

UNIT 3 : Changes in Patterns of Migration c.1500 to the present day

What were the experiences of and responses to the various groups of emigrants?

THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD : c.1500-1700s

The experiences of emigrants from the UK have varied, depending on the time and place to which they went. **While British and colonial governments encouraged emigration** and painted a rosy picture of the new life, **native peoples often fought colonists** e.g. the American Indian tribes or the aborigines in Australia, while established populations also often resented new arrivals.

The early settlers in America

In the early modern era the **first groups of settlers in the American colonies had mixed experiences**. The very earliest settlers had a hard time. The first settlers at Roanoke in the 1580s disappeared without trace and the Jamestown colony only survived after resorting to cannibalism.

The Puritans who followed in the early 17th century were better prepared. The **Pilgrim Fathers**, having **survived the first winter** and with help from the local Indians, **began to build their colony**. Their success was built on hard work and cooperation and they were able to practice their religion freely, which was the reason for them emigrating. By the mid 17th century, as well as the original Plymouth Colony there were also others at, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Maine. These colonies were soon thriving, with their wealth based on fishing, shipbuilding, trade and farming.

Though the Pilgrim Fathers had needed the help of the local Indians when they first arrived, **relations with the Indians were not always good**. As the colonies expanded there were wars against the Pequots and Wampanoags, which the colonists won. The Quakers had much better relations with the Indians. Generally the emigrants of the later 17th and 18th centuries thrived. (though indentured servants and transported criminals would probably not have shared these positive experiences.)

WELSH EXAMPLE : - During the war with the Wampanoags the Welsh settlement at Swansea in Massachusetts colony was destroyed and some of its inhabitants killed. However, the later "Welsh Hills" settlement in Ohio had better relations with the local tribes, including a chief called "Big Jo" who often visited the settlement.

INDUSTRIAL PERIOD : c.1800s

During the industrial era there was an **increase in emigration from Britain**, with some groups being more welcome than others.

- Many migrants e.g. Welsh steelworkers, miners and slate quarrymen were **welcome in places like the USA and Australia**. They took with them **the skills that these nations needed** to develop their industries. They often headed to places where their countrymen had settled in earlier centuries e.g. the Welsh settlements in Ohio and Pennsylvania which made the act of emigration a bit easier
- The huge influx of **Irish in the east coast cities of the USA** in the 1840s and 50s were made to feel **less welcome**. They were **disliked for being Catholic** and were **blamed for reducing wages and for causing disease**. They were associated with drunkenness and violence, which they understandably resented. **NINA signs** (No Irish need apply) were often to be seen in factory and shop windows. As a result the Irish tended to keep together and protect themselves through organisations like the Molly Maguires, which fought to get better rights for Irish workers. However, the Irish arrived at a time when America was expanding westwards, so **they found plenty of work in industries** like steel and coal and helped build America's railway network. By the end of the century, largely as a result of the work they had done in building America, they were accepted in society
- Though the British government encouraged emigration to the colonies, **British emigrants** in many parts of the Empire experienced **opposition from native peoples** e.g. the Maori in New Zealand and Zulus in South Africa whose lands they were attempting to colonise. The Indian mutiny 1857 also showed that the British were not always welcomed as rulers.

WELSH EXAMPLE : Welsh workers who went abroad in the 19th century were much in demand, not only because of the skills they took with them, but because they were sober, hard-working and literate. In the USA and Australia they were also able, for a time, to continue using the Welsh language and culture.

The early colonists in Patagonia also found a welcome. The Argentine government was happy for them to settle in the area and the colonists received help from the Tehuelche Indians, with whom they had good relations. In spite of a difficult start the colony developed, using the Welsh language and culture as intended.

MODERN PERIOD : c.1900s-present day

Emigration in the 20th century

During the **20th century** emigrants have **generally had better experiences**. They have left mainly for **countries that have been long settled** and where **English was the dominant language** e.g. Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

Those who left Wales (and other depressed areas of the UK) during the Depression were able to find work in the wealthier areas of England. There was some resentment, with accusations of newcomers taking jobs from local people, but nothing serious.

The post-war period

After 1945 the **governments of Commonwealth countries** like Australia and Canada **encouraged emigration**. They **provided assisted passage schemes** e.g. "£10 Poms" in order to increase the number of skilled workers. Though **new migrants** to Australia **have experienced some resentment** from locals – "whingeing Poms" – the common language and culture has made it generally easy for them to assimilate.

Though British people continue to emigrate, **more recently it has become more difficult** as countries like Australia and Canada now use **a points-based system** to assess potential immigrants.

WELSH EXAMPLE : As in the 19th century skilled Welsh workers who emigrated in the 20th century were generally welcomed because of the contribution that they would make to their new home.

The success achieved by Welsh emigrants e.g. in music and film in the USA or the fact that Australia has had two prime ministers of Welsh descent, indicates that Welsh emigrants have not had much difficulty in integrating in their adopted countries.