

# EPISODE 7: CITIES

## INTRODUCTION

Between 1880 and 1930, nearly 24 million new immigrants arrive in the United States. Many go to work building a new frontier: the modern city. The high cost of land in cities like New York and Chicago means the only way to build is up. A new kind of building, the skyscraper, is made possible by steel. Produced on a massive scale, steel production underpins the infrastructure of the modern city.

This new urban frontier depends on the labor of rural migrants and newly arrived immigrant workers to grow. For many, the Statue of Liberty is their first sight of the New World and Ellis Island is the gateway to the American Dream. The lawless city offers opportunities for many and astronomical wealth for a few. Police chief Thomas Byrnes uses his harsh new innovation "the third degree," to keep a lid on crime.

The millions flocking to urban areas of the U.S. often experience terrible conditions in disease-ridden tenements. Jacob Riis, photographer and reformer, brings their plight to the world with his groundbreaking photographs in the book "How the Other Half Lives." Workers in new high-rise factories become urban martyrs in New York City's Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire in March of 1911, as the city struggles to make these new buildings safe. Powered by steel and electricity, the city begins to be tamed and defined by mass transportation, stunning skylines, electric light...and the industrious American spirit.

1. Can you name any skyscrapers? Which skyscrapers have you been in or seen in person?
2. What do you think new immigrants to America picture before they arrive? What do you think they actually see when they arrive?
3. Where do most immigrants want to live when they arrive in America? Why?
4. What types of jobs do immigrants coming to America look for and get when they arrive here?