PART A

The following documents are examples of the various nativist statements and arguments for more restrictive immigration laws. Examine each document carefully, and answer the question or questions that follow.

Document 1

This excerpt is from a resolution by the American Federation of Labor to Congress, "Some Reasons For Chinese Exclusion, Meat vs. Rice: American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism," (1902).

The Chinese, if permitted freely to enter this country, would create race antagonisms which would ultimately result in great public disturbance. The Caucasians will not tolerate the Mongolian. . . . But this is not alone a race, labor, and political question. It is one which involves our civilization. . . .

What nativist arguments are stated in this document?

Consider the source of the statement. What unstated concern do you suspect is the primary reason why this group opposed Chinese immigration?

Document 2

This excerpt is from Our Country, by Reverend Josiah Strong (1885).

. . . immigration not only furnishes the greater portion of our criminals, it is also seriously affecting the morals of the native population. It is disease and not health which is contagious. Most foreigners bring with them continental ideas of the Sabbath, and the result is sadly manifest in all our cities, where it is being transformed from a holy day into a holiday. But by far the most effective instrumentality for debauching [corrupting] popular morals is the liquor traffic, and this is chiefly carried on by foreigners. . . .

What "diseases" did Strong blame on immigrants?

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Document 3

Many towns, cities, and states sponsored night schools where recent immigrants could learn American customs and how to speak English.

According to this advertisement, why should immigrants learn the "American language"?
DBQ 12: THE NATIVIST RESPONSE TO IMMIGRATION, CONTINUED

Document 4


These new immigrants were no longer exclusively members of the Nordic race as were the earlier ones who came... the new immigrants [contain] a large... number of the weak, the broken and the mentally crippled of all races drawn from the lowest [levels] of the Mediterranean basin and the Balkans, together with hordes of the wretched, submerged populations of the Polish Ghettos. Our jails, insane asylums and almshouses are filled with this human flotsam [wreckage] and the whole tone of American life, social, moral, and political has been lowered and vulgarized by them.

According to Grant, how were the new immigrants (those who came to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) different from earlier immigrant groups?

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How did Grant see these newer immigrant groups endangering America?

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Document 5

During the 1880s and 1890s, many Americans became alarmed over the number of strikes and riots involving labor unions and the many immigrant workers who were union members. This short excerpt comes from “The Age of Steel,” a business magazine article that was published soon after the Haymarket Square riot of 1886.

... if the master race of this continent is subordinated to or overrun with the communistic and revolutionary races, it will be in grave danger of social disaster.

According to the author of this article, what was the greatest danger of unrestricted immigration to the United States?

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Document 6

Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts made this statement in 1891. The occasion was a debate in the U.S. Senate over a proposed Literacy Act that would restrict future American immigration to those who could read and write.

... the qualities of the American people ... are moral far more than intellectual, and it is on the moral qualities of the English-speaking race that our history, our victories, and all our future rest. There is only one way in which you can lower those qualities or weaken those characteristics, and that is by breeding them out. If a lower race mixes with a higher in sufficient numbers, history teaches us that the lower race will prevail. The lower race will absorb the higher. . . .

[We] are exposed to but a single danger, and that is by changing the quality of our race and citizenship through the wholesale infusion of races whose traditions and inheritances, whose thoughts and whose beliefs are wholly alien to ours. . . . There lies the peril at the portals [gates] of our land; there is pressing in the tide of unrestricted immigration. The time has certainly come, if not to stop, at least to check, to sift, and to restrict those immigrants.

What, according to Senator Lodge, was the danger of unrestricted immigration?

Document 7

E. A. Ross was a prominent sociologist early in the twentieth century. This is an excerpt from a magazine article Ross wrote in 1914. (From “Immigrants in Politics,” Century Magazine, 1914.)

In every American city with a large, foreign vote have appeared the boss, the machine, and the Tammany way [Tammany Hall was the corrupt city government of New York City]. Once the machine gets a grip on the situation, it broadens and inculcates its power by intimidation at the polls, ballot frauds, vote purchases, saloon influence, and the support of the vicious and criminal. But its tap-root is the simple-minded foreigner . . .

According to Ross, what was the influence of immigrants on American politics and government?

PART B

Why did American nativist groups oppose free, unrestricted immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?