

Coming to the U.S.A.



Somali refugee camp

When civil war broke out in Somalia, these sisters left their home and came to the United States.

The Ibrahim sisters-Nimo and Fadumo-came to the United States in 2000. They were born in Somalia, a country in Africa. While they were still very young, civil war and famine came to Somalia. More than a million Somalis were in danger of starving. They had to escape.

Fadumo was 5 years old when her family left Somalia. "I remember the house we used to live in, and how we used to cook, and how it was so different than here," says Fadumo.

When they fled their home country, the Ibrahim family had nowhere to go, nowhere to turn. They were **refugees**. For many years they didn't have a home. They lived in camps in Africa. But thanks to the International Rescue Committee, they were able to move to Boston, Massachusetts. Nimo and her sister went to high school in Boston. Their father got a job, and their mother was taking care of two new babies. They made a brand-new start.

It wasn't easy. Nimo said that fitting in to her new home and learning a new language were

difficult at first. "There are a lot of nice people, and there are a lot of cruel people," she said. "It took me two years to get used to everything and everyone."

There were many good things, as well. Fadumo said she liked "the mix of different kinds of religion and culture" in Boston.

When they were in high school, both Nimo and Fadumo wanted to become doctors and go back to Somalia to try to help people.

"I miss my grandmother and my family in Somalia," said Nimo.

Vocabulary: *refugees* (re-fyoo-JEES) people who leave their country to escape danger

Immigration

by ReadWorks



The United States of America has long been the world's chief receiving nation for immigrants. An immigrant is a person who leaves his or her country to settle and live in another country. Over the years, many millions of people have uprooted and left family and friends to move to America. Some felt forced to leave because they feared for their lives due to dangers present in their home countries. For example, many immigrants left countries that were at war or that didn't give them the freedom to practice their faith. Immigrants also left their native lands if they couldn't find work or enough food to live. Whatever the reason, immigrants usually have had to sacrifice a life that is familiar for one that is unknown.

The United States was founded by immigrants. From the 1600s through 1775, European colonists settled in the land that is now the United States. Most of these immigrants were from England. Others arrived from France, Germany, Ireland, Scotland, and Spain. Many of these colonists came here looking for economic opportunity. They wanted better land to farm or better work. Others came to escape religious persecution. Some were even convicts brought over from English jails.

Since the United States was established in the late 1700s, it has seen three waves of immigration. The first wave of American immigration took place from 1820 to 1870. Over

seven million people made the voyage to America, mostly from northern and western Europe. About a third of these immigrants were Irish people trying to escape a famine that plagued Ireland in the mid-1840s. Another third of the immigrants from this wave were German. The Chinese also began to immigrate to America during this time. They got word of the Gold Rush in California. They came to work in the mines and get rich.

This flood of immigrants wasn't always welcome by those already in America. Some feared these newcomers would take away their jobs. Others didn't like the politics, customs, and/or religions the new immigrants brought with them. For example, many Irish people were discriminated against for being Roman Catholic. The Chinese also suffered greatly from discrimination.

The next wave of U.S. immigration was by far the greatest. It started in 1881 and ended in 1920. Over 23 million people immigrated to the United States during this period, most of whom came from southern and eastern Europe. But by this time, anti-immigration sentiments had become so strong that a growing number of people demanded laws to make it harder for foreigners to become American citizens. In 1875, Congress passed its first immigration law intended to limit immigration. It kept people who were viewed as undesirable out, including convicts. In 1882, Congress also passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. It prohibited Chinese workers from coming to the United States. A few years later, other laws were passed. One required adult immigrants to have literacy skills. Another limited the number of immigrants from countries outside the Western Hemisphere. However, one of the greatest blows to immigration was the Great Depression of the 1930s. Immigration sharply declined. In fact, there were more people leaving America than coming to America during this time.

The third wave of immigration began in 1965 and continues today. Most immigrants in this wave have come from Asian countries as well as South American countries, Caribbean countries, and Mexico. A large number of these immigrants have settled in the East and Midwest. However, many others have moved to California.

Most immigrants have come to America with the hope of building a better life. However, they were sometimes met with hatred by the people already living in the country who feared the economic and cultural impacts of these newcomers. While this discrimination and the economic downfall of the Great Depression had a negative effect on immigration, American immigration has managed to survive.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Use the article "Immigration" to answer questions 1 to 2.

1. Most immigrants came to America for a better life. What were these immigrants' home countries like?

2. Why were immigrants not always welcomed by people who were already in America?

Use the article "Coming to the U.S.A." to answer questions 3 to 4.

3. What came to Somalia that forced the Ibrahim family to escape the country?

4. Why hasn't it been easy for the Ibrahims to start their new lives in Boston?

Use the articles "Coming to the U.S.A." and "Immigration" to answer questions 5 to 6.

5. What are some struggles that immigrants or refugees face in their home countries that cause them to come to America? Use at least one example from each text to support your answer.

6. What are some struggles that newcomers might face in America? Use at least one example from each text to support your answer.
