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"Migration"

Communities and Lifestyles - Checkpoint 42, ed. by Gill Stacey (Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1991), p. 4.



Migration

I don't know what possessed them 1
 To leave family, home and the familiar
 And cross thousands of miles.
 It couldn't have been just money.
 Perhaps they longed to see a 5
 Different corner of the world.
 Couldn't have found a country more
 Different.
 They never intended to stay.
 For long. 10
 But as the next generation
 Make them grandparents
 Roots are setting down.
 The dreams of retiring 'back home'
 Become fragments. 15
 They've started to bury
 Them here now,
 In foreign soil,
 The adventurers.

Explanation

1 to possess (v.): to influence s.o. so completely as to make them do s.th.

COMPREHENSION

- 1 Why, according to the poem, might people leave their homes to go to live in a foreign country?
- 2 Which reason is rejected?

LANGUAGE PRACTICE

- 3 Translate "It couldn't have been just money" (l. 4) and "Couldn't have found a country more different" (ll. 7f.) into your own language. Which concepts (■ p. 124) do the two sentences express?

ANALYSIS

- 4 What is the attitude in this poem towards immigrants? Give reasons for your answer.
- 5 Although this is a very short poem, it can be divided into sections. Where would you make the divisions? Why?

OPINION

- 6 Why, in your view, do "the dreams of retiring 'back home' / Become fragments" (ll. 14f.)?
- 7 Would you ever consider emigrating to another country? If not, give your reasons. If your answer is 'yes', under what circumstances and to which country?

PROJECT

- 8 Imagine that you and your family live in a Third World country. Because of the political and economic situation in your country some of your family members want to emigrate to Europe, some do not. In groups of four or five, collect arguments for and against emigration, then act out a family discussion in front of the class.

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"Immigration into Britain: Past and Present"

In order to understand better the problems arising from immigration, it is necessary to be in possession of the facts about it. In the following you will find some rather surprising information about the people who have emigrated to Britain at various times.



Britannia and her children – today

AWARENESS

- 1 Look at the picture of "Britannia and her Children" (1907) on p. 17 and compare it with "Britannia and her Children – today" above. You'll find some similarities as well as some differences. What are they?
- 2 What are the reasons for the differences?

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Past

http://www.cre.gov.uk/ethdiv/ed_immigrants.html

If we go back far enough, we can say that everyone who lives in Britain today has origins somewhere else. Many of us can probably trace the immigrants in our own family histories.

Some may have been among the various invading armies – Roman, Saxon, Viking or Norman. Others had little choice about coming: Africans were brought to Britain by force in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as slaves or servants; and thousands of people arrived at various times as refugees from France, Ireland, Russia, and other countries, escaping from persecution or famine in their own countries.

Most people probably came because they thought they could make a better life for themselves here. Before 1914, when the First World War broke out, there were fewer restrictions and it was possible to travel to many countries without passports, visas or work permits. People could just decide to make a new life somewhere else, provided they had enough money for the passage. Often they were encouraged by the monarch or government because immigration was a way of dealing with local shortages of capital, skills or labour.

At any one time, newcomers have only been a tiny proportion of the British population. Even today, only about 7% of the population were not born in Britain. Newcomers have often met hostility and resentment, yet even a quick study would show that they have brought skills and qualifications, set up businesses and created jobs, not only for themselves but also for local people.

Many have been willing to do jobs that have been difficult to fill locally. What is remarkable and often not understood is that the contributions immigrants and their immediate descendants have made, and continue to make, to Britain are out of all proportion to their numbers.

In 1066, for example, a small community of French Jews were encouraged by William I to bring their capital and financial skills to Britain. At its peak the community was only 5,000 strong or around 0.025% of the population, but it became an indispensable source of finance for king and commoner alike. At the time, canon law forbade Christians from lending money at interest, and Jews were not allowed to do any other work, leaving money-lending as the only profession they could enter – and to them being the founders of banking and financial services in Britain.

From the fourteenth century, Flemish and French weavers, German mining engineers, Dutch canal builders, printers, brewers and brick-makers brought new manufacturing skills and techniques at a time when wool was Britain's only major export.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Protestant refugees from France and the Low Countries played a revolutionary role in manufacturing, silk weaving, science and banking.

The Irish who fled in their thousands from rural poverty and famine between the 1830s and 1850s helped to build much of the infrastructure of an industrial society in Britain, doing jobs that local people often did not want, in mines and docks, and building canals, roads, railways, and factories.