Who Belongs Here?

Read how immigration sparked debates about culture, work, and political power.

8.C.10.1.E "Examine the rise of nativist movements in response to increased immigration during industrialization, including debates over assimilation, labor competition, and political influence."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one concern in the passage about assimilation, one about labor competition, and one about political influence. Label your underlines A, L, and P to show how nativists responded to immigration.

Debates in a Growing City

1 In 1905, a Chicago factory whistle could bring workers from many places onto the same street. New arrivals from Italy, Russia, and other countries joined earlier immigrant communities in growing cities. Some native-born Americans welcomed their neighbors, but nativists argued that immigrants threatened American life. They pressed newcomers to adopt English and familiar U.S. customs, a process called assimilation. Others asked whether people could share civic duties while keeping their languages and traditions. The disagreement was not simply about learning English. It was about who got to decide what counted as American.

2 Work sharpened the argument. Factories needed workers, and many immigrants took low-paying jobs in mills. Some native-born workers feared that a larger labor supply would make jobs harder to find or hold down wages. Employers sometimes hired replacement workers during strikes, which could deepen suspicion between groups. Yet immigrants also joined unions and fought beside native-born workers for better pay and safer conditions. Nativist leaders often blamed immigrants for problems created by dangerous workplaces and employers' pay decisions. Labor competition was real in some situations, but it did not explain every low wage.

3 Political power raised another fear. Most newcomers could not vote, but immigrants who became citizens and met voting rules could shape city elections. Political machines sometimes offered jobs or help with housing in return for votes. Nativists said these alliances gave newcomers too much influence, while supporters argued that new citizens deserved a voice. These debates helped drive laws that limited entry, including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the national-origin quotas of 1924. Those laws targeted different groups, but both showed how fears about belonging, work, and power could become policy.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did nativists and others disagree about what assimilation should mean?

2. How might hiring replacement workers during strikes increase labor tensions? What detail challenges blaming all immigrants for low pay?

3. What did nativists fear about political machines, and how did supporters of new citizens respond?

4. How did debates over immigration become government policy? Name two laws from the passage and explain what they had in common.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 5- to 6-sentence statement for a city meeting in 1905. Take a position on whether immigrant neighbors should be expected to give up their languages and traditions, connect your position to both work and voting concerns from the passage, and address one opposing view.

ANSWER KEY

Who Belongs Here?

GRADE 8 · 8.C.10.1.E

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one concern in the passage about assimilation, one about labor competition, and one about political influence. Label your underlines A, L, and P to show how nativists responded to immigration. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did nativists and others disagree about what assimilation should mean?	**Nativists pressed newcomers to adopt English and familiar U.S. customs. Others questioned whether immigrants could share civic duties while keeping their languages and traditions.**
2	How might hiring replacement workers during strikes increase labor tensions? What detail challenges blaming all immigrants for low pay?	**Replacement workers could deepen suspicion between groups during strikes. Immigrants also joined unions with native-born workers, and employers' pay decisions contributed to low wages.**
3	What did nativists fear about political machines, and how did supporters of new citizens respond?	**Nativists feared that alliances with political machines gave newcomers too much influence. Supporters argued that new citizens deserved a voice.**
4	How did debates over immigration become government policy? Name two laws from the passage and explain what they had in common.	**The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the national-origin quotas of 1924 both limited entry, though they targeted different groups.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Immigrant neighbors should not have to give up their languages and traditions to belong in our city. Some workers fear that new arrivals will take jobs or lower pay, especially when employers hire replacements during strikes. Instead of blaming immigrants, we can support unions where workers join together for fair pay. Some residents also worry that political machines gain power by trading help for votes, but new citizens who meet voting rules deserve a voice. We should question unfair deals in elections without treating a person's language as proof that they cannot be a good neighbor.

Accept either position in Part 3 if the statement connects assimilation to both labor and political influence, addresses an opposing view, and uses historically accurate details. For Question 2, students may also cite immigrants' union membership as evidence against blaming all immigrants.