Why They Came

Tracing the motives behind journeys to North America, 1820–1860

6-12.US1.26 "Analyze the religious, political, and economic motives of immigrants who came to North America between 1820-1860."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one reason people left each homeland, and circle one hope they had for life in North America. Label each marked reason E for economic, P for political, or R for religious.

Three Journeys, Different Reasons

1 At a New York dock in 1850, two passengers might tell very different stories about why they crossed the Atlantic. For many Irish families, the Great Famine made staying dangerous. A disease destroyed much of the potato crop beginning in 1845, and hunger spread as people lost access to food and land. Some families left to escape hunger, then sought wages in North American cities. Jobs did not erase the hardship of crowded housing or low pay. Still, a relative already in New York could offer a place to stay and help a newcomer find work.

2 In the German states, some people wanted elected governments and greater freedom to speak and publish. The revolutions of 1848–49 brought hope for these changes, but rulers regained control in many areas. A reformer who had spoken out could face arrest or censorship and might leave for North America to seek greater political freedom. There, other reformers could offer a circle of people who shared those ideas. Not every German immigrant left for that reason. Some craftspeople crossed the ocean mainly because they hoped to earn more from their work.

3 Religion shaped another journey. During the 1840s and 1850s, converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints left Britain for North America. Some faced hostility toward their faith at home and wanted to worship with a larger community of fellow believers. By the 1850s, many traveled onward to Utah Territory, where church members had established settlements. Life there was difficult, and joining the community did not guarantee safety or wealth. Yet fellow believers could help newcomers settle. Their journey shows why a person might cross an ocean for religious belonging, not simply for a higher wage.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did conditions in Ireland and the chance to earn wages in North America work together to influence migration?

2. Why might a German reformer have left after the revolutions of 1848–49? Explain why this was a political motive.

3. Why did some British converts travel to North America and then Utah Territory? Explain why a higher wage was not their main reason in the passage.

4. Why would it be inaccurate to say all German immigrants in the passage came for political freedom?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence port clerk's note about two imagined arrivals from different groups in the passage. Use a specific passage detail to explain each person's main motive, then explain one way their decisions were alike without claiming their motives were identical.

ANSWER KEY

Why They Came

GRADES 6-12 · 6-12.US1.26

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one reason people left each homeland, and circle one hope they had for life in North America. Label each marked reason E for economic, P for political, or R for religious. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did conditions in Ireland and the chance to earn wages in North America work together to influence migration?	**The potato crop failure brought hunger and made staying dangerous. Wages in North American cities offered a way to support a family.**
2	Why might a German reformer have left after the revolutions of 1848–49? Explain why this was a political motive.	**Rulers regained control, and a reformer could face arrest or censorship for speaking out. Leaving to seek greater freedom to speak and take part in politics was a political motive.**
3	Why did some British converts travel to North America and then Utah Territory? Explain why a higher wage was not their main reason in the passage.	**They faced hostility toward their faith and wanted to worship with fellow believers. The passage describes religious belonging, not higher wages, as their reason.**
4	Why would it be inaccurate to say all German immigrants in the passage came for political freedom?	**Some German reformers sought political freedom, but some craftspeople came mainly to earn more from their work.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I met an Irish newcomer and a British convert at the dock. The Irish traveler left after potato crop failure brought hunger and hoped to earn wages in New York. The British traveler faced hostility toward their faith and hoped to worship with fellow believers in Utah Territory. Their main motives differed: one sought food and work, while the other sought religious belonging. Both could get help settling from people already in North America, a relative for the Irish traveler and fellow believers for the convert.

Accept other pairs if each motive is supported by a passage detail and the shared factor is supported by the passage. Do not assume the German reformer sought paid work; the passage gives that motive to some German craftspeople.