Push Factors in Immigration

By Patti Hutchison

"Remember, remember always that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionaries."- Franklin D. Roosevelt

Our nation was founded by immigrants from across the oceans. The U.S. is a "melting pot" of ethnic groups that have come together as American citizens. What factors have prompted people over the years to leave their homelands to come to America? Experts call them push-pull factors.

A person who decides to leave his homeland permanently is known as an emigrant. Once he enters another country, he is known as an immigrant. For example, an Irish man decides to go to live in the U.S. As he leaves Ireland, he is an emigrant. As he arrives in the U.S., he is an immigrant to this country. Push factors help people make the decision to emigrate. Pull factors help them decide to be an immigrant to a certain country.

Push factors are usually poor conditions in the homeland. These can be social, political, or economic factors. These drive people to leave the land they were born in.

Social push factors include lack of social mobility and job restrictions. For example, in the 1800's, Italians were restricted by social class. If you were born a peasant, you would always remain a peasant. No matter how hard you worked, there was no way to move up the social ladder. As a result, many Italians began to immigrate to the U.S.

Other social factors that make people decide to leave their homes include epidemics and starvation. There were widespread epidemics of cholera and malaria in Europe in the 1800's. The Irish potato famine in 1845 forced many Irish to leave their homeland.

Political factors that drive people from their mother country include persecution and government restrictions on citizens. The Jews were persecuted for many years in Europe, especially during World War II. Many decided to leave and find new homes in the U.S. and other countries. Communist governments in Europe and Asia placed many restrictions on the people there. Many people from Poland, Russia, and other countries decided to leave to find freedom.

Economic push factors of immigration include poverty, overpopulation, and lack of jobs. These conditions were widespread in Europe during the 1800's. As a result, many Irish, Italians, and Germans decided to go live in the U.S.

Social, political, and economic push factors cause citizens to be disappointed with life in the countries they were born in. Because of these factors, many left their homelands in search of a better life somewhere else. Many chose the U.S., making this country a "nation of immigrants."

The picture shows an Irish peasant family unable to pay rent because of failure of potato crop due to blight finding shelter in a hedgerow the day after eviction from their cottage. From <u>The Illustrated London News</u> *December 1848.*

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Questions

_____ 1. A person who decides to leave his homeland to live in another country is called:

      A. a migrant worker
      B. an emigrant
      C. an immigrant

_____ 2. Push factors are usually:

      A. poor conditions in the homeland
      B. factors that help people decide where to move to
      C. favorable conditions in the homeland

3. Name two social push factors.

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_____ 4. What push factor prompted many Irish to leave their country in the 1840's?

      A. lack of social mobility
      B. a potato famine
      C. political persecution

5. Why did Jews emigrate from Europe?

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6. Name two economic push factors:

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Which push factor might cause you to leave your homeland? Write a paragraph explaining your answer.

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Write a paragraph explaining the meaning of the quote by F.D.R. at the beginning of the article.

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