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| **Leaving Home for the "Promised Land", 1894****I**n 1894 Mary Antin was a thirteen-year-old Jewish girl living with her family in the "Jewish Pale" of the Russian Empire. Jews within the Empire were required to live in this area that stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and encompassed portions of the present-day states of Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. Conditions were harsh and the population poverty-stricken. Mary and her family lived on the edge of starvation in the town of Polotzk north of Minsk in the modern state of Belarus.Mary's father had immigrated to Boston in 1892 in search of a better life. A year and a half after his departure, the family received a letter from him that contained tickets that would transport them to America – to what Mary described as the "Promised Land." Mary kept a detailed journal of her experiences as she transitioned from life in Czarist Russia to American citizen. These observations were published as a book in 1912. We join her story after her family has received the tickets that will take them to America. She describes a bittersweet mixture of joy and sadness as the family prepares to leave for the "Promised Land:*" . . . The weeks skipped, the days took wing, an hour was a flash of thought; so brimful of events was the interval before our departure. My mother, full of grief at the parting from home and family and all things dear, anxious about the journey, uncertain about the future, but ready, as ever, to take up what new burdens awaited her; my sister, one with our mother in every hope and apprehension; my brother, rejoicing in his sudden release from heder; [religious education classes] and the little sister, vaguely excited by mysteries afoot; the uncles and aunts and devoted neighbors, sad and solemn over their coming loss; and my father away over in Boston, eager and anxious about us in Polotzk, - an American citizen impatient to start his children on American careers, - I knew the minds of everyone of these, and I lived their days and nights with them after an apish fashion of my own.**What made me silent and big-eyed was the sense of being in the midst of a tremendous adventure. From morning till night I was all attention. I must credit myself with some pang of parting; I certainly felt the thrill of expectation; but keener than these was my delight in the progress of the great adventure. It was delightful just to be myself. I rejoiced, with the younger children, during the weeks of packing and preparation, in the relaxation of discipline and the general demoralization of our daily life. It was pleasant to be petted and spoiled by favorite cousins and stuffed with belated sweets by unfavorite ones. It was distinctly interesting to catch my mother weeping in corner cupboards over precious rubbish that could by no means be carried to America . . .* *The last night in Polotzk we slept at my uncle's house, having disposed of all our belongings, to the last three legged stool, except such as we were taking with us. Excitement kept me awake… In the morning I was going away from Polotzk, forever and ever. I was going on a wonderful journey. I was going to America. How could I sleep?”*References:     Antin, Mary, The Promised Land (originally published, 1915, re-published 1969) |

1. **How did Mary Antin feel about moving to the United States? (2-3 thoughtful sentences.)**

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1. **What evidence does the writing give to show you how she felt? (Give 2 examples)**

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| **Opulence in the Gilded Age, 1890****T**he period following the Civil War to the mid-1890s was a time of rapid industrial expansion in the United States. In addition to accelerating America’s economic development, the era spawned a new generation of wealthy families that benefited from their early investment in this transformation. These *nouveau riche* families broadcast their new status through conspicuous consumption. This was particularly true in New York City where families such as the Astors, the Vanderbilts and the Rockefellers built extravagant homes in Manhattan and luxurious vacation residences on Long Island and New Port, Rhode Island.Mark Twain coined the term "Gilded Age" to describe the era. His characterization is based on the concept of “Gilding the Lilly.” The lily, is naturally beautiful, it needs no further embellishment. Attempting to "Gild the Lilly", or add a gold covering to it, to enhance its beauty is superfluous and unnecessary. Thus, Twain's description refers to the unabashed desire of the wealthy of this era to broadcast their status through extravagant opulence*“…Accordingly he went to Charles Delmonico, who in turn went to his cuisine classique to see how they could possibly spend this sum on this feast. Success crowned their efforts. The sum in such skillful hands soon melted away, and a banquet was given of such beauty and magnificence that even New Yorkers, ac­customed as they were to every species of novel expenditure, were astonished at its lavishness, its luxury. The banquet was given at Del­monico's in Fourteenth Street. There were seventy-two guests in the large ballroom looking on Fifth Avenue.**The table covered the whole length and breadth of the room, only leaving a passageway for the waiters to pass around it. It was a long extended oval table, and every inch of it was covered with flowers, excepting a space in the center, left for a lake, and a border around the table for the plates. This lake was indeed a work of art; it was an oval pond, thirty feet in length, by nearly the width of the table, enclosed by a delicate golden wire network reaching from table to ceiling, making the whole one grand cage; four superb swans, brought from Prospect Park, swam in it, surrounded by high banks of flowers of every species and variety, which pre­vented them from splashing the water on the table… all around the enclosure and in fact above the entire table, hung little golden cages with fine songsters who filled the room with their melody, occasionally interrupted by the splash­ing of the waters of the lake by the swans and the cooing of these noble birds and at one time by a fierce combat between these stately, graceful, gliding white creatures.**But this was not to be alone a feast for the eye; all that art could do, all that the cleverest men could devise to spread before the guests, such a feast as the gods should enjoy, was done, and so well done that all present felt, in the way of feasting, that man could do no more! The wines were perfect . . .Then soft music stole over one's senses; lovely women's eyes sparkled with delight at the beauty of their surroundings, and I felt that the fair being who sat next to me would have graced Alexander's feast."* References:     This eyewitness account appears in McAllister, Ward, Society as I Have Found it (1890). 1. **Based on what you read above, what do you think the word “opulence” (ah-pew-lents) means? What evidence does the article give? (give 2 examples that help you with the definition)**

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The beginning of the 20th century witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of immigrants coming to America's shores. In the century's first decade over 9 million expectant new arrivals - almost three times the number of the previous decade - entered the United States. The reason for their coming typically rested on the push of hardships at home - including a lack of economic opportunity, religious discrimination and political persecution - and the pull of the expectation of a better life in the "Promised Land."

Although many made their way to the agricultural and mining lands of the West, the majority ended up in the urban centers of the East living in self-segregated enclaves and working at menial jobs and often exploited by their employer.

Sadie Frowne was typical of this new wave of immigration. She was thirteen when she arrived in America with her mother. They had left their native Poland after the death of Sadie's father and the failure of the small grocery store that provided them a living. The two made their way to America with the help of Sadie's Aunt Fanny who lived in New York City. Sadie told her story to a journalist just three years after her arrival in America. It was first published as a newspaper article and later with other autobiographies as a book.

**Life in the Sweatshop...**

*“I get up at half-past five o'clock every morning and make myself a cup of coffee on the oil stove. I eat a bit of bread and perhaps some fruit and then go to work. Often I get there soon after six o'clock so as to be in good time, though the factory does not open till seven. I have heard that there is a sort of clock that calls you at the very time you want to get up, but I can't believe that because I don't see how the clock would know.*

*At seven o'clock we all sit down to our machines and the boss brings to each one the pile of work that he or she is to finish during the day, what they call in English their 'stint.' This pile is put down beside the machine and as soon as a skirt is done it is laid on the other side of the machine. Sometimes the work is not all finished by six o'clock and then the one who is behind must work overtime. Sometimes one is finished ahead of time and gets away at four or five o'clock, but generally we are not done till six o'clock.*

*The machines go like mad all day, because the faster you work the more money you get. Sometimes in my haste I get my finger caught and the needle goes right through it. It goes so quick, though, that it does not hurt much. I bind the finger up with a piece of cotton and go on working. We all have accidents like that. Where the needle goes through the nail it makes a sore finger, or where it splinters a bone it does much harm. Sometimes a finger has to come off. Generally, though, one can be cured by a salve.*

*… The machines are all run by foot-power, and at the end of the day one feels so weak that there is a great temptation to lie right down and sleep.”*

References:
Sadie’s account: Holt, Hamilton, The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans as Told by Themselves (1906)

1. In 2-3 thoughtful sentences, describe a typical workday in the “sweatshop.”

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1. How do you think that Sadie’s job compares with working conditions today?(2-3 thoughtful sentences)

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