Immigration in the United States

Native Americans

* Came from a land bridge from Siberia
* First explorers of continent
* Had many different groups

European Discovery

* Christopher Columbus in 1492
* Natives easily defeated by Columbus and later Spanish conquistadors
* Completely obliterated their population by force and diseases like smallpox
* 95% of the native population died
* Message of new land spread quickly in Europe

First Settlers

* First successful colony in 1607 in Jamestown, Virginia by English settlers
* After 1620: over tens of thousands of British, German, and Dutch immigrants
* Mostly British
* Escaping because of religious prosecution, more opportunities and wanting a new life
* Colonies like New Amsterdam (later New York City) starting to grow
* 90% of colonists became farmers
* Population count exploded because farmers needed helping hands
* Death rate low, because of wide open space villages 🡺 couldn’t spread

Slaves

* Tobacco as a very valuable crop
* British settled in the south for tobacco
* Needed workers 🡺 went to Africa to steal people and force them to work 🡺 slaves
* Hundreds of thousands of Africans were brought to the south and sold into slavery
* Brutally exploited, forced migration

Immigration after founding of the US

* Barely any immigrants till 1830
* After 1830 🡺 new wave of immigrants from England, Germany, and Ireland
* Attracted by cheap farmland because of western expansion
* Industrial revolution 🡺 many new opportunities/jobs
* Immigrants were male-dominated and were mainly 18 to 25 years old
* Irish 🡺 laborers who also built infrastructure
* Half of the Germans became farmers, others executed handcrafts
* Asian immigrants were simple laborers, that relied on random short time tasks and homes
* Population till 1850 rose over 20 million
* Each decade, the immigrant count tripled

Industrial revolution intensifies

* 1880 🡺 new steam-powered ships replaced sailing ships, making travelling faster and much cheaper 🡺 accessibility increased drastically
* 🡺 huge new wave of immigrants from Europe, especially from Italia, Poland, Greece, Sweden, Norway, Hungary, and Libya
* Many places to work, because of the industrial revolution, so people came in search of work
* US production made up for loss of workers in Europe while WWI

Anti-immigrant measures

* The US became quite densely populated
* Great Famine (1845-1849)
* Irish immigrants that came in masses were looked down upon
* 1850-1910 🡺 immigration wave
* Mass immigration was considered dangerous
* First anti-immigration law, the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882
* Forbid Chinese contract workers or criminals to be in the US
* 1921 🡺 Emergency Quota Act 🡺 Quota on accepted immigrants
* New immigrants more than halved in 1921 (from 800.000 to 310.000)
* 1924 🡺 even more strict quota and first border patrol 🡺 deportation of illegal immigrants
* Exceptions to this law were contract workers and refugees that fled from WW2

Latin-American immigrants

* Immigrants from Latin-America came to the US, mainly as low pay land workers
* Substituted the missing young men that were fighting in WW2
* 1942 🡺 Bracero program 🡺 workers were guaranteed fixed wage (20 cents an hour), protection and moderate living conditions
* A lot of illegal immigrants 🡺 Operation Wetback (1954), initiated by Herbert Brownell
* Many were killed and many normal US residents were deported because they couldn’t identify themselves
* Over 1 million Mexicans were deported

Current state

* 1965 🡺 Hart-Celler Act
* Removed quota
* Preference on immigrants with family in US or with jobs that are high demand
* Chinese Exclusion Act removed
* Didn’t fix the issue with illegal immigrants from Latin-America
* 1986 🡺 Ronald Reagan signs the Immigration Reform and Control Act, which allowed 2.7 million immigrants to enter the US
* 1990 🡺 Immigration Act signed by George H.W. Bush further loosened rules, so that 675.000 immigrants per year came from 1992-1994
* 20% of all immigrants in the world live in the US
* 47 million immigrants as of 2015