

America, a nation of immigrants

In the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century it was easy to enter the USA. People came from all over the world, many of them arriving to escape poverty and persecution. In 1862 **The Homestead Act** offered free land in western areas of the USA. Immigration increased and reached its peak in 1907 with the arrival of 1,285,000 immigrants. The Ellis Island Immigration Station was the main entry point for immigrants. All new arrivals were interviewed on the island and given a medical examination. About 2% were denied admission and sent back to their own countries because of disease, a criminal background or insanity. For this reason the island was known as the 'The Isle of Hope and Tears'. Almost 50% of Americans can trace their family history to at least one person who passed through the port of New York at Ellis Island.

HISTORIC REASONS FOR MIGRATION

- ▶ **Germans** left their country (1815-1914) to escape poverty or persecution.
- ▶ **Italians** migrated to escape problems such as poverty, over-population and high taxation.
- ▶ The discovery of gold in California in 1848 attracted great numbers of **Chinese** people.
- ▶ Large numbers of **Irish** people fled from hunger and famine in the mid 19th century. Between 1844 and 1854 about 25% of the population migrated to the USA.
- ▶ **Jewish** people from **Poland**, **Finland** and **Lithuania** escaped unfair laws imposed by the Russian government.

Warm up

1 Write a list of the reasons why people migrate to other countries. Discuss your ideas with the class.

Reading

2 Read the page and write down the reasons for migrating to the USA from:

China	Ireland
Eastern Europe	Italy
Germany	Japan



'My mother had her trunk full of stuff, all our clothes, and a lot of food that my grandmother likes, all kinds of cheese... and sausage.'

Margaret Lehan, an Italian immigrant in 1911

- ▶ In Greece working conditions were so bad that one out of every four **Greek** men of working age moved to the USA.
- ▶ From the 1890s the **Japanese** also featured among the immigrants. They settled on farms in California.

3 Answer the questions.

- 1 What is The Homestead Act?
- 2 How many immigrants arrived to the USA in 1907?
- 3 Where did most of the immigrants in 2006 come from?
- 4 Where is Ellis Island? What was its nickname?
- 5 What happened there?
- 6 What is the American Dream?
- 7 Why did the Statue of Liberty become a symbol of the American Dream?