

# The american expectation and immigrant response essay sample

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Immigrants often had a difficult and complicated experience when adjusting to life in America. Immigrant families had to find ways to adapt to American society. In some cases immigrants found it necessary to challenge American society. Immigrant ideals were challenged by American values that were pushed on them. Due to these as well as other hardships, immigrants from all walks of life living in America had a genuinely arduous task in adjusting to American life.

One of the many hardships immigrants had to overcome was that of appalling living conditions. They did not make enough wages to afford anything remotely close to comfortable living. However, as Jacob Riis states, this does not corrupt immigrants, however it “ is a powerful argument for the optimist’s belief that the world is, after all, growing better...” Immigrants use their poor living conditions not as an excuse but as a lightning rod for growth and expansion. They use it as a way to better themselves because they started from the bottom and are working their way up. This challenged American ideals because the majority of Americans did not think it was possible for people to cross social or economic boundaries. Americans also especially did not want the immigrant population to do so because Americans did not see immigrants as equals both socially and economically.

Along with the poor living conditions, another factor in the economic struggle for immigrants was the lack of steady and livable wages. Often times immigrants were forced to work the most difficult and dangerous jobs while making less than desirable wages. In a private letter written back to a relative in Europe, one immigrant wrote that “ if I don’t earn \$1. 50 a day, it would not be worth thinking about America...here in America one must work <https://assignbuster.com/the-american-expectation-and-immigrant-response-essay-sample/>

for three horses.” It was a difficult task for an immigrant to earn those types of wages. Stating that one had to work for three horses in America shows that the work they were forced into was backbreaking to the point that it felt like it was the work only three horses could handle properly. All of this culminates to the complete opposite of American ideology. America was supposed to be a land of opportunity and easy money. The immigrants were not included in either of these because they were outsiders in the country.

Perhaps the most shocking adaptation to American culture by immigrants was child labor in the 1900’s. Since it was rare for a male to make enough money to provide a living for his family, often times women and children were forced into work as well. For children, this meant working during the day and if possible, going to classes at night. This was detrimental to a child’s health in many ways. Besides the fact that children were working in factories with dangerous machinery, they were working long hours only to have to go to class at night. This meant very little sleep. A human body, especially a developing child, cannot function properly on such a small amount of sleep. This made it that much more dangerous to work because it was hard to focus on the task at hand due to the lack of sleep.

Some immigrants were not excited or anxious to adopt American lifestyles in their homes. Many times mothers would try to control the culturalization of their children. This could be done so in many ways. One way is making the children speak their native language at home. In doing so, this gives children a link to their heritage. Another way of keeping their children interested in

the past was by telling stories. Story telling encouraged children to think about where they came from and what it was like there.

Thankfully for immigrants there were people that wanted to help them adjust to American life. One such person is Jane Addams. In opening the Hull House she gave immigrants a place to gather unwind from all the hard work they had been doing. The Hull House made it a much easier task to adapt to American society in numerous ways. One way is by offering classes in English. One of the biggest issues with immigrants in the workforce is the language barrier. It was difficult to get one's ideas across to a boss or manager without being able to speak any significant English. There were also vocational classes offered.

With better job skills, one could hopefully raise his or her income by getting a better job. The Hull House offered children something they had never seen before, Chicago's first playground. It gave kids a place to enjoy themselves and gave them a safer environment to play. Perhaps the most important thing that the Hull House offered was a place for class connection.

Immigrants came to Hull House and could meet and talk to other immigrants in the same situations. In seeing that they weren't alone, it made them feel not as bad about their situation in America. They could relate to each other because they were all going through similar ordeals and feeling the same way about American life.

Life in America was a difficult thing for immigrants to grasp in the 1900's. It was an uphill battle in trying to assimilate and adapt to American norms and

values. There were many barriers standing in their way but with the help of others they were given a chance to break these barriers down.