Fear and Newcomers

Examine why nativism gained support during a new wave of immigration.

USH.C.1.4.C "Examine the rise and motivations of Nativism against a new wave of Eastern European immigrants."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the claims nativists made about eastern European immigrants, and circle the conditions or events that helped those claims gain support.

Who Was Welcome?

1 In 1907, a family from the Russian Empire could arrive at Ellis Island carrying little more than clothing and an address in New York. Many newcomers from eastern Europe, including Jewish families fleeing persecution and others seeking work, entered growing cities. They found jobs in factories and shops, often for low pay, and built communities around shared languages and faiths. As immigration increased, some native-born Americans began calling for limits on newcomers. This opposition was known as nativism.

2 A factory worker might worry that employers would hire immigrants for lower wages, reducing workers' bargaining power. Nativist leaders turned that economic fear into a wider accusation: they blamed immigrants for low wages and crowded housing, even though employers set pay and landlords controlled rent. Some Protestant Americans also distrusted Jewish and Eastern Orthodox newcomers because their religions and languages differed from those of many native-born Americans. These claims treated millions of people as one group instead of judging individuals.

3 After World War I, strikes and the Russian Revolution fueled fears of radical politics in the United States. Nativists often linked eastern European immigrants to revolution without evidence about individual newcomers. Those fears joined older prejudices and helped win support for restrictions. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 limited immigration by nationality. The 1924 Immigration Act set quotas using the 1890 census, favoring countries with earlier migration to the United States and sharply restricting arrivals from eastern Europe.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did a concern about wages become a broader nativist claim?

2. What religious differences contributed to nativism, and what was unfair about the response?

3. How did events after World War I help nativists gain support for restrictions?

4. How did the 1924 law turn nativist opposition into a restriction on eastern European immigration?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence letter to a newspaper in 1923 responding to a proposal to bar all eastern European immigrants. Use two facts from the passage, and explain whether a worry about jobs or politics justifies the proposed ban.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the claims nativists made about eastern European immigrants, and circle the conditions or events that helped those claims gain support. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did a concern about wages become a broader nativist claim?	**Some workers feared competition for jobs and wages. Nativist leaders blamed immigrants for low pay, although employers set wages.**
2	What religious differences contributed to nativism, and what was unfair about the response?	**Some Protestants distrusted Jewish and Eastern Orthodox newcomers. They judged millions of people as a group rather than as individuals.**
3	How did events after World War I help nativists gain support for restrictions?	**Strikes and the Russian Revolution increased fears of radical politics. Nativists linked eastern European immigrants to revolution without evidence about individuals.**
4	How did the 1924 law turn nativist opposition into a restriction on eastern European immigration?	**It used the 1890 census to set national quotas, favoring countries with earlier migration and sharply limiting arrivals from eastern Europe.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear Editor, workers have reason to worry about low wages, but employers decide what to pay. Many eastern European newcomers are seeking work, while some Jewish families fled persecution. The 1921 law already limits immigration by nationality. A blanket ban would judge people by where they came from rather than by their actions.

Accept responses that connect a specific economic, religious, or political concern to nativism and distinguish evidence about conditions from assumptions about all immigrants.