

# When Have You Been a “Stranger?”

Jewish Immigration to the United States

Discovering  
American  
Jewish History  
Through  
Objects

**01 THE JERUSALEM TALMUD**

It is a joy to live in one’s own house.

שמחה לאדם בשעה שהוא דר בתוך שלו

Jerusalem Talmud, Moed Katan 2:4

**02 STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND**

When you hear the word “stranger,” what does it make you feel?

When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do them wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love them as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:33–34

**03 THE NEW COLOSSUS**

How are Matron America and the Statue of Liberty similar and different?

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame, / With conquering limbs astride from land to land; / Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand / A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame / Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name / Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand / Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command / The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame. “Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she / With silent lips. “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-tost to me, / I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus,” 1883

**04 THE PROMISED LAND**

What is Antin saying about the process of becoming American?

The apex of my civic pride and personal contentment was reached on the bright September morning when I entered public school... Our going to school was the fulfillment of my father’s best promises to us... Did they [the parents] teach me from books, and tell me what to believe? I soon chose my own books, and built me a world of my own... When I discovered my own friends, and ran home with them to convert my parents to a belief in their excellence... [d]id I not become the parent and they the children, in those relations of teacher and learner?

Mary Antin, *The Promised Land*, 1912

**THEM AND US 08**

Once you are an immigrant, you never forget that you are one.

Jorge Ramos, Univision News Anchor, 2013

Mom and Dad had gotten their citizenships, voted, paid taxes, but America would never be their country. I knew it every time I heard one of them refer to Americans as them, and Russia and Russians as us and ours.

Lev Golinkin, *A Backpack, A Bear, and Eight Crates of Vodka*, 2014

Should immigrants aspire to fully “become American?”

**OF THE DAWN OF FREEDOM 07**

The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.

W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903

**100 PERCENT AMERICAN 06**

No matter by what various crafts we came here, we are all now in the same boat... We must all realize that there are true Americans who did not happen to be born in our section of the country, who do not attend our place of religious worship, who are not of our racial stock, or who are not proficient in our language.

Calvin Coolidge, 1925

**THE GREAT RACE 05**

These immigrants adopt the language of the native American, they wear his clothes, they steal his name and they are beginning to take his women, but they seldom adopt his religion or understand his ideals.

Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 1916



“Matron America” pop-up Rosh Hashanah Greeting Card, Hebrew Publishing Company 1909 Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, 1982.20.1 Gift of Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett



# OPEN BOOK

Teacher  
Guide  
7th – 11th  
Grade

## When Have You Been a “Stranger?”

Jewish Immigration to the United States

## Jews have been coming to these shores for over three and a half centuries.

Some fled persecution; others searched for opportunity. Arriving from around the globe, speaking different languages, and following different traditions, they shared one hope: a chance to live in freedom. Between 1880 and 1924, more than two million East European Jews said goodbye, most of them forever, to their homes, families, and communities. Fleeing poverty and repression they set out in search of better lives. Some settled in Palestine, Western Europe, South Africa, or Australia, but most sailed to America.

### KEY QUESTIONS:

- Why did so many immigrants undertake this long and difficult journey?
- What did they hope to find in the United States?
- What choices did they make in order to feel more American?
- What struggles did they confront?
- In what ways did they maintain and/or redefine their Jewish identities?

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

#### By the end of this unit students will be able to:

- Apply inquiry-based methods to interpreting museum objects and/or primary sources.
- Explore a historical question using critical thinking, text analysis, object interpretation, and discussion.
- Identify aspirations that Jewish immigrants carried with them during the era of mass migration as well as the opportunities and challenges they encountered upon settling in the United States.
- Empathize with the motivations for why people immigrate and the hardships immigrants endure in coming and acclimating to a new country.
- Identify how historical issues continue to be relevant in their lives today.

# Suggested Pre-Lesson Activity

## 1. Begin by explaining the following:

Many American families are descendants of immigrants who came to the United States during the era of mass migration, roughly between 1880 and 1920. Some families came earlier, trace their lineage to indigenous peoples, or were brought to this continent as slaves. Whether centuries ago or yesterday, immigrants have been coming to the US from all over the world, for many different reasons. This lesson focuses on people who emigrated at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. As we explore the past, think about similarities or differences you notice in comparison to our lives today.

## 2. Pair students into groups of two or three and prompt them to answer the following:

- a. Imagine someone moves into your neighborhood from a different country. What is an activity, event, or other element of American culture that you believe this person should know about? (for example: important words in English, American holidays, sports, or movies)
- b. How would you explain it to them?
- c. Have you ever been in a situation in which you spoke a different language or did not know the popular activities, shows, or events? What did you do?

## 3. Bring students back together and ask for volunteers to answer the following:

- a. What element of American culture did you choose?
- b. Was it hard to describe something you know well to a person who hasn't ever seen or done that thing before?
- c. Are there sometimes things about an event or activity that can't be experienced or understood from a description?

# Procedure

**1. Refer to the *OpenBook Overview* and follow the instructions for the “See, Think, Wonder” activity as a class. Consider using the following discussion questions.**

## **See:**

- Who do you see in the image?
- What is the woman on the left (Matron America) wearing?
- What is she holding?
- What do you see in the eagle’s talon?
- What do you see in the background?
- What letters do you see on the gate?

## **Think:**

- Who do you think are the people by the gate? Do you think they are related to one another? How do you think they feel?
- Where do you think they are arriving?
- Do you think the gate is being opened or closed?
- Who do you think the woman is on the left? Why do you think she is she holding a key?
- Who do you imagine sent this New Year’s card? Who are they sending it to?
- What story do you think this image is telling?

## **Wonder:**

- I wonder what happened before and after this meeting at the gate.
- I wonder what choices these immigrants will make in order to feel like an American.
- I wonder why there is a key and a gate. I wonder if there were any people or groups that Matron America might not open the gate for.

**2. If you haven’t already, divide students into pairs or trios. Distribute one Talmud page to each group and Student Guide to each student.**

**3. Refer to the *OpenBook Overview* and follow the instructions for the *havruta study*.**

**4. Refer to the *OpenBook* Overview and follow the instructions for the Wrap-up. Consider using the following discussion questions.**

**Prompting questions about specific texts:**

- What adjectives did Emma Lazarus (#2) and Mary Antin (#4) use to describe the immigrant experience?
- Emma Lazarus wrote the poem (#2) that’s currently carved onto the Statue of Liberty. If you could choose another text to put on the Statue of Liberty instead, which would you choose?
- Can you find two texts that disagree with each other? What do you think they would say to each other?
- Which texts talk about pride or joy in being an immigrant? What specifically do those texts say?
- Which texts talk about fear or concern about being an immigrant? Why?
- What did Jorge Ramos and Lev Golinkin (#8) say about identity? Does the Leviticus text (#2) agree with them? Why or why not?

**General prompting questions:**

- Why did Jewish immigrants come to the United States?
- What did they hope to find here?
- What choices do you think they make to feel more American?
- Can you suggest some ways they maintained and/or redefined their Jewish identities?
- Should immigrants have to “Americanize” in order to gain social acceptance? Well-paying jobs? Community leadership? Is there a “price” to “becoming American?”
- Do you identify as American? What about you makes you feel American?
- Do you identify with any other cultural identity? (e.g., religious) Can you think of a time when that identity has created conflict with your American identity?

# Suggested Post-Lesson Activity

1. Pass around US coins or project an image for the entire class.
2. Explain that written on every American coin is the phrase *E Pluribus Unum*, which means “Out of many, one.” These words first appeared on a coin issued by the US Treasury in 1795 but it was not a requirement until 1873, when Congress made it federal law for all coins to carry the phrase.
3. Ask the following discussion questions:
  - Why do you think this phrase is on our coins?
  - What does it mean to you?
  - What do you think people imagined when they chose to place this phrase on our currency?
  - What do you think Emma Lazarus (#3) and Mary Antin (#4) would say about this phrase?
  - What do you think W. E. B. Du Bois (#7), Jorge Ramos, and Lev Golinkin (#8) would say about this phrase?
  - Do you think the phrase is still accurate or relevant today?
  - If you were given the opportunity to choose a new phrase, what would it be?

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## Object Information

### “Matron America” pop-up Rosh Hashanah greeting card, Hebrew Publishing Company, 1909.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, postcards developed as a quick and easy form of communication and also as an art form. The first government-issued postcard, with a space for a message on one side and the recipient’s address on the other, was issued May 1, 1873. Initially, government postcards cost less to mail than privately issued cards, but this changed in 1898 when Congress made the postage equal for all types of postcards. Likewise, until World War I, most postcards were printed in Europe, especially Germany, because only the federal government was allowed to print postcards until the 1898 law.

The Talmud page features a segment of a pop-up Rosh Hashanah greeting card, which had a similar history to postcards in their origins and production. Elaborately decorated and three-dimensional, cards like this one sold by the Hebrew Publishing Company were designed to be displayed in the recipient’s home. Like postcards, they were often printed in Europe and then sold in the United States, where a large immigrant population made for a lucrative market. Many pop-up cards featured steamships, a recognition of the senders’ immigrant experiences. Inside, the cards often had various greetings in English, Hebrew, and Yiddish. Senders offered holiday greetings, described their lives in America, or perhaps encouraged others to consider emigrating.



Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, 1982.20.1  
Gift of Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett

### Matron America

This segment from a larger Rosh Hashanah pop-up card depicts a figure called Matron America opening America’s gate to immigrants who arrived on one of the steamships seen in the background. Dressed in a red-and-white-striped long skirt with a blue top adorned with white stars, Matron America looks like a patriotically themed mother welcoming immigrants to the country. Atop her head is a hat in the same style with a ribbon that reads “America” in Yiddish. Above her is a bald eagle carrying a shield and arrows, a reference to the Great Seal of the United States, officially adopted by Congress as the national seal in 1789. At the bottom of the card is Hebrew text from the book of Psalms that translates as “Opens the gates of righteousness” and “Copyright by Heb. Pub. Co. 1909.” The colors are warm and bright and the symbols indicate a message of hope.



This Rosh Hashanah card, designed and printed in the United States, integrates traditional Jewish with American imagery. The olive branch is a biblical symbol of peace. The dove brought Noah an olive leaf after the Flood to show that the waters had abated off the earth and peace had been restored. The gate can be understood as a reference to the opening of the “gates of Heaven” on Rosh Hashanah (according to Isaiah 26:2 and Psalm 118:19–20).

## IMPORTANT DETAILS:

### Matron America

- Symbolizes the United States; she is more commonly known as Columbia, a secular goddess who personified the country’s national ideals.
- Columbia, usually depicted wearing a “liberty cap” copied from the goddess Minerva, also had a twin, the Goddess of Liberty, and the two could be used interchangeably. In this postcard, she wears a hat with “America” written in Yiddish.
- Holds the key to the gate, suggesting that America’s “doors” are presently open but can also be closed.
- In this postcard, Columbia is the gatekeeper who welcomes and protects the downtrodden, who appear both grateful and relieved upon arrival to their new homeland.

### Eagle

- Refers to the Great Seal of the United States
- The 13 arrows in the eagle’s talons and the 13 stripes on its shield represent the original 13 states.
- The arrows in one talon and olive branches in the other symbolize war and peace.

### Immigrants

- A grouping of two adults and two children. Generally, immigrants did not arrive as families, but came in a “chain migration,” with one family member arriving first and then earning enough money to bring a second, and so on.
- The family carries little with them because immigrants often brought only what they could carry.
- The mother’s clasped hands and bowed head suggest gratitude.
- The man could be the father or, if the father had already come to America, the grandfather.

### Setting

- The scene takes place on a shoreline with open gates labeled “US.”
- The multiple steamships in the background indicate that many more immigrants will be arriving.
- The steamships in the distance resemble the types of boats most immigrants took across the Atlantic Ocean.

# Appendix A – Historical Background

## Why did so many Jews leave Europe during the era of mass migration, and what did they hope to find in the United States?

Between 1880 and 1924, over 20 million immigrants came to the United States. Of those, more than 2 million were Jewish, including one third of all eastern European Jews. While the majority of eastern European Jewish emigrants landed in the US, some chose to immigrate instead to Palestine, Argentina, South Africa, and other countries across the world.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Jews in Eastern Europe experienced a population boom. By the century's end, the Jewish population of cities such as Warsaw, Odessa, and Lodz had grown to hundreds of thousands. But many Central and Eastern European Jews also faced severe restrictions on migration within the European continent: Jews from the western area of Poland, which was ruled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, could not move to Vienna until 1849. Some moved instead to eastern Poland, which included parts of present-day Ukraine, Belarus, and Romania. Jews living in the Russian Empire were restricted to a border region known as the “Pale of Settlement,” and only rarely could move into cities such as Moscow. This meant that most Eastern European Jews did not live in major urban centers, instead dwelling in small towns known as “shtetls.”

Mass migration emerged out of a European social, economic, and political context. By the

last decades of the nineteenth century, urbanization and industrialization, combined with ongoing oppression and sporadic violence, made it increasingly difficult to sustain shtetl life. Legal restrictions limited how and where Jews could practice Judaism and receive an education. Russian authorities also enacted a policy of forced “assimilation” by conscripting young Jewish men into the army, and they instituted constraints on what professions Jews could practice, where they could live, and how they could participate in newly industrializing economies. Competition for resources and very poor economic conditions led Jews, and many other Europeans, to consider immigrating to the United States, where many already had relatives. For Jews, migration seemed even more urgent after the Russian Empire instituted the forced conscription and a series of pogroms (violent organized attacks against Jews) that took place between 1903 and 1906; one example was the Kishinev Massacre of 1903, which killed fifty people, destroyed the town, and left the community in fear.

Jews emigrated in much greater numbers and intensity than other Europeans. For example, they constituted only about five percent of the Russian Empire, but nearly half its emigrants. Approximately two-thirds of Russia's Jewish population chose to remain in Russia. Jews followed a “chain migration” in which one or more family members came first and then sent for the others. Neither the worst nor the best off left. As with their fellow migrants, the bulk of those who came were young, able-bodied men and women, but the Jewish migration also included the older generation and children, and the numbers of male and female immigrants were equal. In fact, birth order rather than gender tended to determine who migrated and

when. Unlike immigrants from Southern Europe, Jews generally came to America permanently.

Whether arriving in the seventeenth or the twentieth century, Jews who made the United States their home enjoyed a degree of acceptance they had not experienced in Europe. European Jews could not determine their own destinies and were often subjected to laws that determined where they could live, what professions they could choose, and which, if any, political rights they might enjoy. Conversely, the confluence of American political ideas and a social hierarchy based on slavery and race made it possible for Jews to achieve an unprecedented level of social and cultural integration. Despite instances of ongoing discrimination and periodic questioning of their whiteness, Jews never became America's most stigmatized group.

### **How did immigrants integrate into their new homeland? Should they seek acceptance by "Americanizing?"**

Jewish immigrants who emerged from the Ellis Island port of entry faced with determination the challenge of making America home. They considered their move permanent and set out to turn their dreams of a new homeland into realities. This required no small amount of hard work or accommodation. Opportunities did not come easily, and immigrants faced a myriad of challenges on their path to social integration and financial sustainability, including poverty, cramped quarters, cultural and linguistic alienation, and horrendous working conditions.

Finding work became the primary goal for most newly arrived immigrants. The right job made the difference between subsistence and disaster

for immigrants perched on the edge of economic survival. Some found work as unskilled laborers. Others sold goods from pushcarts or storefronts. Large numbers entered the garment industry, slaving away for the Jewish owners who dominated the business. A few of the most educated and well trained entered the professions, while rabbis and Jewish scholars struggled to eke out a living. Jews developed a thriving subeconomy that created opportunities for employment within the immigrant community. They often hired other Jews, especially in the rapidly expanding garment industry that represented a crucial source of work for immigrants. Jews also engaged in a full range of other occupations, working as furriers, peddlers, cigar makers, shoemakers, and clerks. Jewish doctors and dentists managed successful practices with mostly Jewish clients, while many of the neighborhood groceries, restaurants, dry goods stores, butcher shops, bakeries, and pharmacies had Jewish proprietors. Purchasing goods and services from one another helped Jews to succeed, even when some non-Jews would not employ them.

The challenges of making ends meet often had to be negotiated with education and collective action. Families often labored over the decision to send their children to school because it meant the loss of wages. But despite a paternalism in public schools that generally did not value students' immigrant backgrounds, they offered immigrant children a place to be educated as well as the opportunity to learn the language and behaviors that would make possible their integration into their new home. In urban immigrant neighborhoods across the United States a constellation of aid organizations emerged to acclimatize and

Americanize new arrivals; poor living and working conditions resulted in new legislation; and immigrants themselves created mutual aid societies to strengthen and protect their communities. Unionization and political movements opened the door for immigrants, especially women, to learn about and express opinions about citizenship, American democracy, and the difficult conditions in which they lived. Such movements also constituted a social network of mutual aid and communal support.

Jewish immigrants formed burial societies, foundations for orphans and the destitute, and communal funds for education. Jewish immigrants formed civic associations such as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the Henry Street Settlement, and small-town associations known as *landsmanshaftn*, which brought together Jews from the same European town; these associations helped Jews feel less lonely in their new country, provided limited financial support, and helped them learn and grow as new Americans. Taking advantage of resources such as settlement houses, immigrant newspapers, and American sports, Jewish immigrants learned about American culture and developed ways to balance it with Judaism and Jewish identity. Some feared that Judaism would disappear in America and stressed that maintaining tradition was of the utmost importance, while others saw change as essential to Jewish survival.

### **How was a child's experience different from an adult's experience?**

Of the approximately two million Jews to immigrate to America at the turn of the nineteenth century, about one-third were children below the age of fourteen.

Often children immigrants adapted to their new home more quickly and with greater ease than their parents did. They often developed better English-language skills and helped their parents to communicate with local authorities and the government. School played a significant role in this disparity; while adults attended English language classes long enough to develop a basic level of English, they sent their children to public schools, where they rapidly learned fluent American English. Children who had to leave school while still young in order to work were aided by opportunities for informal education, especially from other children in the neighborhood, sports, and cinema.

# Appendix B — Supplementary Information for Talmud Page

## 01 JERUSALEM TALMUD, MOED KATAN 2:4

The Talmud, literally “study,” is a compilation of commentaries written over multiple generations that interpret and expand on the Mishnah, the first work of rabbinic law, published around the year 200 CE. The Talmud is about law but is not a code of law or a legal commentary on the Torah. Instead, it is a physical documentation of the intellectual debates among Rabbis during the first centuries of the Common Era and the inspiration for those that have taken place thereafter.

## 02 LEVITICUS 19:33–34

Leviticus (*Vayikra* in Hebrew) is the third book of the Torah and focuses on ritual law and practices. The nineteenth chapter of Leviticus is sometimes referred to as the Holiness Code because of the number of times the word “holy” appears in the text. It contains laws ranging from rules for agricultural practice (“you shall not crossbreed your livestock with different species,” Leviticus 19:19) to moral commands (“You shall not oppress your fellow. You shall not rob,” Leviticus 19:13).

The commandment to treat strangers well because the Israelites had themselves been strangers in Egypt is a repeated theme in the Torah. Exodus and Deuteronomy, the second and fifth books of the Torah and Hebrew Bible,

both contain similar commandments:

- “And you shall not mistreat a stranger, nor shall you oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 22:20)
- “And you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, since you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 23:9)
- “You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 10:19)

The experience of being foreign, being an outsider, has been central to Jewish life for thousands of years. Nevertheless, it’s noteworthy that in a text as old as the Torah, the commandment to welcome foreigners is repeated about thirty-five times, more than any other commandment. In modern times, the idea of being a stranger has held special relevance for Jews. As Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, the former chief rabbi of the United Kingdom, writes, “[T]o be a Jew is to be a stranger.”

## 03 THE NEW COLOSSUS

In 1883 Emma Lazarus donated her sonnet “The New Colossus” to an auction to benefit the construction of a pedestal for the Statue of Liberty. The poem, which was mounted on the statue sixteen years after Lazarus died at age thirty-eight, has since become the iconic literary representation of America as a haven for immigrants.

Emma Lazarus (1849–87) was born in the United States to a Sephardic family of means that had immigrated to America before the Revolutionary War. Educated at home, Lazarus

began writing poems as a young woman. In 1866 her father arranged for the private printing of poems and translations she had completed between ages fourteen and sixteen. Another volume published the following year, *Poems and Translations*, attracted the attention of poets and critics, including the writer Ralph Waldo Emerson. Growing up during the tumultuous Civil War era, Lazarus turned her attention to Jewish identity in her early thirties when she learned about the 1881 pogroms against Russian Jewry. In 1882 she published *Songs of a Semite*, her most famous full-length work. In it Lazarus celebrated Jewish resilience, focusing both on her own Jewishness and what she considered the best of her heritage.

As the United States prepared to commemorate its centennial in 1876, France gifted a neoclassical sculpture designed by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi and built by Gustave Eiffel. The statue represents the Roman goddess *Libertas*, or “Lady Liberty.” Officially called “Liberty Enlightening the World,” the statue, better known as the Statue of Liberty, has been beacon of freedom, especially to those who seek a new and better life in America. Asked to compose an original poem for an auction raising funds to construct a pedestal for France’s gift, Lazarus wrote “The New Colossus” in 1883. She used the opportunity to express the plight of refugee immigrants and America’s role in welcoming them to a new life in freedom. Despite its renown, “The New Colossus” did not become affixed to the Statue of Liberty’s pedestal until 1903, sixteen years after Lazarus passed away at age thirty-eight.

## 04 THE PROMISED LAND

As a young child, Mary Antin (1881–1949) emigrated with her family from Belarus to the United States. In 1912 she published *The Promised Land*, a first-person account of her life. The book begins with her 1891 travels from Europe to Boston, continues with her 1901 marriage to Amadeus William Grabau, a geologist, and her move to New York City, where she attended Teachers College of Columbia University and Barnard College. Much of the book recounts Antin’s experiences in the public school system and her feelings about marriage and identity.

When Mary Antin worked in New York’s public schools, public education was considered as a way of imparting American values and behaviors to the children of immigrants in the hope that they would become “productive and contributing” members of American society. For most Jewish immigrants, public school represented a path to education and social advancement. Despite their paternalism, public schools offered immigrant children a place to be educated as well as the opportunity to learn the language and behaviors that would make possible their integration into their new home.

\* This quote may invite a reflective discussion about public schools versus Jewish day schools.

## 05 THE GREAT RACE

Madison Grant (1865–1937) was a prominent American writer and pseudoscientist most well-known for his work as a eugenicist. Born in New York City and descended from some of the first American colonists, Grant attended Yale University and Columbia Law School. As a practicing lawyer, he maintained interests in

the natural sciences, considering himself an amateur anthropologist and zoologist.

In 1916, Grant wrote *The Passing of the Great Race*, one of the primary works of twentieth century “scientific” racism and a foundation of the field of eugenics. The book details European history through a racial lens, contrasting the “sub-races” of Europe as well as their traits and civilizations with other races. He emphasized the changing demographics of American immigration and warned that immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe would overrun the genetically superior “Nordic race” to corrupt American society.

Within his book and in politics, Grant actively advocated for immigration restrictions and anti-miscegenation laws. He served as vice president of the Immigration Restriction League until his death and provided statistics to set the quotas on immigrants from different European countries for the Immigration Act of 1924. As Grant’s ideas gained in popularity, he helped pass stricter state laws both against interracial marriage and encouraging sterilization of the “feebleminded” and criminals. His work would go on to be used and cited by the policy-makers of Nazi Germany, ultimately putting him out of favor with the American public after the war.

## **06 100 PERCENT AMERICAN**

Calvin Coolidge (1872–1933) became the thirtieth president of the United States after the sudden death of Warren G. Harding in 1923. Throughout his presidency (1923–29), Coolidge had a reputation for honesty and integrity. He prioritized cleaning up the corruption and scandals that afflicted Harding’s presidency and

ushered America through an age of social and technological change. Although the early years of Coolidge’s presidency helped restore the public’s faith in the federal government, his economic policies helped bring about the Great Depression.

In this 1925 speech to the American Legion, a veterans organization, Coolidge praised his audience’s service during World War I and acknowledged that “one of the most natural reactions during the war was intolerance.” At the same time he stressed that embracing difference was key to maintaining peace and America’s new position as a world power.

Despite the words of this speech and his reputation for tolerance, Coolidge oversaw a period of ongoing racial intolerance, lynching, xenophobia, and anti-immigrant legislation. During his presidency, nearly 120 African American men continued to be regularly lynched and the Ku Klux Klan played a leading role in shaping the politics of the 1924 presidential election. During the Great Mississippi River Flood of 1927, white communities were saved while thousands of black residents were displaced because their communities had been flooded to reduce pressure on the levees. Those displaced were forced to work in exchange for rations, overseen by the National Guard and area planters—which led to beatings, lynching, and rape. Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, who Coolidge eventually appointed to head the relief efforts, succeeded Coolidge in the White House by capitalizing on southern segregationists’ support for his flood management program.

Moreover, in the years following World War I, sweeping changes at home and abroad

produced multiple fears: of the unknown, of outsiders, and of moral decay. Such nativism and xenophobia helped encourage Congress to impose increasingly strict immigration quotas and pass laws targeting foreigners who spoke out against the war or the government. Coolidge signed the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act, which instituted the most stringent immigration quotas in US history, thereby ending the era of mass migration. The quotas favored Western European countries and severely limited immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe; these quotas remained on the books throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

### **Additional Text from President Coolidge's speech:**

We must not, in times of peace, permit ourselves to lose any part from this structure of patriotic unity. I make no plea for leniency toward those who are criminal or vicious, are open enemies of society and are not prepared to accept the true standards of our citizenship. By tolerance I do not mean indifference to evil. I mean respect for different kinds of good. Whether one traces his Americanism back three centuries to the Mayflower, or three years of the steerage, is not half so important as whether his Americanism of today is real and genuine. No matter by what various crafts we came here, we are all now in the same boat. You men constituted the crew of our "Ship of State" during her passage through the roughest waters. You made up the watch and held the danger posts when the storm was fiercest. You brought her safely and triumphantly into port. Out of that experience you have learned the lessons of discipline, tolerance, respect for authority, and regard for the basic manhood of your neighbor. You bore aloft a standard of

patriotic conduct and civic integrity to which all could repair. Such a standard, with a like common appeal, must be upheld just as firmly and unitedly now in time of peace. Among citizens honestly devoted to the maintenance of that standard there need be small concern about differences of individual opinion in other regards. Granting first the essentials of loyalty to our country and to our fundamental institutions, we may not only overlook but we may encourage differences of opinion as to other things. For differences of this kind will certainly be elements of strength rather than of weakness. They will give variety to our tastes and interests. They will broaden our vision, strengthen our understanding, encourage the true humanities, and enrich our whole mode and conception of life. I recognize the full and complete necessity of 100 per cent Americanism, but 100 per cent Americanism may be made up of many various elements.

If we are to have that harmony and tranquility, that union of spirit which is the foundation of real national genius and national progress, we must all realize that there are true Americans who did not happen to be born in our section of the country, who do not attend our place of religious worship, who are not of our racial stock, or who are not proficient in our language. If we are to create on this continent a free Republic and an enlightened civilization that will be capable of reflecting the true greatness and glory of mankind, it will be necessary to regard these differences as accidental and unessential. We shall have to look beyond the outward manifestations of race and creed. Divine Providence has not bestowed upon any race a monopoly of patriotism and character.



## 07 OF THE DAWN OF FREEDOM

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868–1963) was an activist, academic, author, sociologist, and journalist. Born and raised in Massachusetts, he graduated in 1888 from Fisk University, a black liberal arts college in Nashville, Tennessee. He went on to become, in 1895, the first African American to receive a PhD from Harvard University, which led to his appointment as professor of economics and sociology at Atlanta University. Du Bois is remembered as the founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and, between 1910 and 1934, served as its director of publicity and research, sat on its board of directors, and founded and edited its influential monthly magazine, *The Crisis*. Du Bois's 1899 book, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, was the first sociological examination of a black community in the United States and established Du Bois as the country's first great scholar of African American life.

An outspoken advocate for full civil rights and Pan-African unity, Du Bois used his position to protest lynching, Jim Crow laws, and economic and political discrimination. In his 1903 essay collection, *Souls of Black Folk*, he developed an intellectual argument for black liberation. He posited that African Americans exist in a state of exile, which results in a “double consciousness” that Du Bois defined as “this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” Du Bois

explored the idea of dual identity and exile from the vantage point of his own history of forced seizure and enslavement, but his description of dual identities would not have seemed unfamiliar to Jewish immigrants.

### Additional text from *Souls of Black Folk*:

The Nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land. Whatever of good may have come in these years of change, the shadow of a deep disappointment rests upon the Negro people,—a disappointment all the more bitter because the unattained ideal was unbounded save by the simple ignorance of a lowly people.

The first decade was merely a prolongation of the vain search for freedom, the boon that seemed ever barely to elude their grasp,—like a tantalizing will-o'-the-wisp, maddening and misleading the headless host. The holocaust of war, the terrors of the Ku-Klux Klan, the lies of carpet-baggers, the disorganization of industry, and the contradictory advice of friends and foes, left the bewildered serf with no new watchword beyond the old cry for freedom. As the time flew, however, he began to grasp a new idea. The ideal of liberty demanded for its attainment powerful means, and these the Fifteenth Amendment gave him. The ballot, which before he had looked upon as a visible sign of freedom, he now regarded as the chief means of gaining and perfecting the liberty with which war had partially endowed him. And why not? Had not votes made war and emancipated millions? Had not votes enfranchised the freedmen? Was anything impossible to a power that had done all this? A million black men started with renewed zeal to

vote themselves into the kingdom. So the decade flew away, the revolution of 1876 came, and left the half-free serf weary, wondering, but still inspired. Slowly but steadily, in the following years, a new vision began gradually to replace the dream of political power,—a powerful movement, the rise of another ideal to guide the unguided, another pillar of fire by night after a clouded day. It was the ideal of “book-learning”; the curiosity, born of compulsory ignorance, to know and test the power of the cabalistic letters of the white man, the longing to know. Here at last seemed to have been discovered the mountain path to Canaan; longer than the highway of Emancipation and law, steep and rugged, but straight, leading to heights high enough to overlook life....

The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea. It was a phase of this problem that caused the Civil War; and however much they who marched South and North in 1861 may have fixed on the technical points, of union and local autonomy as a shibboleth, all nevertheless knew, as we know, that the question of Negro slavery was the real cause of the conflict. Curious it was, too, how this deeper question ever forced itself to the surface despite effort and disclaimer. No sooner had Northern armies touched Southern soil than this old question, newly guised, sprang from the earth,—What shall be done with Negroes? Peremptory military commands this way and that, could not answer the query; the Emancipation Proclamation seemed but to broaden and intensify the difficulties; and the War Amendments made the Negro problems of to-day.

## 08 THEM AND US

See the full Ramos article here: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-et-jorge-ramos-immigration-20130604-dto-htmlstory.html>

Arriving from around the globe, speaking different languages, and following different traditions, immigrants have been the wellspring of America’s diversity and pluralism. Moreover, the experiences of migration and adaptation connect us, as individuals and a nation, to one another as well as to communities throughout the world. America’s opportunities did not come easily and immigrants faced a myriad of challenges on their pathway to social integration and financial sustainability, including poverty, cramped quarters, cultural and linguistic alienation, and difficult working conditions.

A major drama animating immigrants’ lives has been the negotiation between heritage and homeland. This dynamic has been a source of inspiration and innovation as well as vigorous, sometimes dramatic, debates over identity, religion, and culture. Jews adapted Judaism in ways that respected Jewish heritage and tradition and made it meaningful and relevant in an American environment. They made decisions based on the desire to preserve their heritage and integrate into the society in which they lived—a balancing act that immigrant and minority communities still face today.



# OPEN BOOK

Student  
Guide

## When Have You Been a “Stranger?”

Jewish Immigration to the United States



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