3.1 What events influenced the movement of peoples around the world?

*The reasons why populations move today are similar to those that motivated people in past centuries. People **emigrate** from their homelands because of push factors such as poverty, famine, overcrowding, natural disasters, war and conflict, political or religious oppression, or simply a spirit of adventure. They move to new lands because of pull factors such as the promise of a better life, better employment opportunities, more space, more fertile soil, greater personal freedom and the opportunity to shape the future of an undeveloped land.*

The Industrial Revolution was the key event that influenced the movement of peoples at this time. From its beginning around 1750, right through to the early 20th century, millions of people were relocated across the globe. This movement also took place against a background of imperialism, when European powers sought to expand their influence and control across the world. Newly 'discovered' lands in America, the Pacific and parts of Africa became known as 'the new world'.

Many of these migrants moved willingly, hoping for a new start. Others, such as slaves and convicts, were given no choice. This led to a great variety of migration experiences. Each group—whether free settler, assisted immigrant, slave, or convict—made a particular contribution to the lands in which they settled.

At the same time, these great movements of population had significant impacts on the original inhabitants of the new worlds. In North America, Australia and much of Africa, indigenous peoples were dispossessed of their lands and exploited.

Influences on emigration—push factors

In 1750, Europe's population was 163 million, and North America's 2 million. By 1900, Europe had grown to 408 million, while North America's had rapidly risen to 82 million. Those figures indicate where the major movement of peoples was taking place. What was happening in Europe in this period to push so many people towards starting a new life elsewhere?

focus on …

perspectives: types of migrants

When dealing with the movement of people there are key perspectives that will be considered. Their perspective will influence how they view or react to specific events. To consider perspectives it is important to define some key terms:

- **emigration:** the departure of people from their native countries

- **immigration:** the entry of people into a new country

- **migration:** the movements of peoples within a country or from one country to another

- **convict:** a convicted person transported to serve a sentence in the British colonies

- **slave:** a person who is wholly the property of another person

- **free settler:** a person who pays their way to settle in a new country

- **assisted migrant:** a person who receives assistance from a government or organisation to move to another country.

This is the way these terms are used within this topic. It is important to consider the impact a particular perspective will have on a source. It raises questions of bias that should always be taken into account when reading accounts from the time.

Source 3.3 *The Last Of England*, a painting by Ford Maddox Brown, 1852–55, shows a couple emigrating with their baby in a ship named *Eldorado*, with the white cliffs of Dover in the background.

Agricultural revolution

Until the early 18th century, the majority of people in Europe lived in rural areas and were engaged in agriculture. Land use had changed little since the Middle Ages, and the same families worked the same land generation after generation. Most peasants worked strips of land, barely producing enough to feed their families. Their lives were simple and there was a certainty to the rhythm of the seasons and the roles of the various members of rural village communities.

All of this was to change with the development of new farming techniques and agricultural machines during the 18th century. The agricultural revolution began in Britain but quickly spread to Western Europe. New methods of crop rotation, animal breeding, machines for ploughing, sowing seed and harvesting improved crop yields and quality of meat.

These new approaches to farming were beneficial for the landowners, but they were also responsible for the displacement of many peasants. Landowners enclosed fields for planting and grazing. They still required peasants to tend the crops and animals, but the new machines required fewer labourers. This was the first major example of technology claiming jobs.

The agricultural revolution resulted in a wave of migration from the country to the newly emerging towns and cities. Many who had lost their livelihoods in the rural villages, especially the young and single, flocked to the towns and cities looking for work. This migration coincided with the Industrial Revolution.

Source 3.4 The seed drill invented by Jethro Tull made sowing of crops easier and involved far less waste of seed. It also required fewer labourers.

Industrial Revolution

At the same time as new methods and machines were modernising agriculture, new approaches to manufacturing and food processing were also emerging. The steam engine paved the way for the development of steam-powered machines including the locomotive, spinning and weaving machines, pumps to assist mining and smelters to process the ores.

A vast unskilled or semi-skilled labour force was required to support this new industrial economy. Working conditions were terrible and there were also no laws about child labour. No laws meant children as young as six were often employed in the mines and factories. They could fit into small spaces and climb under machines, and worked in great danger.

The great migration of people from rural areas into the towns and cities provided the labour force to work in the new factories. Cities such as Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham in England all grew rapidly. This resulted in great overcrowding and unhealthy living conditions. For many of the poor in these industrial cities, as well as the displaced in rural areas, emigration provided an outlet.

For some of the most disadvantaged in the industrial towns and cities, petty crime became a way of life. A great increase in crime and overcrowded jails contributed to another of the major forces behind emigration from Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries—the transportation of convicts to penal colonies in North America and Australia.

Source 3.5 Children were often forced to work in factories during the Industrial Revolution. This was a push factor for some families to emigrate.

Population growth

During the 18th century, improvements in food production and new discoveries in medicine and hygiene led to a significant increase in population. The birth rate was rising, fewer children were dying and the average adult was living longer. Between 1750 and 1800, the population of Britain grew from six and a half million to nine million. This population growth created great pressures, especially at a time when new technology on farms and in factories was reducing the number of available jobs. Emigration acted as something of a safety valve, reducing pressure on jobs, housing and resources.

Natural disasters: the Irish potato failure

Over the centuries, natural disasters have motivated groups of people to leave their homelands in the simple quest for survival. The work of Thomas Malthus (see Chapter 1) suggested that such disasters were part of a natural cycle of population control. In the middle of the 19th century, one of the greatest movements of people out of one country occurred, as a result of the failure of the potato crop in Ireland.

The majority of Irish people were tenant farmers on lands owned by English overlords. The crops and animals that they produced on their small holdings were used as rent payments, leaving most peasant families to rely heavily on the potato crop for their sustenance. In the 1840s, the potato crop failed several years in a row as a result of impoverished soils and a disease called potato blight. Most landowners refused to waive the rents, which would have enabled the Irish farmers to survive this tragedy. The result was starvation in Ireland while tonnes of edible crops were shipped to England. Those who were evicted from their cottages for non-payment of rent often finished up in **workhouses** where they received meagre accommodation and food. Disease was rife in most workhouses and the already starving and weakened peasants had little resistance. The most disastrous years of famine were 1847 to 1849. The famine, which became known as the Great Famine, led to between one and one and a half million deaths. Up to two million emigrants also left Ireland at this time.

Over a period of ten years, the population of Ireland decreased by one-third. A small percentage of those who left Ireland travelled to Australia and New Zealand, but most went to North America because the journey was shorter and cheaper. However, it is estimated that up to one in five emigrants died on the voyages of the so-called 'coffin ships'. Poor sanitation, overcrowding and disease meant that many passengers, already weakened by starvation, were not able to survive the journey.

Discrimination

Over the centuries, many waves of emigrants left their homelands to escape religious or political persecution. American colonies, for example, had been established by Puritans escaping religious persecution in Britain.

Jewish people had suffered discrimination in Europe for centuries. They often became scapegoats when times were tough, because they appeared to be wealthy and successful. This perception was only partly true. Many Jewish people, especially in Eastern Europe, were not allowed to own land and were among the poorest peasants. During the 19th century there were organised attacks on Jews. This led to many fleeing to countries like the USA.

Source 3.6 A 19th century engraving showing an attack on Jewish citizens in Kiev, Ukraine