

Apparts jacob riis



This document was written by Jacob A. Riis, an excerpt from his *How the Other Half Lives*. The author views that most people do not realize the tremendous amount of poverty surrounding them. They do not realize how the “other half” of the population; meaning the poor, manage to make it through a living. Riis wants to describe the living conditions of the lower class to create Americans an image of how the poor has many difficulties. Place and Time: Jacob Riis wrote this document in the late nineteenth century.

This was when immigrants, mostly from Southern and Eastern Europe, came in an abundance amount of number to American cities very rapidly.

However, Jacob Riis focuses mainly on New York City in this excerpt, for it was the major entry port for Europeans and possessed more foreign-born residents and more densely populated neighborhoods than any other U. S. city. Prior Knowledge: The first great wave of immigration began in the 1820s during a period in American history that witnessed expansion, innovation, and the beginning of a modern society.

The United States offered hope with the prospect of prosperity and security for many Europeans struggling with the post Napoleonic period. The arrival of so many immigrants created massive problems in Northern cities. The Five Points district in New York City spawned the cholera outbreak during the presidency of Andrew Jackson which led to stereotyping immigrants by middle class and wealthy Americans. Emerging slums further intensified sanitation concerns and produced irrational fears.

By the 1850s, strong nativist feelings led to the formation of the American party, often referred to as the " Know-Nothings. " Believing that low-wage earning immigrants would take away jobs and fearful of the perceived authoritarianism of Catholicism, Know-Nothings attempted to pass strict laws restricting immigrants. Both Irish and German immigrants helped forge the new nation precisely at a time when innovation, creativity, and labor were needed. Germans like Horace Mann in the 1830s and 1840s reformed American education.

Carl Schurz, a founder of the Republican Party and a refugee of the 1848 Revolutions in Europe, became a national leader, championing Abraham Lincoln, crusading for party reform after the Civil War, and strongly opposing American imperialism at the turn of the century. Audience: Jacob Riis' intended audience would most likely be anyone that is not aware of the living conditions of the lower class or poor people/immigrants/families; particularly the " half" of the people who were rich, though. Riis just wanted Americans to have a glimpse of life among the urban poor.

Reason: Jacob Riis, who became a crusader for the eradication of tenement slums, intended on describing the crowded conditions and the " cosmopolitan character of lower New York. " Riis wanted to provide numerous Americans their first glimpse of life among the urban poor. He wanted to show people how the lower classes manage to live in the horrible conditions that they are in. The Main Idea: The main idea was that American cities were vastly and rapidly being populated by immigrants, mostly from Southern and Eastern Europe.

However, the majority of these immigrants were living in poverty. They were residing in crowded conditions, not being able to support their family or themselves without any sort of income, food, or property. Being the "other half" that were poor; they did not get enough if any, attention from the "other half" that were either rich or classified as the upper class. In this excerpt, Jacob Riis acknowledges the living conditions of the poor; he sees how they get by with their daily lives.

He just wonders if they are all corrupted or not, and speedily, by their atrocious surroundings. He also believes however, that things cannot get any worse. He believes that the slums' sediment was going for a steadier growth.

Significance: I believe the significance of this document is how Jacob Riis acknowledges how the lower classes of immigrants in New York City live in their horrible conditions. He points out all the clear facts on how they live in poverty in such, but he also mentions how things could not really get any worse.

Most immigrants had absolutely nothing, so the only way they could go, was up. He pointed out that their sediment grew at a steady rate and that a German rag-picker, someone who was considered to be as low in the scale as his Italian successor, could be compared equally to a thrifty tradesman or prosperous farmer today. This shows that if any slum or person of a lower class had motivation to thrive and prosper, he or she could easily do so by steadily working up, or have the optimist's belief that the world is, after all, growing better, not worse.