

Coming to America

In the early 1900s, many immigrants came by boat to the United States through New York City. This is a photograph of European immigrants from that time period. How do you think they felt when they arrived here? What do you think they said to each other when they saw New York for the first time?

Over the years, millions of immigrants have come to the United States from countries all over the world. They come here for different reasons. Work with your partner to make a list of reasons why people immigrate to the United States.



European immigrants arrive at Ellis Island, in New York Harbor, in 1907.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-30518.

What are some reasons that people immigrate to the United States today?



How About You?

Why did you come to the United States?

How did you feel when you first came here?

What surprised you most about the United States?

From the Old World to the New World

Over 500 years ago, people from Europe began coming to North America. They had different reasons for settling here. Some groups came for political freedom, so that they could govern themselves. Other people came for economic opportunities. They hoped to find gold or to trade tobacco and furs. Other groups, like the Pilgrims in Massachusetts, wanted to be free to practice their own religion.

In 1620, the Pilgrims came to North America from Europe. They were looking for a place to establish a colony and start their own church. At that time in Europe, rulers told people where to go to church and how to practice their religion. Life was difficult for people who had different religious beliefs from the rulers. Many were persecuted, or punished, for having different beliefs. In early America, the colonists had freedom of religion. Freedom of religion means that you can practice any religion, or not practice a religion. This idea of religious freedom continues to be an important value to Americans today.



The Pilgrims landing on Plymouth Rock, December 1620, a lithograph by Sarony and Major. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZC4-4311.

Reasons for Coming to America

- Political liberty
- Religious freedom
- Economic opportunity

Answer these Civics Test questions.

1. What is one reason colonists came to America? _____
2. What is freedom of religion? _____



Discuss these questions with your class.

Do people come to the United States today for the same reasons as the colonists?

Do people in your native country have the same kinds of freedoms?

American Indians

For thousands of years before Europeans arrived, there were many tribes of American Indians living in North America. These tribes had different languages, customs, and belief systems. Some tribes lived in villages and farmed the land for food. Other tribes moved often to hunt and gather food. Some tribes, such as the Navajo, Cherokee, and Iroquois, lived here at the time of the Pilgrims.

The Pilgrims settled in the northeast where the Wampanoag Tribe lived. The Wampanoag taught the Pilgrims important skills, including how to grow crops such as corn, beans, and squash. The first winter was very hard for the Pilgrims and

the Wampanoag helped them to survive. After the first harvest, the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag celebrated with a feast. Today, Americans celebrate this event on Thanksgiving every November.

Over the years, more Europeans immigrated to America and moved west. There was conflict between some American Indian tribes and the Europeans. The settlers defeated those tribes and took much of their land. The federal government signed treaties with the tribes and moved them to reservations. Today, there are more than 500 federally recognized tribes. Each tribe has its own social and political system with different languages, beliefs, stories, music, and foods.



*Indian camp on River Brule near Pine Ridge, South Dakota.
Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-pmsc-02508.*

Answer these Civics Test questions.

1. Who lived in America before the Europeans arrived? _____
2. Name one American Indian tribe in the United States. _____

Remembering Sacagawea



The Lewis and Clark expedition near the Columbia River in 1805. Illustration by Frederic Remington. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-50631.

Sacagawea was an American Indian woman who was born into the Shoshone Tribe in the Rocky Mountains around 1788. When she was 12 years old, another tribe captured her and made her work as a slave. A few years later, she met a French-Canadian fur trader and she became his wife.

In 1803, the United States bought the Louisiana Territory from France. This new land doubled the size of the country. President Thomas Jefferson decided to send two men, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, to explore from St. Louis, Missouri, to the Pacific Ocean. In October of 1804, Lewis and Clark met Sacagawea and her husband in North Dakota and hired them as

guides and interpreters. Sacagawea's knowledge of different American Indian languages and cultures was very helpful to the explorers. She helped them trade horses, and she made peace with the tribes they met along the route. She taught Lewis and Clark how to collect native foods and guided them through the mountains.

Because of Sacagawea's important contribution, she is remembered on a Golden Dollar coin.



The Sacagawea Golden Dollar coin. Courtesy of the U.S. Mint.

Review—Early America

In this lesson, you learned about different individuals and groups of people that were important in early American history. Write one sentence about each one. Compare your sentences with your classmates.

1. immigrants _____
 2. Europeans _____
 3. Pilgrims _____
 4. American Indians _____
 5. Wampanoag _____
 6. colonists _____
 7. Sacagawea _____
 8. President Thomas Jefferson _____
 9. Lewis and Clark _____
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Civics Test Questions

Read the test questions and write the answers. Take turns practicing them with your partner.

1. What is freedom of religion? _____
2. What is one reason colonists came to America? _____
3. Who lived in America before the Europeans arrived? _____
4. Name one American Indian tribe in the United States. _____