

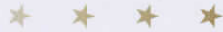


In 1915, a group of Armenian children board a ship. They are leaving to seek safety in other countries.

THE GREAT ESCAPE

A Russian girl hides in her basement, struggling to quiet her baby sister. Soldiers have come to rob the house and kill her family because they are Jewish. Cleverly, her father has set out bottles of whiskey to distract the soldiers. While the soldiers drink, the family slips away. During the night, they hurry to the train station. The train takes them to a seaport where they board a ship to America.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, millions of immigrants left their homelands in Europe and journeyed to America. Some, such as Russian Jews, fled from religious or racial **persecution**. The Armenians in Turkey were another such



group. In March 1915, the Muslim Turkish government announced a decision to rid Turkey of all the Christian Armenians. Some Armenians were murdered in their homes. Others were marched into the desert, where they died of hunger or thirst. Between 1915 and 1923 the Turkish government killed more than one million Armenians.

Hunger drove other immigrants across the sea to America. Europe's population was growing, and there were not enough jobs for everyone. People in cities found it difficult to feed their families. In the countryside, wealthy people owned much of the farmland. People who worked for them earned barely enough money to survive.

Some immigrants came because harsh rulers gave them little freedom in their own countries. Benito Mussolini, for example, controlled the government in Italy. He also controlled the newspapers, radio programs, and movies, allowing no one to speak out against him.

These two Dutch children arrived on Ellis Island in 1906.





Benito Mussolini came to power in Italy in 1922. Some Italians left their country to escape his harsh rule.





The United States became a refuge for people from many countries. In America, immigrants bought land and started their own farms. In growing cities, they found jobs building roads, bridges, and parks. They voted for the leaders of their choice. They were free to say what they believed, and they worshipped as they pleased. Escaping death and despair, they found freedom from want and freedom from fear.

Millions of immigrants left their homes, friends, and sometimes families in hopes of building a better life in the United States.

GOD BLESS AMERICA

Many immigrants felt that coming to America was like opening a door to a new life. For immigrants who could not speak English and had no education, that life was difficult.

But hardships did not break them. In fact, many immigrants became famous. Songwriter Irving Berlin was a Russian Jew who came to the United States in 1893. He would later write one of our country's most beloved songs, "God Bless America."

