

Tempest Tossed after Ellis Island?



"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door" -from "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus (on pedestal of statue)

Approximately 20 million people came to America during the period between 1880 and 1930. They came to America to escape religious persecution, to flee political unrest, and many other reasons, but most immigrants came for the "golden door." The promise and possibility of a better economic lifestyle that the United States could offer beckoned to people worldwide.

The hard passage from Europe began by saving enough money to pay the fare to travel across the Atlantic to America. The typical fare for steerage passage in the late 1800s was about \$25.00 to \$30.00 dollars. Saving this amount of money for most peasant immigrants may have taken months or even years to save. They began the journey to America by leaving their homes for port cities; many Europeans walked up to 300 miles to reach these ports. Once aboard the sailing ship the trips took three months. Late in the century the trip was reduced to a week or two by steam ships run by companies like White Star Lines, the same company that owned the Titanic. No matter the length of travel, they were harsh trips.



Many of the ships only served one meal a day and not much of a meal at that. Immigrants were required to show they had money to live on before they would be admitted to the U.S. So, in an attempt to save money, often they would save their money instead of buying food. Many times, on routes earlier in the century, passengers were given only one meager meal a day.

Sometimes the passengers would contract diseases from each other such as cholera and malaria; conditions many were attempting to flee in their own countries. These conditions were referred to as ship fever, illness brought on from other passengers or from the lack of food and water. It was not uncommon for passengers to die on the trip to America. The dead passengers were typically disposed of by throwing them overboard.



New York, Ellis Island, neg. No. 3163E

Once they arrived in New York Harbor, they boarded ferries to Ellis Island. In the loom of The Statue of Liberty, the processing began for entry to the United States. They were ushered into the Great Hall, which was a maze of railings that allowed for the maximum use of floor space. There were times when 10,000 people were processed in one day. Typically it took five hours from the time an immigrant stepped off the ferry, until the time his paperwork was stamped as "admitted."

80% of the refugees were admitted to the United States, the other 20% were sent back to their country of origin. The ships were required to return those not accepted for American shores, yet they were only required to return those denied entrance. The companies were under no obligation to return a parent of a denied child or vice-versa. This led those immigrants to view Ellis Island in quite a different light than most. These immigrants referred to Ellis Island as “The Isle of Tears.” For those fortunate enough to walk through the “Golden Door” the challenges of relocating were far from over.



Although immigrants were required to show proof of solvency and self-sufficiency by producing at least \$25.00 before being allowed to leave Ellis Island, did this really provide a good economic foundation for the immigrants or was this just another of the many hardships that were part of immigration?

Imagine yourself in a new country without a friend or family, all you have is \$25.00 to get food, a home, and clothing. Many immigrants needed to relocate to cities looking for laborers, so they could procure an income. Below is a list of items and the costs during the 1800s. Incomes are also listed. See how long \$25.00 would provide for an immigrant.

Review the chart showing the costs of goods, services, and wages in 1850. Doesn't look like things are very expensive then does it? One dollar in 1850 is worth \$27.10 today. (Consumer Price Index) The price you calculate will show you how much the immigrants actually paid for that item in today's dollar. (This is not what the items cost today! It illustrates, approximately how much that item would cost with today's dollar value.)

1. Explain how you will figure out how much something costs in today's dollar?
2. Now pick five items and see how much they would have paid for those items, with the value of the dollar today.

Item	Cost in 1850	Cost today
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

3. Write the rule/equation you used to figure out the cost of any of those items. Use letters to describe the variables and unknowns in your rule. (Don't forget a key for your variables/unknowns.)
4. Why might things be so expensive at this time in history?
5. What might people have done to cut the cost of living for themselves and their families?

HOW MUCH IS IT?**GOODS – COST OF HOUSING**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost per week in 1850</i>	<i>Equivalent cost today</i>
Food Items		
Eastern U.S.		
Groceries - New York	\$1.50 per day	
Groceries - Massachusetts	.55 per day	
Chicken legs	.05 each leg	
Beef	.70 per lb.	
Butter	.32 per lb.	
Milk	.14 per qt.	
Barrel of flour (good for 8 weeks)	\$5.00 per barrel	
Western U.S. (California Mining areas)		
1 slice of bread	\$1.00	
1 slice of bread - buttered	\$2.00	
1 pear	\$2.50	
1 barrel of flour (good for 8 weeks)	\$50.00	
Pork per pound	.50 per lb.	
Living		
160 acres in Wyoming	\$1,000.00	
1 steer (California)	\$150.00	
Boarding house	\$2.21 per day	
Millinery sold in bulk by trader		
6 pairs of pants	\$18.00 per pair	
24 shirts	\$8.00 per shirt	
3 blankets	\$25 per blanket	
Cotton fabric per yard	\$12.00 per yard	
Cradle	\$50.00	

HOW MUCH IS IT?**WAGES AND TRAVEL**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost per week in 1850</i>	<i>Equivalent cost today</i>
<i>Wages</i>	\$	\$
Labor worker in New York	\$2.40 per day	
Labor worker in Massachusetts	.88 per day	
Mine worker	\$0 - \$500.00 per week	
Non-citizen mining fee	\$20.00 per month	
Railroad laborer	\$1.25 per day	
Clothing worker	\$1.25 per week	
Fabric weaver	\$4.00 per week	
Carpenter	\$7.00 per week	
Unskilled labor	\$1.00 per day	
Manufacturing and industry	\$4.00 per week	
Farming		
<i>Transportation</i>		
Stage fares to cities within New York	\$2.50	
Steamships (steerage)	\$25.00 - \$30.00	
Train fare within New York state	\$2.00	
Paddleboats in the Great Lakes	\$10.00	
River Boats -- Mississippi	\$2.00 - \$5.00	
River Boats -- California Delta	\$30.00	
Railroad fare	.03 per mile	
Straw mat for sleeping	\$2.50	
Dinner on the train	.75 per day	
Meals in depot restaurants (3 stops daily)	.25 per meal	
Optional - you can cook your own meals - you must supply the food.	\$1.00 per day	

**EXTRA CREDIT:**

Why do you think things cost so much more in the western United States?

Use Worksheets #2 and #3 and the Transportation and Industry in the US in 1860 map to help you answer the questions below.

Occupation of choice: (Example: manufacturing)

Wage you will earn: (Example: \$1.00 a day)

Location that will support your occupation: (Example: Ohio)

Distance from New York to the location of your occupation: (Example: about 400 miles)

Time it will take you to get to that location: (Example: 1 day)

Cost to get to that city: (Example: \$12.00)

Now you can begin to figure out how long you would last as an immigrant to the United States. Here is an example.

Example Month One			Total (+) (-)
Item	Paying out	Income	
1st day in America		\$25.00	
Transportation	\$12.00		
Room and Board for a month	\$66.30		
Food for a month	\$16.50		
Misc. (clothes etc.)	\$18.00		
Wages for a month		\$30.00	
End of the month	\$112.80	\$55.00	(-) \$57.80

I didn't do so well. By the end of the month I was short \$57.80. I would have to give up the \$18.00 pair of pants. I would also have to live and work in New York for a while and save some money enabling me to move. Let's see how you do.

There are a couple of things you need to think about before you get started. For example, you may have to take a train to your new home. But, the cost is listed in "cents per mile," how do you know how much it costs? You will need to figure out how to make the amount proportionate to the miles you travel. In other words you will need a rule that will allow you to figure out exactly how much a trip would cost for any amount of miles you may be traveling. (Tip: Sometimes it is helpful to practice your rule with smaller numbers that make sense and can prove your rule works, and then calculate the actual numbers for the problem.)

Write a rule for:

Transportation cost -

Food costs -

Wages made -

Now you are ready to begin.

Month One			Total (+) (-)
Item	Paying out	Income	
1st day in America		\$25.00	
Transportation			
Room and Board for a month			
Food for a month			
Misc. (clothes etc.)			
Wages for a month			
End of the month			

Here are a couple of worksheets so you can see how long it will take you to break even and begin making an income that you can live on.

Month			Total (+) (-)
Item	Paying out	Income	
Transportation			
Room and Board for a month			
Food for a month			
Misc. (clothes etc.)			
Wages for a month			
End of the month			

Month			Total (+) (-)
Item	Paying out	Income	
Transportation			
Room and Board for a month			
Food for a month			
Misc. (clothes etc.)			
Wages for a month			
End of the month			

Examine the Transportation and Industry in the US in 1860 map.

1. What are some relationships you see from this map?
2. How might industry have influenced the expansion of the railroad lines?
3. How might industry have benefited from the railroad expansion?
4. What other factors may have influenced growth in both industry and the railroad?
5. How might the railroad and industry affected city and regional growth in the 1850's?

As an immigrant, work was of the utmost importance to the success of their move to the United States. Many immigrants found work somewhere other than New York City. Their work skill may have not have paid as much in New York as in other places. For some immigrants, the pay for their skill was not enough to live in New York City, or they simply may not have been a skilled laborer and were forced to take work wherever someone would hire them. Some industries needed large amount of workers and would require workers as soon as they arrived in the United States. For example, only 2 miles of rail could be laid in one day, so railroad companies needed many people to build new railroad lines. Because of the need for large amounts of workers the railroad industry was willing to pay for the immigrants' transportation to the locations where expansion was taking place, so workers could lay tracks in those areas.



Use your railroad map to create time zones of travel with the origin point being New York City. You will need to calculate how long it would take to arrive at different locations by train. Try to create a range of times. For example, you can indicate your ranges in bands of color.

Band Blue – one day of travel
Band Red – one week of travel

Steam trains traveled anywhere between 40 miles per hour to 70 miles per hour, depending on the model of the train. You will be writing an equation (rule) that will help you calculate the time it took to arrive in different locations by train, from New York City. For your equation, use the average speed of 55 miles per hour.

1. Explain how you will determine the amount of time it will take to travel to different locations.
2. Now, create a rule or equation that will help you calculate how long it will take to arrive at the different locations. What is your equation? (Make sure to create a key for your variables, so anyone can use your method as a tool to determine time of travel in the 1850's.)

How might the distance from New York effect or influence:

an immigrant?

an industry?

the railroad?

Name _____

