

U.s. responses to immigration



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Responses to Immigration. In chapter 10, Responses to Immigration: Exclusion, Restriction, and Americanization, 1880-1924, the author uses eight documents and two essays to demonstrate the prevalent, contrasting attitudes towards immigrants at the turn of the nineteenth century. A Protestant clergyman (309), Josiah Strong, warns of the multiple perils of allowing immigration, contending that the immigrants, with low morals, criminal tendencies, involvement in liquor traffic, and belief in Mormonism, Catholicism and Socialism, exert a negative influence on the natives. In the same vein, The Immigration Restriction League (310) accuses immigrants of increasing unemployment and of largely being paupers, criminals and illiterates, with isolationist tendencies. The document condemns “ the harm done by the foreign ideas and customs, imported into this country from the slums of Europe” (311). This is in marked contrast to Emma Lazarus's Poem at the Foot of the Statue of Liberty, which says, “ Give me your tired, your poor” (312). A German American immigrant attacks the false Americanism which is ruled by blatant materialism and “ looks with contempt upon other nationalities” (312). A Jewish playwright, Israel Zangwill, celebrates the fusion of all European races in “ the great Melting-Pot” of America (315). Theodore Roosevelt warns against the “ hyphenated American” (316) and advocates an “ Americanism” based on assimilation. Randolph Bourne Promotes Cultural Pluralism which preserves the unique identity of immigrants and yet forms a harmonious whole. The Governor of Iowa issues a Proclamation making English the medium of instruction in schools and the official language of public discourse. Stephen Meyer’s essay details the “ benevolent paternalism” employed by Henry Ford, using the carrot and stick approach, to inculcate typical American middle class values, work ethics and

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the discipline of the assembly line on immigrant industrial workers. On the other hand, John Higham's essay demonstrates the views of sociologists like Turner and Kallen, who advocate pluralism as opposed to assimilation. Here, there is a "celebration of differences" (336) and the belief that pluralism, and the preservation of unique cultures, enriches American democracy. The author shows that the responses to immigrants ranged across a wide spectrum and were largely concerned with the assimilation of immigrants into the cultural and political mainstream of American life.