

LESSON 3



# The Peopling of the United States

## *How have different groups contributed to the United States?*

### Introduction

The United States is a nation with many different places and features, like mountains and rivers. But the United States is much more than the geography of the land. A nation, like the United States, is a place where people live together under one government.

People who live in the United States are very different from one another. Look around your school. Do your fellow students look the same way or eat the same types of foods? Do they all speak the same language at school or at home? Do their families all share the same way of life? For many schools, the answer is, “No.”

The United States is a nation where people from many different backgrounds live together. These people come from many parts of the world. They come to the United States for many reasons.

In this lesson, you will learn about people from five parts of the world who came to our country. You will learn about how and why these different people first came to America, and you will see how each group has contributed to our country in a special way.

- ◀ America has many different types of people in it. Some may speak different languages or live a different way of life.

### Social Studies Vocabulary

the Americas

colony

culture

democracy

diverse

immigrant



Geography



History

## 1. The First Americans Arrive

Archaeologists agree that the first Americans arrived long ago. But they have different ideas about exactly how and when people came to North America.

For many years, most scientists believed that the first people in **the Americas** came from the continent of Asia about 11,500 years ago.

At that time, Earth's climate was much colder than it is today. Much of Earth's surface was covered with ice. This long cold period is known as the ice age. During the ice age, snow piled up that created huge sheets of ice called glaciers. Because so much water was in the form of ice, the level of the oceans went down. A narrow strip of seawater between Asia and North America disappeared. This left a bridge of land between the two continents.

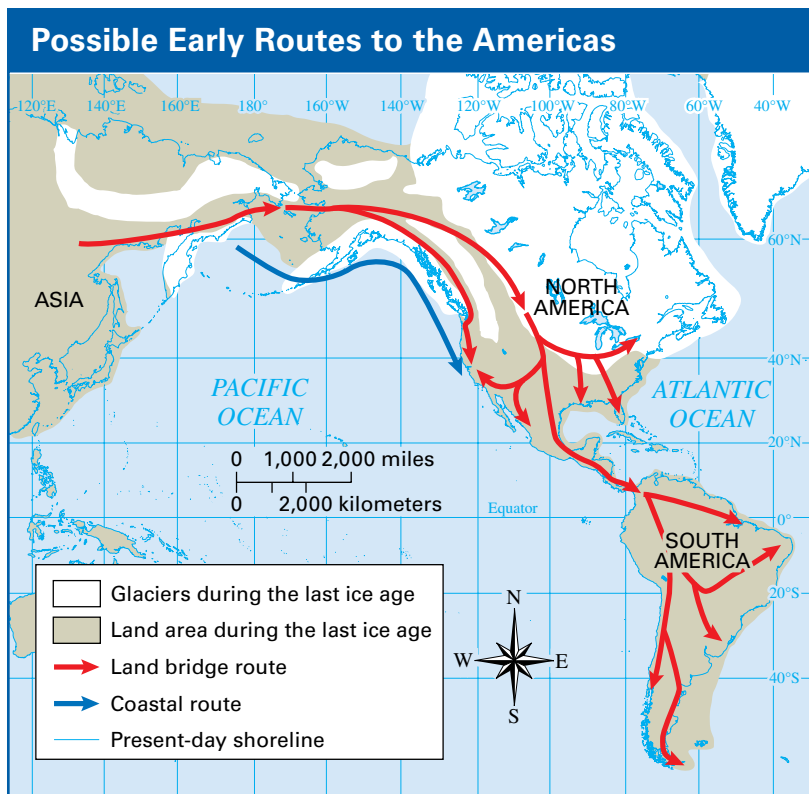
Scientists believed that herds of animals wandered onto this land bridge, looking for food. Hunters from Asia may have followed them and crossed the land bridge to North America. Years later, the seawater once again covered up the land bridge.

More recent discoveries have led some scientists to think that people may have arrived in the Americas even earlier. About 12,500 years ago, people with boats may have moved along the Pacific coast of Alaska and northwestern Canada and then south.

Over time, people spread throughout North and South America. American Indians are the *descendants* of these first Americans. A descendant is someone who is related to a particular person or group from the past.

**the Americas** the landmasses and islands of North America and South America

Many scientists believe that early American Indians crossed a land bridge into North America. Other people believe that they came by boats from Asia.



## 2. Contributions of American Indians

American Indians are a **diverse** people, with many different tribes and languages. They have affected American life in many ways. One important contribution has been that their **cultures**, or ways of life, respect nature. Native peoples did not harm the environment as much as people in other nations around the world.

American Indians also gave names to many of the places in our country, including major rivers, such as the Mississippi River. We still use many of these names today. Some of our states, such as Iowa and Minnesota, have American Indian names as well.

You may be able to see other contributions in your kitchen at home. American Indians were the first to grow many of the foods we eat today. One of the most popular foods they grew was corn. In the different areas where they settled, American Indians also grew fruits and vegetables like beans and squash.

There are many other contributions that American Indians have made to American life. Before the United States was created, a group of American Indian tribes worked closely together, separating power between a central government and each individual tribe. When the United States was formed, our early leaders were influenced by these American Indian tribes. You can research contributions that American Indians have made in the United States.



American Indians lived in tribes. Each tribe developed its own language and customs.

**diverse** made up of different groups of people  
**culture** a way of life shared by a group of people



### 3. The Spanish Settle the Americas

In 1492, an explorer named Christopher Columbus set sail west across the Atlantic Ocean believing that he would reach Asia. Instead, he landed on a Caribbean island.

Columbus returned to Spain, but he left some men behind to start a **colony** for Spain. More Spanish people followed Columbus's route to the Americas. These Spaniards began colonies on islands in the Caribbean Sea and in North and South America, often near where American Indians lived.

One of the largest Spanish colonies was in Mexico. From Mexico, settlers moved into what is now the United States. They built towns, churches, and forts in the areas we know as Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, and Florida.

Today, Mexico, all the countries to its south, and the many islands in the Gulf of Mexico are called Latin America. Most people who were born in Latin America or whose *ancestors* were born there are called Latinos. An ancestor is a relative from a past generation.

Some Latinos have lived in the United States for many years, while others have just arrived. Many have come from Mexico, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.

**colony** a settlement that is ruled by another country

Spanish colonies spread north from South America through parts of the United States. They built towns, churches, and forts throughout this area.



## 4. The Contributions of Latinos

Latinos have made many contributions to American life. In 1848, there were many experienced miners in Chile. When a sawmill worker discovered gold in California, thousands of people, including many miners from Chile, went to California hoping to become rich. Wealthy Americans hired many people from Chile to dig tunnels to help them mine for gold.

Another contribution is that many Latinos have helped other Americans turn the dry Southwest into a rich farming region. Many crops, such as oranges, that are grown in this region today were first brought by Spanish settlers to Mexico and then from Mexico to the United States.

You may have seen another contribution on television: the cowboy. Cowboys came to the United States from Mexico—even the cows, which originally came from Spain. Mexican settlers brought cattle to the Southwest and built cattle ranches. And they introduced the Mexican cowboy, called a *vaquero* (vah-KEHR-oh).

Americans learned how to be cowboys from Mexican vaqueros. Their wide-brimmed cowboy hats came from Mexican *sombreros*. Their high-heeled cowboy boots came from Mexican *botas*. Mexican vaqueros taught Americans how to use *la reata*, or the lariat, to rope their cattle.

There are many other contributions that Latinos have made to American life. Many cities and towns in the West and Southwest have been heavily influenced by Latinos. Some cities are named using Spanish words. Others places have buildings, called *haciendas*, that are similar to those built by the people from Spain. What other contributions have Latinos made to American life?



Mexican vaqueros, or cowboys, wear large-brimmed hats to protect them from the sun. Americans created the cowboy hat based on this type of hat.

Some people came to America so they could freely practice their religion. These pilgrims from England settled in what is now Massachusetts.



## 5. More Europeans Come to America

The Spanish were the first Europeans to colonize North America, but other Europeans soon followed. The French started a colony in Canada. Russians began a colony in Alaska. Dutch settlers built a colony in what is now New York.

Settlers from England began colonies on the eastern shore of North America. Between 1607 and 1733, the English built 13 colonies in America. These colonies hugged the Atlantic Coast from Maine to Georgia.

The 13 English colonies attracted settlers from many parts of Europe. Many of these people were poor and came to find land or work. Others were searching for freedom to follow their religion or to gain wealth. All hoped to start new lives in a new land.

In 1776, the 13 English colonies broke away from England. Together, they formed a new nation called the United States of America.

The new nation continued to welcome immigrants from Europe. An **immigrant** is a person who comes from some other place to live in a country. European Americans are immigrants from Europe or descendants of European immigrants.

At first, most of the immigrants came from western Europe. Later, others came from eastern and southern Europe. Each group added to America's diversity, or mix of peoples.

**immigrant** someone who comes from another place to live in a country

## 6. The Contributions of European Americans

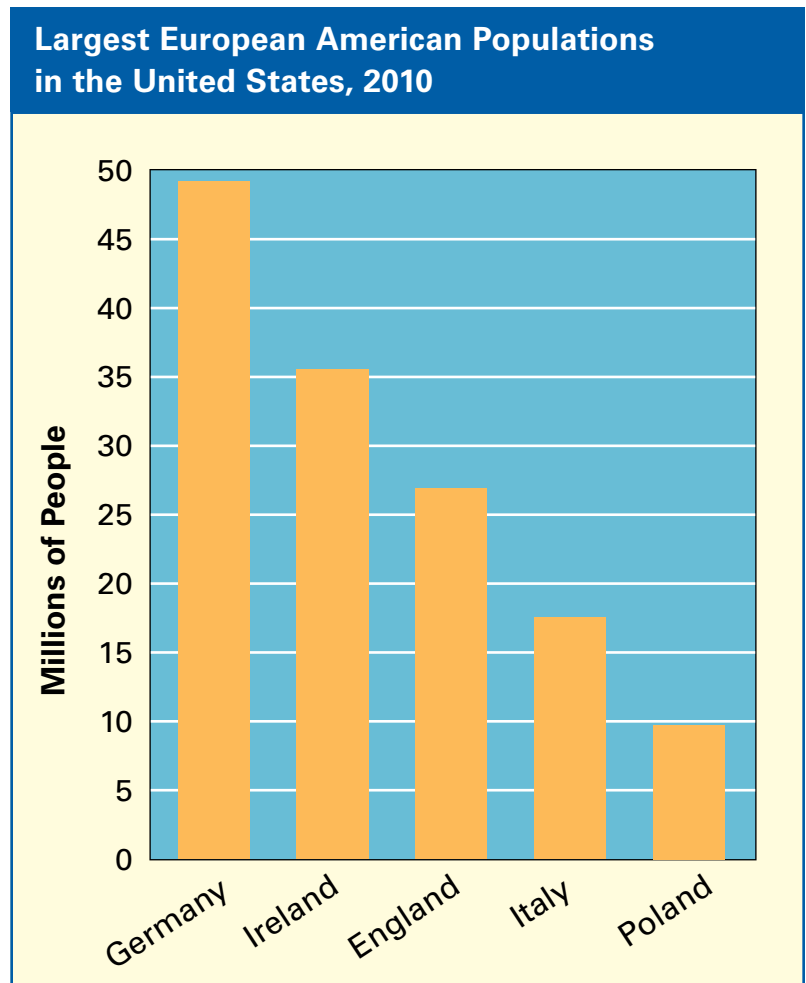
European Americans have played a large part in shaping American life. One significant contribution is the English language. Americans speak English today in part because so many English colonists settled in the English colonies. By contrast, few French colonists settled in Canada. When the British won the French and Indian War in 1763, it meant that English became the primary language spoken in the North American colonies.

European Americans also contributed to the creation of the American government. They brought ideas of **democracy**, which has its roots in the governments of ancient Greece and Rome. The colonists from Europe eventually tired of being told what to do by an English king. They wanted to govern, or rule, themselves. The colonists decided to fight for their freedom. The king of England did not want to give American colonists this freedom. He sent troops to America to keep the colonies under his control. The war they fought is known as the American Revolution.

There are many other contributions that European Americans have made to American life. A number of European Americans were also inventors. Their inventions included the telephone, the radio, and electric lights. These inventions have shaped the way Americans live today. What other contributions have European Americans made to American life?

**democracy** a form of government in which people vote for their leaders

European Americans come from many countries. Each group brings different languages, customs, and foods to the United States.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey



## 7. Africans Arrive in America

In 1619, a ship arrived in the colony of Virginia. The ship's captain traded 20 Africans, taken from their homes in Africa by force, for food. Within a few decades, more people brought from Africa were forced to be slaves. A slave is a person who is owned by another person.

In 1619, the practice of buying and selling people was common in much of the world. In Africa, for example, people who were captured in raids were often sold as slaves.

For almost 250 years, traders used force to bring hundreds of thousands of Africans to this country. Most Africans were sold as slaves. They worked on farms raising tobacco, rice, and cotton. For this work, slaves received no pay. Slave owners viewed their slaves as property, rather than as people who worked for them. They often treated the slaves very harshly.

Slavery became part of life in the American South. But outside the South, fewer people owned slaves and others opposed slavery. The fight over slavery finally led to the American Civil War in 1861. When the war ended in 1865, the practice of slavery was stopped. But the struggle by African Americans to be treated like other Americans was just beginning.

Most African Americans that were forced into slavery lived in the southern states. But other states had slaves as well.



## 8. The Contributions of African Americans

African Americans have made many contributions to American life. In many African countries, telling stories is often an honored art. African slaves brought that art to America. We can enjoy many of these stories today in books, plays, and poetry.



Another very important contribution has been the fight for equal rights. Rights are freedoms that belong to all people. The American Civil War ended slavery in 1865, but it did not end *prejudice* against African Americans. Prejudice is the use of skin color, cultural background, or religion to form an unfair opinion about other people.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was one of the leaders of the movement for equal rights in the 1960s. He helped bring equal rights for African Americans in the United States.

Because of prejudice, whites often denied African Americans the same rights that whites enjoyed. In some states, white people made laws to keep African Americans separate from them in restaurants and in schools. The rules to keep the two groups separate were unfair to African Americans. Separate meant, in effect, not equal.

African Americans fought long and hard for equal rights. Some Americans were killed in that struggle. Others were sent to jail. Laws were finally passed to end the unfair treatment.

Today, all Americans—no matter what their skin color—are equal under the law. We all have equal rights because African Americans refused to accept anything less.

There are many other contributions that African Americans have made to American life. In the South, the blues, a type of music, was created by African Americans who were facing injustice. Today, blues has inspired many other types of music such as jazz, rock ‘n’ roll, and country music. African Americans have also created music like hip hop, rap, and some types of gospel music. What other contributions have African Americans made to American life?

Many people from China came to the United States to find gold. Some of these people chose to stay and live here.



## 9. Asians Come to America

People from Asia came to America for many different reasons. In 1848, after the discovery of gold in California, many Chinese immigrants traveled to the United States. Not all Americans welcomed the Chinese gold-seekers. But many admired how hard they worked.

Other people from Asia came to America for work. As Americans moved west in the late 1800s, they had big dreams. They wanted railroads to cross the country. They wanted to build new farms and factories. But to make these dreams come true, Americans needed workers. So the word went out across Asia: send workers!

Between 1850 and 1882, many Chinese came to the United States to work. Some saved their money and later returned to China. But others stayed in the United States for good.

Immigrants also came from Japan, Korea, and the Philippines. Some immigrants went to Hawaii to work in the sugar fields. Others worked on farms and in factories on the West Coast. One Japanese immigrant wrote this poem about going to the United States:

Huge dreams of fortune  
Go with me to foreign lands  
Across the ocean.

Instead of finding fortune, however, most of the Asian immigrants found hard lives. They worked long hours for little pay. Their bosses often treated them roughly. Still, most of the immigrants stayed in their adopted land, as Asian Americans.

## 10. The Contributions of Asian Americans

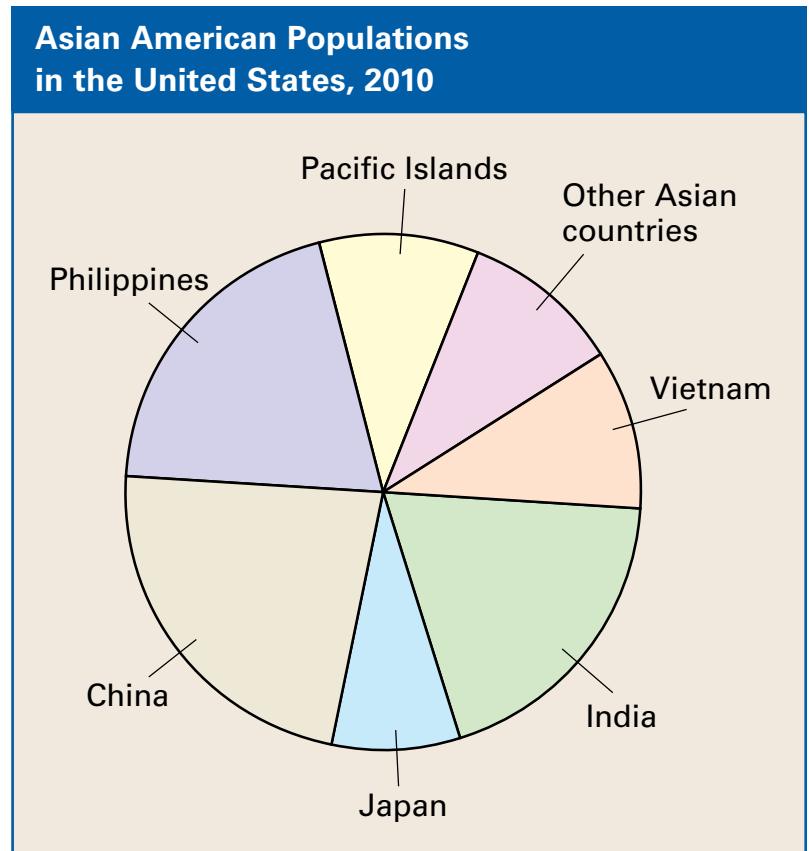
Asian Americans form one of the most diverse groups in the United States. Today, this group includes people from many different countries in Asia, like China, Japan, the Philippines, North Korea and South Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, India, as well as the countries of the Pacific Islands.

Asian Americans have made many contributions to American life. When immigrants from countries in China first came to this country, some were treated very poorly. Many were forced to live in parts of a city that were unsafe. They worked together to rebuild these sections of town and turned them into places, often called Chinatowns, that people from all over the world can visit and enjoy today.

The diverse groups of immigrants that came from Asia brought new foods to the United States. They also brought new ways of cooking. As a result, today Americans enjoy many kinds of Asian foods, such as sushi and stir-fried dishes. Asian cooking has also blended with many other types of American food to create new and delicious combinations.

There are many other contributions that Asian Americans have made to American life. Today, many immigrants from Asia come to the United States to study. Once they are done with school, many choose to stay and help their fellow Americans research and create new ways to make the lives of all Americans better. What other contributions have Asian Americans made to American life?

Asian Americans come from many different countries. Each group brings new things, like different kinds of food, to the United States.



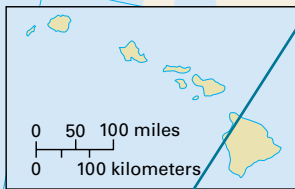
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010



Chinatowns, like the one in San Francisco, California, can be found all across the United States.



Inventions, like the light bulb, radio, and phone, were created by European Americans.



PACIFIC OCEAN  
120°W

ATLANTIC OCEAN

Gulf of Mexico  
0 150 300 miles  
0 150 300 kilometers



The Spanish built missions like this one across the Southwest. Missions are churches and surrounding settlements.



American Indians grew corn in the Americas. Corn is now one of the major goods grown in the Midwest.



Musicians first played the African American style of music we call jazz in New Orleans. Jazz music is still popular today.



These people have something in common. They are all Americans.

## Lesson Summary

Sooner or later, you will hear someone describe the United States as a nation of immigrants. It's true. We all came to this land from some other place. Some made the journey thousands of years ago. Others arrived just yesterday.

Each group came for its own reasons. Ancestors of American Indians may have followed the animals they hunted to a new land. The Spanish were looking for a route to Asia. The English came seeking freedom and opportunity. Other Europeans were fleeing war and hunger. The first Africans were brought to America against their will. Asians originally crossed the ocean to find gold and work.

Immigrants are still traveling to America. Most of these new immigrants come from countries in Latin America and Asia. But people also come from many other parts of the world.

The contributions of each group of people have changed and strengthened the United States. Without any one group and its contributions, the United States would not be as richly varied as it is today.

# Settling in Your State

You just read about the diverse backgrounds of the people in the United States. Your state is probably diverse. Some people may have recently arrived from other countries. Others may have lived here all their lives, but their grandparents or great-grandparents arrived from another part of the world. So, why do people live in your state?

People from other parts of the world bring their culture with them. Does your state have restaurants that serve Chinese, Indian, or Mexican food? Those recipes came from other countries. Different cultures affect other parts of your state, too. For instance, if you live in Colorado, the name of your state comes from Spain. Spanish explorers saw red rocks by a river and named the river *Colorado*, which means “the color red.”

People move to states for many different reasons at different times in history. For example, in the mid-1800s, Colorado attracted thousands of gold-seekers after gold and silver were discovered. Today, people come for jobs in

oil and gas production or to live by the Rocky Mountains.

Do research and find out why people have moved to your state. Start by writing questions, such as: Did people come for certain kinds of jobs? Is the scenery or climate a big attraction? Make a list of questions you want to answer.

Many people settled in Colorado during the mid-1800s once gold and silver were discovered. This is just one of many reasons people settled in this state.



GREGORY GOLD DIGGINGS, COLORADO, MAY, 1859.



## Move Here!

There are many places to find answers to your questions. You can interview a neighbor or family members. Or you can go to a library and read diaries by people who moved there. Remember that these sources will give you just one person's point of view. For other viewpoints, you can look at Web sites about your state and in history books. Take notes like the ones shown here.

Now prepare a sales pitch to encourage someone to move to your state. Construct an argument that gives reasons why your state is a great place to live. Start with the question: Why should you move to my state? Write strong statements to persuade people. Do research for facts that will support your statements. For example, if people move there for jobs in a certain field, find out how many people got jobs in that field last year. If mild weather is important, list the average number of sunny days or the average temperatures each season. If your state has fun things to do, find exciting photographs to share. These are all ways to back up your argument with supporting evidence. Make posters that help you make your point. Present your sales pitch to your classmates.

Once you have found answers to your questions, prepare a sales pitch. Include information about why people moved to your state.

Why People Moved to Colorado	
Jobs: Mining, ranching, hotels and ski resorts	
Climate: Warm summers and snowy winters	
Scenery: Rocky Mountains	
Recreation: Skiing in winter	





# New York City: Layers of the Past

Walk down any block in New York, and you will see people from many backgrounds passing by. The same thing has been true for hundreds of years. How have different groups of people made New York City what it is today?

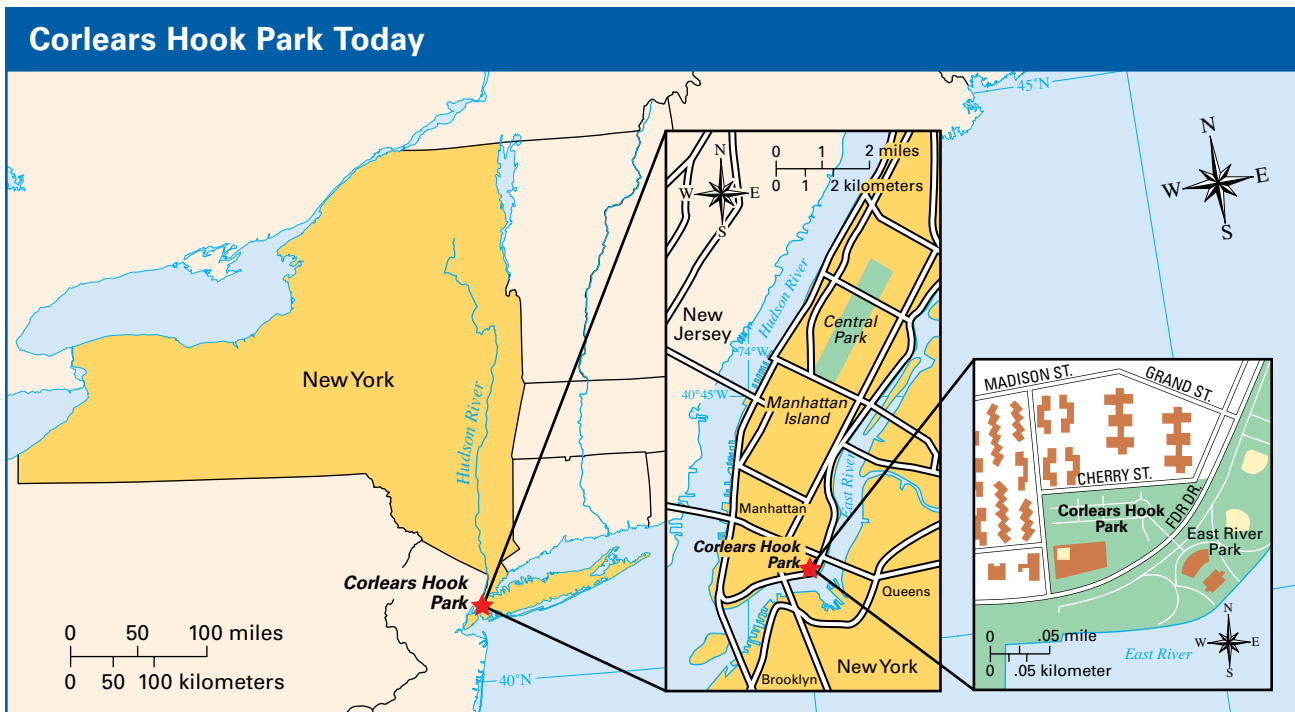
Welcome to Corlears Hook Park located in the Lower East Side, a neighborhood in New York City. There are children laughing and running in the park today. Listen and you can hear them speak in Spanish and Chinese, as well as English, as they play.

About 100 years ago, on this very same spot, children also played. Those children spoke Dutch, English, French, German, and Yiddish.

Some 300 years before that, the children here were American Indians from the Lenape tribe. The children helped their parents to fish, grow crops, or trap animals.

Stand in Corlears Hook Park today, and you stand on layers and layers of American history. Each group of people that lived in this place has left its mark. How did they shape the New York City of today?

Corlears Hook Park is in New York City, which is in the state of New York. People of all different backgrounds live around this park.





The Lenapes met Henry Hudson and his crew of twenty men. The crew of *Half Moon* wanted to trade for furs that the Lenape had.

## A Meeting of Three Worlds

Manhattan Island, now a part of New York City, was first settled by American Indians more than 10,000 years ago. Thousands of Lenapes lived on the island they called Manahatta, “the hilly island.” They fished, grew crops, and trapped animals such as beavers. Those beavers would eventually change life on Manahatta forever.

In 1609, the Dutch ship *Half Moon*, captained by Henry Hudson, sailed into the harbor of Manahatta. The Dutch were looking for places to settle and for people to trade with. They especially wanted furs. And the Lenapes had lots of furs.

A few years later, a free black sailor named Juan Rodriguez, who worked with the Dutch, sailed to Manahatta. It was his job to trade Dutch furs with American Indians. He was the first man who wasn’t an American Indian to live on Manhattan Island.

In 1624, a Dutch fur company sent 30 families to start a colony. Their settlement at the tip of Manhattan Island was named New Amsterdam. The Dutch made changes to the island as they built their new town. They cut down trees, laid out streets, and built homes.

As more and more people arrived, three worlds came together. First were the American Indians, and then the Dutch. Later, people came from France, Ireland, Great Britain, and other European countries. Africans were part of the story, too. In 1644, a visitor to New Amsterdam said that he heard 18 different languages spoken on the streets! It was a diverse town even then.

Tenement apartments were often very crowded. Since there was very little space inside, people had to do many things outside.



### Waves of Immigrants Come to New York

Since the 1600s, when the Dutch first settled there, New York City has attracted immigrants by the millions. In 1664, the English took over New Amsterdam and renamed the city New York.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, most immigrants to the United States came from Europe by ship. They traveled past the Statue of Liberty into New York Harbor and landed at Ellis Island. In the year 1907, more than 1 million new Americans came through Ellis Island.

Many immigrants settled on the Lower East Side. The neighborhood around Corlears Hook was crowded with families that had come from Italy and Russia and other parts of Europe. Everyone—even children—worked hard to start a new life in their new country.

Many immigrant families lived in **tenements**. Sometimes, twenty families or more lived in one tenement. Each floor had several small apartments and often only one bathroom. The apartments did not have much fresh air or good light. Rats and cockroaches added to the poor living conditions.

The Confino family lived in a tenement located at 97 Orchard Street. Ten people lived in their small apartment. Like other families, the Confinos brought their traditions with them. They practiced Judaism. They ate foods like those they had eaten in Greece. They also brought their dreams to the United States. In time, they became Americans.

**tenement** a four- to six-story building with many small apartments





People celebrate the Feast of San Gennaro in Little Italy. For eleven days each year they honor Italian traditions.

## New York City Today

The Lower East Side is still crowded. It is still a place where many new Americans first arrive. And it is still a place where you can see signs of the past. An Italian bakery or a Jewish delicatessen reminds New Yorkers of the Lower East Side that the Confinos knew.

Today, you hear different languages on the streets. In Little Italy, you once heard Italian everywhere. Now, you are more likely to hear Chinese or Spanish as you walk through the neighborhood. In fact, New York City's Chinatown is the largest Chinatown in the United States.

The Lower East Side celebrates its history all year long. It has been home to a mix of people since Juan Rodrigues first arrived. People in all groups that have come to New York City have changed the place in some way. ♦



In Chinatown, dragons dance in the street. People come from many places to welcome the Chinese New Year.