# Paths Into City Life

English lessons, civic learning, and political connections in immigrant neighborhoods

**USH.C.1.4.B** "Describe the Americanization programs which sought to integrate and assimilate immigrants (e.g., political party machines, Tammany Hall) through instruction in English and the United States of America's system of government."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline two ways newcomers learned English or about government, circle two ways a party machine connected newcomers to civic life, and put a star beside one possible cost of each approach.

### Learning the City

1. In 1905, a new arrival in a crowded American city might need work, a place to live, and help reading official notices. Many reformers believed newcomers should learn English and the rules of U.S. government. Settlement houses offered evening English lessons, sometimes alongside lessons about voting, public offices, and citizenship. Public schools also taught immigrant children English and lessons on American civic life. These efforts were called Americanization because organizers hoped immigrants would take part in national life and adopt shared habits. A lesson could help a family read a city notice or understand what an elected mayor does.

2. Political party machines offered another route into city life. In New York City, the Democratic organization known as Tammany Hall built support in immigrant neighborhoods. A ward leader might secure coal for a family, help a worker seek a city job, or guide an eligible immigrant through citizenship paperwork. Leaders used interpreters and personal visits to explain city services and elections, offering practical lessons in how local government worked. In return, they expected political loyalty and votes from those who could vote. The party machine was not the city government, but its connections to elected officials made it influential.

3. Americanization did not work the same way for everyone. A settlement house teacher might explain how citizens could contact an elected official; a machine worker might introduce a newcomer to the official's allies. Both could help immigrants navigate U.S. institutions, but their goals differed. Reformers often wanted people to adopt English and certain American customs, sometimes treating immigrants' own languages as obstacles. Machines wanted reliable supporters, and favors could make families feel pressured to back a party. Immigrants made their own choices: some used English classes or party connections while keeping their home languages and traditions.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Describe how settlement houses and public schools used instruction to help immigrants take part in U.S. civic life.

2. Describe how a Tammany Hall ward leader could help an immigrant understand city government and elections.

3. How did Tammany Hall turn help for immigrant families into political power, and why was it not the same as city government?

4. How could the goals of reformers and party machines affect immigrants differently, even when both helped newcomers take part in civic life?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you have just moved to New York City in 1905. Write a five-sentence letter to a relative comparing a settlement house class and a Tammany Hall ward leader as ways to learn about U.S. civic life; explain how English could help, one trade-off, and which route you would choose and why.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.1.4.B

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways newcomers learned English or about government, circle two ways a party machine connected newcomers to civic life, and put a star beside one possible cost of each approach. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Describe how settlement houses and public schools used instruction to help immigrants take part in U.S. civic life. | **Settlement houses offered English and civic lessons to newcomers, while public schools taught immigrant children English and about American civic life.** |
| 2 | Describe how a Tammany Hall ward leader could help an immigrant understand city government and elections. | **A ward leader could use an interpreter or a personal visit to explain city services and elections and connect the immigrant with officials' allies.** |
| 3 | How did Tammany Hall turn help for immigrant families into political power, and why was it not the same as city government? | **Tammany Hall offered help and expected loyalty and votes from those who could vote. It was a political organization with connections to elected officials, not the government itself.** |
| 4 | How could the goals of reformers and party machines affect immigrants differently, even when both helped newcomers take part in civic life? | **Reformers' push for English and American customs could discourage home languages. Machines' demand for loyal supporters could pressure families to back a party.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear Sofia, I plan to attend evening English and citizenship lessons so I can read city notices and learn what elected officials do. A Tammany ward leader could also explain city services and introduce me to people connected to officials. I worry that accepting favors could bring pressure to support the party's candidates. I will start with classes because I want to understand the system before choosing a party. I will keep speaking our home language with the family, too.

Accept other passage-supported examples of instruction, practical help, or pressure. For the letter, look for a comparison of both routes, a specific use for English, a trade-off, and a justified choice.