

Urbanization and Challenges

Urbanization in America in the late 1800's:

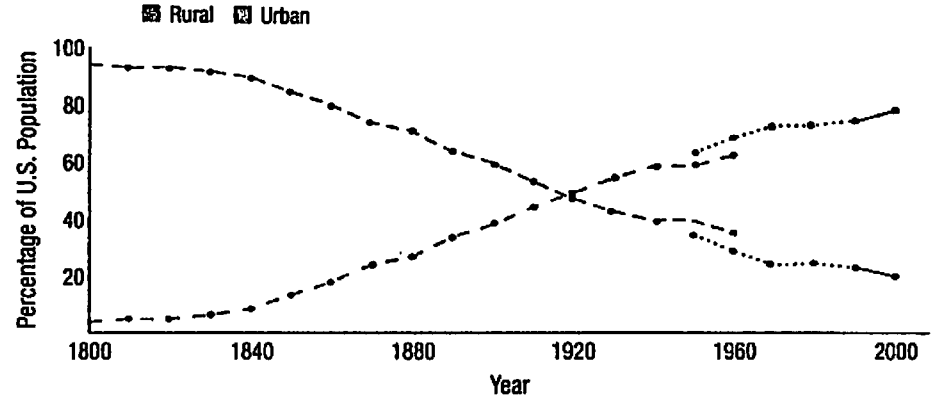
The history of Urbanization in America is inextricably linked to industrialization and immigration. The incredible inventions of the First Industrial Revolution, that centered on textiles, agriculture, iron, and steam engine technology, provided farmers with the McCormick Reaper, the Cotton Gin and Cotton Spinning Machinery and revolutionized farming methods in the United States and led to the expansion of the mills. Steam power then led to the invention of railroads and the Grain Elevators, the "Prairie Skyscrapers" that enabled the fast transit of wheat and other grains to market. Increased agricultural efficiency resulted in fewer jobs in the farming areas and the rural population started looking to the cities and towns for employment beginning urbanization in America. The history of Urbanization in America can be seen in the growth rate of city populations. In 1840 the United States had only 131 cities by 1900 that number had risen to over 1,700. People in rural areas moved to the towns and cities. Immigrants flocked to the towns and cities. As a result, in just a few years the United States transformed from an agrarian to an urban nation, and the demographics of the country shifted dramatically. The following table provides facts and statistics on the numbers of the populations in the towns and cities between 1870 and 1920.

Source 1:

URBAN - RURAL POPULATION AND NUMBER OF URBAN PLACES, 1850-1890			
Source: Historical Statistics of the United States			
YEAR	NUMBER OF URBAN PLACES	TOTAL URBAN POPULATION (IN MILLIONS)	TOTAL RURAL POPULATION (IN MILLIONS)
1850	236	3.5	19.6
1860	392	6.2	25.2
1870	663	9.9	28.7
1880	939	14.1	36.0
1890	1348	22.1	40.8

1. Compare the urban population to the rural population for this time period. What trends are indicated by the information in the chart? (Give two examples)

Source 2:



2. Based on the graph and your knowledge of social studies, why did urban population increase while rural population decreased? (Give two reasons)

Source 3:

"...It used to be a matter of pride with the better sort of our country people that they could raise on their own land or manufacture within their own households almost everything needed for domestic consumption. But now if you leave the rail, at whatever remote station...and make your way to the house of any long-settled and prosperous farmer, and the intimacy of his family with the town will constantly appear, in dress, furniture, viands [food], in all conversation... [For example:]...If the baby has outgrown its shoes, the measure [size] is to be sent to town...."

Frederick Law Olmstead, 1871
Quoted in Hoogenboom and Hoogenboom (ed.), *The Gilded Age*

3. How does Olmsted think life has changed in America by 1871?

Source 4:

"Before 1895 the streets [of New York City] were almost universally in a filthy state. In wet weather they were covered with slime, and in dry weather that air was filled with dust. Artificial sprinkling in summer converted the dust to mud... Rubbish of all kinds, garbage, and ashes lay neglected in the streets, and in the hot weather the city stank with the emanations of putrefying organic matter. It was not always possible to see the pavement, because of the dirt that covered it... [Now]... New York is... clean... Few realize [the changes]... For example, there is far less injury from dust to clothing, to furniture... children make free use as a playground of streets which were formally impossible to them. "Scratches" a skin disease of the horses to mud and slush... is now almost unknown..."

NYC Commissioner George E. Waring, Jr. 1897,
Quoted in Hoogenboom and Hoogenboom [ed.], *The Gilded Age*

4. According to the source, name two problems that city life had:

5. According to the same source, name two things the city has improved:

Source 5:

"...By 1900 [urban Americans] found themselves living in a communal setting... they now turned toward the impersonal government or corporation to provide them with water and heat, sewerage and light, elevators and elevators, machine-made clothes and factory-canned goods. It was a life of interdependence accentuated by technology, rather than a life of independence assured by [rural] distance..."

Robert H. Walker, "The Changing Community"
The Age of Enterprise, 1865-1900, 1971

6. According to the author, how did urban life make Americans more independent?

7. What role did technology play in making Americans more independent?

Source 6:

"The sheer size of cities helped create a new form of politics... Many city problems were handled by local political bosses who traded in patronage favors and graft. Big city political machines were not altogether sinister [threatening] in their effects; they provided food and money for the poor, fixed problems at city hall, and generally helped immigrants in their adjustment to a new life..."

Tindall and Shi, "City Politics" America, A Narrative History, 1998

8. According to the author, what new form of politics was created in the cities?

9. What was the relationship between immigrants and political machines?

Source 7:

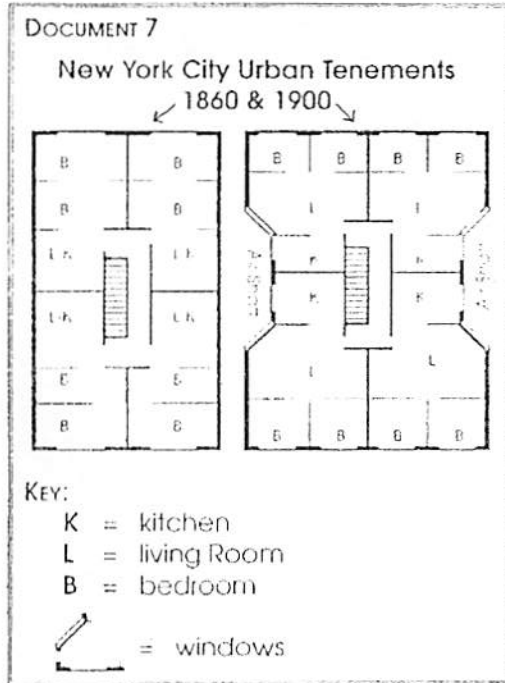
"By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, [the walking city, so named for the necessity of walking to work] disappeared. Where once substantial houses, businesses, and small artisan dwellings had stood side by side, central business districts emerged... Few people lived downtown, although many worked or shopped there. Surrounding the business center were areas of light manufacturing and wholesale activity with housing for workers. Beyond these working-class neighborhoods stretched middle class residential areas. Then came the suburbs... Scattered throughout the city [was] industrial activity surrounded by crowded working-class housing... Better transportation increasingly allowed middle- and upper-class residents to live away from their work and from the grimy industrial districts..."

Nash, et al., *The American People, 1998*

10. According to Nash, how did urban geography change in the late 19th century?

11. Nash focuses on changes in technology in his article, describe the role that technology had on cities.

Source 8:



12. According to the above diagram, how do the floor plans, from 1860, represent a change in living conditions for the urban population?

Source 9:



Jacob Riis, *Five Cents Lodging, Bayard Street, c. 1889*

13. Based on the photograph of immigrants living in a tenement apartment, how were living conditions for immigrants in cities?

Source 10:

"With...one dollar a day [our mother] fed and clothes an ever-growing family. She took in borders. Sometimes this helped; at other times it added to the burden of living. Boarders were often out of work and penniless; how could one turn a hungry man out? She made all our clothes. She walked blocks to reach a place where meat was a penny cheaper, were bred was a half cent less. She collected boxes and old wood to burn in the stove..." – quoted in *How We Lived*

3. This quote would describe some one of (US.2.6)
- Middle class
 - Upper class
 - Lower class
 - Upper-Middle class