

## Student Handout: Immigration Primary Texts

### Chinese Immigrant Lew Chew Denounces Prejudice in America, 1882 (excerpt)

When I was ten years of age I worked on my father's farm, digging, hoeing, manuring, fathering and carrying the crop. We had no horses, as nobody under the rank of an official is allowed to have a horse in China, and horses do not work on farms there, which is the reason why the roads there are so bad. . . .

I worked on my father's farm till I was about sixteen years of age, when a man of our tribe came back from America and took ground as large as four city blocks and made a paradise of it. . . .

The man had gone away from our village a poor boy. Now he returned with unlimited wealth, which he had obtained in the country of the American wizards. After many amazing adventures he had become a merchant in a city called Mott Street, so it was said. . . .

The wealth of this man filled my mind with the idea that I, too, would like to go to the country of the wizards and gain some of their wealth, and after a long time my father consented, and gave me his blessing. . . .

[He] gave me \$100, and I went to Hong Kong with five other boys from our place and we got steerage passage on a steamer, paying \$50 each. . . . When I got to San Francisco, which was before the passage of the Exclusion act, I was half starved, because I was afraid to eat the provisions of the barbarians, but a few days' living in the Chinese quarter made me happy again. A man got me work as a house servant in an American family, and my start was the same as that of almost all the Chinese in this country. . . .

Men of other nationalities who are jealous of the Chinese, because he is a more faithful worker than one of their people, have raised such an outcry about Chinese cheap labor that they have shut him out of working on farms or in factories or building railroads or making streets or digging sewers. He cannot practice any trade. . . . So he opens a laundry. . . .

The treatment of the Chinese in this country is all wrong and mean. . . .

There is no reason for the prejudice against the Chinese. The cheap labor cry was always a falsehood. Their labor was never cheap, and it is not cheap now. . . . But the trouble is that the Chinese are such excellent and faithful workers that bosses will have no others when they can get them. . . .

It was the jealousy of laboring men of other nationalities . . . that raised all the outcry against the Chinese.

Irish fill the almshouses and prisons and orphan asylums, Italians are among the most dangerous of men, Jews are unclean and ignorant. Yet they are all let in, while Chinese, who are sober, or duly law abiding, clean, educated, and industrious, are shut out. . . . Many Chinese have become Christians, in spite of the persecution which they have to endure from their heathen countrymen. More than half the Chinese in this country would become citizens if allowed to do so, and would be patriotic Americans.

*From Chew, L. (1903). The biography of a Chinaman. In L. Bacon, J. P. Thompson, H. W. Beecher, R. S. Storrs, J. Leavitt, . . . C. A. Herte (Eds.), Independent, 55, 417–423. Public Domain.*

**Italian immigrant Rocco Corresca writes about American opportunity, 1902 (excerpt)**

Now and then I had heard things about America—that it was a far off country where everybody was rich and that Italians went there and made plenty of money, so that they could return to Italy and live in pleasure ever after. One day I met a young man who pulled out a handful of gold and told me he had made that in America in a few days.

I said I should like to go there, and he told me that if I went he would take care of me and see that I was safe. . . .

The young man took us to a big ship and got us work away down where the fires are. . . .  
Francisco and I were very sick from the great heat at first . . .

We were all landed on an island . . .

We came to Brooklyn to a wooden house in Adams Street that was full of Italians from Naples. Bartolo had a room on the third floor and there were fifteen men in the room . . .

There was a bootblack named Michael on the corner, and when I had time I helped him and learned the business. . . . and we were soon able to make the best polish.

[Rocco and his friend Francisco open up their own bootblack shop soon and are successful.]

We had said that when we saved \$1,000 each we would go back to Italy and buy a farm, but now that the time is coming we are so busy and making so much money that we think we will stay. . . .

At first we did not know much of this country, but by and by we learned. . . .

There are plenty of rich Italians here, men who a few years ago had nothing and now have so much money that they could not count all their dollars in a week. The richest ones go away from the other Italians and live with the Americans.

*From Corresca, R. (1902). Biography of a Bootblack. Independent, 54(2), 2863-2867.  
Public Domain.*

**Jane Addams: "Immigrants and Their Children," Twenty Years at Hull-House with Autobiographical Notes, 1911 (excerpt)**

One thing seemed clear in regard to entertaining immigrants; to preserve and keep whatever of value their past life contained and to bring them in contact with a better type of Americans. For several years, every Saturday evening the entire families of our Italian neighbors were our guests. These evenings were very popular during our first winters at Hull-House. Many educated Italians helped us, and the house became known as a place where Italians were welcome and where national holidays were observed. They come to us with their petty lawsuits, sad relics of the vendetta, with their incorrigible boys, with their hospital cases, with their aspirations for American clothes, and with their needs for an interpreter.

*From Addams, J. (1911). Chapter XI: Immigrants and their children. In Twenty Years at Hull-House: With Autobiographical Notes (pp. 231-232). Chicago: MacMillan Company. Public Domain.*

**Alzina Parsons Stevens, "Life in A Social Settlement—Hull House, Chicago," March 1899 (excerpt)**

There are now forty-seven evening classes meeting at the House weekly, twenty-five evening clubs for adults, seventeen afternoon clubs for children, the Hull-House Music School, a choral society for adults, a children's chorus, a children's sewing school, a training school for kindergartners, a trades union for young women.

In daily use are the nursery, the kindergarten, the playground, the penny provident bank, an employment bureau, a sub-station of the Chicago post office. A trained nurse reports to the house every morning and noon, to take charge of the sick-calls for the neighborhood; a kindergartner visits daily sick and crippled children. The coffeehouse serves an average of 250 meals daily, and furnishes noonday lunches to a number of women's clubs; soups and broths and wholesome food are bought by neighbors from its kitchen, and bread from its bakery, adorned with the label of the bakers' unions, goes out to the Lewis Institute, to grocery stores, to neighbors' tables.

*From Stevens, A. P. (1899). Life in a social settlement—Hull House, Chicago. In Self Culture, 9, 42-51. Public Domain.*

**Metropolitan Temple, *Chinese exclusion* (excerpt)**

**Featured in *For the Reenactment of the Chinese Exclusion Law: California's Memorial to the President and the Congress of the United States, 1902***

To quote the Imperial Chinese consul-general in San Francisco: "They work more cheaply than whites; they live more cheaply; they send their money out of the country to China; most of them have no intention of remaining in the United States, and they do not adopt American manners, but live in colonies, and not after the American fashion." . . .

Their practical status among us has been that of single men competing at low wages against not only men of our race, but men who have been brought up by our civilization to family life and civic duty. They pay little taxes; they support no institutions—neither school, church, nor theater; they persistently violate our laws and have tribunals of their own; they remain steadfastly, after all these years, a permanently foreign element. . . .

We respectfully represent that American labor should not be exposed to the destructive competition of aliens who do not, will not, and can not take up the burdens of American citizenship, whose presence is an economic blight and a patriotic danger.

*From Metropolitan Temple. (1901, November 21). Chinese exclusion. In For the Reenactment of the Chinese Exclusion Law: California's Memorial to the President and the Congress of the United States, Senate Document no. 191. 57th Cong., 1st Sess., 1902. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. Public Domain.*

**Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race* (excerpt), 1916**

[Note: It is important to be aware that in this excerpt, the term “native American” does not mean “Native American” (the race). Grant is referring to what he considers the current, 1916 standard of the typical United States citizen.]

These new immigrants were no longer exclusively members of the Nordic [blond hair, blue-eyed, white] race as were the earlier ones who came. . . . the new immigration, while it still included many strong elements from the north of Europe, contained a large and increasing number of the weak, the broken, and the mentally crippled of all races drawn from the lowest [levels] of the Mediterranean basin and the Balkans, together with [many] of the wretched, submerged populations of the Polish Ghettos [Jewish people from Poland].

these newcomers were welcomed and given a share in our land and prosperity. The American taxed himself to sanitize and educate these poor helots [uncultivated people] and as soon as they could speak English, encouraged, them to enter into the political life . . .

These immigrants adopt the language of the native American; they wear his clothes; they steal his name; and they are beginning to take his women, but they seldom adopt his religion or understand his ideals, and while he is being elbowed out of his own home the American looks calmly abroad and urges on others the suicidal ethics which are exterminating his own race. . . .

it is evident that in large sections of the country the native American will entirely disappear.

*From Grant, M. (1916). The passing of the great race: Or, the racial basis of European history. New York City: C. Scribner.  
Public Domain.*