

CHAPTER  
**7**  
Section 1

## PRIMARY SOURCE Artifacts from Ellis Island

*Ellis Island was the chief immigration station in the United States from 1892 to 1954. What impressions of Ellis Island do you get from these artifacts?*

### Literacy Test Card, 1919

Class No. 3 Serial Number **5698** Polish

Bądźcie postuszni przewodnikom swoim, i ulegajcie im; albowiem oni czuwają nad duszami waszemi, jako mający zdać sprawę, aby to z radością czynili, a nie wzdychając; bo dla was to niepożyteczne.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

(Hebrews 13:17)

Ellis Island Literacy card—Polish. By courtesy of the Ellis Island Immigration Museum.

Immigrants 16 years and older had to pass a literacy test in order to enter the United States. They were required to read a 40-word passage from the Bible in their native language.

### Immigrant's Telegram, 1912

THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY  
25,000 OFFICES IN AMERICA. CABLE SERVICE TO ALL THE WORLD.

RECEIVED AT \_\_\_\_\_ 1912  
DATED: Str Hoboken N.J. 11  
TO: M Goldfusz  
116 1/2 Ludlow St

Arrived steamer Morden  
met me Ellis Island  
immediately Freide Goldfusz

Ellis Island telegram. By courtesy of the Ellis Island Immigration Museum.

Freide Goldfusz traveled alone to America to join her husband Morris. She was not allowed to leave Ellis Island until immigration officials knew she was in safe hands. This is the telegram she sent to her relatives in New Jersey.

### Detention Card, 1899

Form 100  
United States Immigration Service  
ELLIS ISLAND, NEW YORK HARBOR

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DETENTION CARD.

Name: Freide Goldfusz

Vessel: St. Patrick

Date: Oct 27 1899 M.

CAUSE OF DETENTION.

No ticket to Kansas

Registry Clerk.

JAN. FEB. MARCH. APRIL. MAY. JUNE. JULY. AUG. SEPT. OCT. NOV. DEC.

Ellis Island Detention card National Archives

Immigrants who failed inspection received detention cards like this one and remained temporarily at Ellis Island. Inspectors recorded the reason why some immigrants were detained, including a lack of money or health problems.

### Activity Options (At least 5!)

- Working with a group of classmates, draw up a list of questions you would like to ask an immigrant like Freide Goldfusz who passed through Ellis Island.
- With your class, create a list of questions for your community and immigrant history in the United States. Choose one person from the list and invite him or her to speak to your class about immigration. Afterward, compare the questions with those of immigrants you have read about.
- Write a poem about immigration from the point of view of Freide Goldfusz or another immigrant detained at Ellis Island. Share your poem with classmates.

## CHAPTER

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## Section 2

PRIMARY SOURCE *from How the Other Half Lives*  
by Jacob Riis

*Jacob Riis, a Danish immigrant, worked for 12 years on the Lower East Side as a police reporter for the New York Tribune. In 1890 he published How the Other Half Lives, a shocking glimpse of slum life. What sights, sounds, and smells does Riis include in this description of a New York tenement?*

Be a little careful, please! The hall is dark and you might stumble over the children pitching pennies back there. Not that it would hurt them; kicks and cuffs are their daily diet. They have little else. Here where the hall turns and dives into utter darkness is a step, and another, another. A flight of stairs. You can feel your way, if you cannot see it. Close? Yes! What would you have? All the fresh air that ever enters these stairs comes from the hall door that is forever slamming, and from the windows of dark bedrooms that in turn receive from the stairs their sole supply of the elements God meant to be free, but man deals out with such niggardly hand. That was a woman filling her pail by the hydrant you just bumped against. The sinks are in the hallway, that all the tenants may have access—and all be poisoned alike by their summer stench. Hear the pump squeak! It is the lullaby of tenement house babes. In summer, when a thousand thirsty throats pant for a cooling drink in this block, it is worked in vain. But the saloon, whose open door you passed in the hall, is always there. The smell of it has followed you up. Here is a door. Listen! That short hacking cough, that tiny, helpless wail—what do they mean? They mean that the soiled bow of white [a sign of a recent birth] you saw on the door downstairs will have another story to tell—Oh! a sadly familiar story—before the day is at an end. The child is dying with measles. With half a chance it might have lived; but it had none. That dark bedroom killed it.

"It was took all of a suddint," says the mother, smoothing the throbbing little body with trembling hands. There is no unkindness in the rough voice of the man in the jumper, who sits by the window grimly smoking a clay pipe, with the little life ebbing out in his sight, bitter as his words sound: "Hush, Mary! If we cannot keep the baby, need we complain—such as we?"

Such as we! What if the words ring in your ears as we grope our way up the stairs and down from floor to floor, listening to the sounds behind the

closed doors—some of quarrelling, some of coarse songs, more of profanity. They are true. When the summer heats come with their suffering they have meaning more terrible than words can tell. Come over here. Step carefully over this baby—it is a baby, spite of its rags and dirt—under these iron bridges called fire escapes, but loaded down, despite the incessant watchfulness of the firemen, with broken household goods, with washtubs and barrels, over which no man could climb from a fire. This gap between dingy brick walls is the yard. That strip of smoke-colored sky up there is the heaven of these people. Do you wonder the name does not attract them to the churches? That baby's parents live in the rear tenement here. She is at least as clean as the steps we are now climbing. There are plenty of houses with half a hundred such in. The tenement is much like the one in front we just left, only fouler, closer, darker—we will not say more cheerless. The word is a mockery. A hundred thousand people lived in rear tenements in New York last year. Here is a room neater than the rest. The woman, a stout matron with hard lines of care in her face, is at the washtub. "I try to keep the childer clean," she says, apologetically, but with a hopeless glance around. The spice of hot soapsuds is added to the air already tainted with the smell of boiling cabbage, of rags and uncleanness all about.

*from Jacob Riis, How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), 32–34.*

### Discussion Questions

1. What urban problems discussed in your textbook does Riis touch upon in this passage?
2. How would you describe the effect of poverty on children?
3. List three sights, sounds, and smells that in your opinion Riis used most effectively to evoke the reality of slum life.

# William Marcy "Boss" Tweed

## *Corrupt Boss of the Political Machine*

## Section 3

*"There is not in the history of villainy a parallel for the gigantic crime against property conspired [to] by the Tammany Ring."—Henry G. Stebbins, report of the Committee of Seventy that investigated the Tweed Ring (1871)*

William Marcy Tweed was the most spectacular example of the corrupt boss of the urban political machine of the 1800s. Rising from obscurity to control New York City in a time of its great growth, Tweed and his friends raked in a fortune. Then their empire quickly collapsed.

Tweed (1823–1878) was born in New York. He became a bookkeeper and seemed ready for modest success. After becoming chief of a volunteer fire company, he turned to politics, running for alderman as a Democrat. Knowing that he would probably lose the election to the Whig candidate, he persuaded a friend to run as an independent Whig. By splitting that party's vote, Tweed won the election.

Tweed took over New York's Democratic Party, called Tammany Hall after its headquarters. Soon he was elected to the board of supervisors. Despite having no legal training, he opened a law office in 1860. One client paid him \$100,000 in one year alone, knowing that his so-called legal advice would prove useful. Winning the election of friends to various city posts, "Boss" Tweed built his power. In 1861 his candidate defeated a rival for mayor. The campaign cost Tweed \$100,000—but he made the money back quickly.

Soon thereafter Tweed was the head of several New York politicians, a corrupt group—known as a "ring"—that took over control of city finances. They cheated the government out of millions of dollars.

In 1868, the ring controlled the mayor of New York City, the speaker of the state assembly, and the state's governor. In 1869, the ring decided that all bills sent to New York City and the county would be doubled, with the extra money going into their pockets. Later the share was increased even more.

Because the city did not enjoy complete free-

dom from state control, Tweed had a new city charter written. It appeared to simplify city government, thus winning the support of many prominent New Yorkers as a useful reform. Its real purpose, though, was to increase Tammany control over the city government. Tweed got the state legislature to pass the charter.

By authorizing the building of the Brooklyn Bridge, Tweed collected \$40,000 in stock. The millions received from the fraudulent scheme to build the county courthouse was split five ways. Four parts went to Tweed and three friends. The final share was used to distribute among lesser politicians.

In 1870, the press began a campaign against the Tweed Ring. *Harper's Weekly*, led by cartoonist Thomas Nast, was first. It was followed by the *New York Times*. The next year, two Democratic opponents of the ring gave the *Times* official records that showed widespread corruption. The ring offered the newspaper \$5 million not to publish the evidence—and another \$500,000 to Nast to stop drawing his cartoons. But they went ahead, and New Yorkers rose in anger. An investigating committee condemned Tweed and his partners, who were then arrested. Tweed spent his last eight years in and out of court and prison. He died in jail at age 55.

### Questions

1. What was Tweed's first political "dirty trick"?
2. What was the secret to Tweed's success as long as it lasted?
3. The evidence offered to the *New York Times* in 1871 included pages from the city's account books. Why would they be damaging to the ring?

CHAPTER  
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## Section 2

PRIMARY SOURCE *from Twenty Years at Hull-House*  
by Jane Addams

*On September 18, 1889, social reformers Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr moved into Hull-House, a dilapidated mansion in the midst of the Chicago slums. As you read this excerpt, think about why they undertook this social experiment.*

In those early days we were often asked why we had come to live on Halsted Street when we could afford to live somewhere else. I remember one man who used to shake his head and say it was "the strangest thing he had met in his experience," but who was finally convinced that it was "not strange but natural." In time it came to seem natural to all of us that the Settlement should be there. If it is natural to feed the hungry and care for the sick, it is certainly natural to give pleasure to the young, comfort to the aged, and to minister to the deep-seated craving for social intercourse that all men feel. Whoever does it is rewarded by something which, if not gratitude, is at least spontaneous and vital and lacks that irksome sense of obligation with which a substantial benefit is too often acknowledged. . . .

From the first it seemed understood that we were ready to perform the humblest neighborhood services. We were asked to wash the newborn babies, and to prepare the dead for burial, to nurse the sick, and to "mind the children."

Occasionally these neighborly offices unexpectedly uncovered ugly human traits. For six weeks after an operation we kept in one of our three bedrooms a forlorn little baby who, because he was born with a cleft palate, was most unwelcome even to his mother, and we were horrified when he died of neglect a week after he was returned to his home; a little Italian bride of fifteen sought shelter with us one November evening, to escape her husband who had beaten her every night for a week when he returned home from work, because she had lost her wedding ring. . . .

We were also early impressed with the curious isolation of many of the immigrants; an Italian woman once expressed her pleasure in the red roses that she saw at one of our receptions in surprise that they had been "brought so fresh all the way from Italy." She would not believe for an instant that they had been grown in America. She said that she had lived in Chicago for six years and had never seen any roses, whereas in Italy she had seen them every summer in

great profusion. During all that time, of course, the woman had lived within ten blocks of a florist's window; she had not been more than a five-cent car ride away from the public parks; but she had never dreamed of faring forth for herself, and no one had taken her. Her conception of America had been the untidy street in which she lived and had made her long struggle to adapt herself to American ways.

But in spite of some untoward experiences, we were constantly impressed with the uniform kindness and courtesy we received. Perhaps these first days laid the simple human foundations which are certainly essential for continuous living among the poor: first, genuine preference for residence in an industrial quarter to any other part of the city, because it is interesting and makes the human appeal; and second, the conviction, in the words of Canon Barnett [the founder of the first settlement house, Toynbee Hall, in London] that the things which make men alike are finer and better than the things that keep them apart, and that these basic likenesses, if they are properly accentuated, easily transcend the less essential differences of race, language, creed, and tradition.

Perhaps even in those first days we made a beginning toward that object which was afterwards stated in our charter: "To provide a center for a higher civic and social life; to institute and maintain educational and philanthropic enterprises; and to investigate and improve the conditions in the industrial districts of Chicago."

*from Jane Addams, Twenty Years at Hull-House (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 65-66.*

1. What reasons does Addams give for establishing Hull house?
2. Where was Hull house located?
3. What was Addams constantly 'impressed' by?
4. Why did Addams establish her settlement house in the industrial part of the city?
5. What was the overall goal of Hull house?