Despite being a “land of immigrants,” the United States has also been host to several anti-immigrant movements. Nativism – i.e., hostility toward foreigners – has ebbed and flowed in American history, and Americans have often disliked the immigrants of the day while celebrating their own immigrant heritages. Nativists in the nineteenth century objected to immigrants’ religions, cultural practices, and ethnoracial backgrounds while today nativism reflects Americans’ anxieties about national security, border control, and the U.S.’s political as well as economic position in the world. Although the nature of the complaints against immigrants has changed over time, nativism has been a constant force in American culture and politics for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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