

TOPIC: Results of the Great Irish Famine

AIM: How did nativism affect mid-nineteenth century Irish immigrants to the United States?

Standards: United States History (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4); Language Arts (3).

Do Now Activity: Examine the cartoon depicting Irish immigrants to the United States.

1- How are the Irish portrayed in this cartoon?

2- In your view, what does this cartoon tell us about American attitudes toward Irish immigrants?

Motivational Activity: In your opinion, how are immigrants received in the United States today? In your view, why are some people against immigration? How are anti-immigrant feelings expressed in the United States? How would you respond to someone who says that immigrants can never be "real" Americans? Why?

Activity: Define Nativism. Notes.

1- Nativism: The belief that some immigrant groups can never become real Americans and should not be allowed to enter the country.

2- During United States history many different immigrant groups have been challenged by nativist groups.

3- In the first half of the 19th century, nativists argued that Irish immigrants could never be "real" Americans.

Activity: Examine the cartoon depicting Irish immigrants to the United States. How are the Irish portrayed in this cartoon? In your view, what does this cartoon tell us about American attitudes toward Irish immigrants? In your opinion, does this picture illustrate nativism? Explain.

Activity: Student teams examine worksheets 1, 2 or 3 for evidence of nativism in the mid-nineteenth century United States and report on their findings to the class.

Summary Question: What were the attitudes of nativist groups toward Irish immigrants to the United States?

Application: In your opinion, are attitudes towards immigrants similar or different today?

Homework: Write a letter to your local congressional representative explaining your views on immigration to the United States today.

ACTIVITY SHEET 1- Irish Immigrants in New Orleans

The author of this article was sympathetic toward Irish immigrants. He felt they were being unfairly treated. Read the article and answer the questions.

1- How does the author describe conditions for Irish immigrants who are working on the canal in Louisiana in 1833 and their families?

2- In your opinion, is the treatment of the Irish in New Orleans related to anti-Irish prejudice? Explain your views.

A) "One of the greatest works now in progress here, is the canal planned to connect Lac Pontchartrain with the city of New Orleans. I only wish that the wise men at home who coolly charge the present condition of Ireland upon the inherent laziness of her population, could be transported to this spot. Here they subsist on the coarsest fare; excluded from all the advantages of civilization; often at the mercy of a hard contractor, who wrings his profits from their blood; and all this for a pittance that merely enables them to exist, with little power to save, or a hope beyond the continuance of the like exertion."

B) "Here too were many poor women with their husbands; I contemplated their wasted forms and haggard sickly looks, together with the close swamp whose stagnant air they were doomed to breathe, and fancied them, in some hour of leisure, calling to memory the green valley and the pure river of their distant home."

C) "At such works all over this continent the Irish are the labourers chiefly employed, and the mortality amongst them is enormous. At present they are, where I have seen them working here, worse lodged than the cattle of the field; in fact, the only thought bestowed upon them appears to be, by what expedient the greatest quantity of labour may be extracted from them at the cheapest rate to the contractor. Slave labour cannot be substituted to any extent, being much too expensive; a good slave costs at this time two hundred pounds sterling, and to have a thousand such swept off a line of canal in one season, would call for prompt consideration."

D) "Christian charity and justice should suggest that the labourers ought to be provided with decent quarters, that sufficient medical aid should always be at hand, and above all, that the brutalizing, accursed practice of extorting extra labour by the stimulus of corn spirit should be wholly forbidden."

ACTIVITY SHEET 2- Irish Immigrants in New York City

This article is from the diary of George Templeton Strong, who lived in New York City. They were written between 1838 and 1857. Read the article and answer the questions.

1- How does Mr. Strong describe the Irish in New York City?

2- In your opinion, should Mr. Strong be considered a nativist? Cite evidence to explain your view.

A) "It was enough to turn a man's stomach to see the way they were naturalizing this morning. Wretched, filthy, bestial-looking Italians and Irish, the very scum and dregs of human nature filled the office so completely that I was almost afraid of being poisoned by going in."

B) "We had some hard fighting yesterday in the Bloody Sixth Ward, and a grand no-poperly riot last night, including a vigorous attack on the Roman Catholic Cathedral with brick bats and howls."

C) "Orders given to commence excavating. Ireland came to the rescue; twenty 'sons of toil' with prehensile paws supplied them by nature with evident reference to the handling of the spade and the wielding of the pickaxe and congenital hollows on the shoulder wonderfully adapted to make the carrying of the hod a luxury instead of a labor."

D) "Met a Know-Nothing procession moving uptown, as I travelled down Broadway to the meeting; a most emphatic demonstration. Solid column, eight or ten abreast, and numbering some two or three thousand, mostly young men marching in quick time. They looked as if they might have designs on St. Patrick's Cathedral, and I think the Irish would have found them ugly customers."

E) "Yesterday morning I was a spectator of a strange, weird, painful scene. Seeing a crowd on the corner, I stopped and made my way to a front place. The earth had caved in a few minutes before and crushed the breath out of a pair of ill-starred Irish laborers. They had just been dug out, and lay white and stark on the ground. Around them were a few men and fifteen or twenty Irish women, wives, kinfolk or friends. The women were raising a wild, unearthly cry, half shriek and half song, wailing as a score of daylight Banshees. Now and then one of them would throw herself down on one of the corpses, or wipe some trace of defilement from the face of the dead man with her apron, slowly and carefully, and then resume her lament. It was an uncanny sound to hear. Our Irish fellow citizens are almost as remote from us in temperament and constitution as the Chinese."

ACTIVITY SHEET 3- Irish Immigrants in Philadelphia

In 1844, there were riots in Philadelphia. Examine the picture, read the article and answer the questions.

1- What is shown in the picture?

2- In your opinion, are there examples of anti-Irish prejudice in these accounts of rioting in Philadelphia in 1844? Make a list and explain your views.

A. In 1844, anti-immigrant groups in Philadelphia approved a three plank platform.

1- An extension to twenty-one years of the waiting period for naturalization.

2- the election of none but native-born Americans to public office.

3- the rejection of foreign interference in the social, political and religious institutions of the country, especially the public schools.

B. Groups circulated a flyer complaining about new immigrants to the United States.

"The day must come, and, we fear, is not too far distant, when most of our offices will be held by foreigners -- men who have no sympathy with the spirit of our institutions, who have done aught to secure the blessings they enjoy, and instead of governing ourselves, we shall be governed by men, many of whom, but a few short years previously, scarcely knew of our existence."

C. There were anti-Irish riots in the streets of Philadelphia. A company of Irish volunteer firefighters fought the rioters and one of the rioters died. An anti-immigrant organization issued this declaration:

"The bloody hand of the Pope has stretched forth to our destruction. Now we call on our fellow-citizens, who regard free institutions, whether they be native or adopted, to arm. Our liberties are to be fought for -- let us not be slack in our preparation."

D. The next day a fire set by anti-Irish rioters destroyed St. Augustine's Roman Catholic Church and the Governor of Pennsylvania declared military rule (martial law). More than 2,000 state troops patrolled the streets of Philadelphia. The commanding officer announced:

"Order must be restored, life and property rendered secure. The idle, the vicious, the disorderly must be curbed and taught to understand and respect the supremacy of the law and, if they do not take warning, on their own heads be the consequences."