

EXAMPLE INFORMATIVE THEME

Prompt: For your assignment, you read excerpts from Norton and Bender's books about the factors that influenced transatlantic migration. Write an Informative Theme that has at least five paragraphs to discuss these factors. Use the MLA style, and include references and in-text citations.

TITLE OF PAPER: Migration Across "The Pond"

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Migration Across “The Pond”

There are many factors that led up to the era of European sea exploration and the eventual Transatlantic Migration, but, as noted by Thomas Bender, Europeans’ superior wealth, technology, or civilization did not lead them across the ocean before the Ottomans. Instead, Bender argues that their western expansion was more closely linked to Europeans’ desire to lessen their dependency on the far superior land-trading Ottoman Empire (Bender 25). This desire accompanied others that will later be explored, such as the Europeans’ desire to find a direct route to the material-rich Asia and to set up trade routes that were uninhibited by the Ottomans. Other important factors contributed to their motivation as well, including the economic and social problems that plagued Europe. The Europeans found, with their ability to easily obtain and cultivate American land with efficient plantation systems and to create a new and effective oceanic trade route, exporting goods was not only profitable trade but helpful in boosting an overpopulated and plague-ridden European society.

Indeed, Mary Norton (2008) and Thomas Bender (2006) agree on many of the factors that led to the Transatlantic Migration. For example, Norton and Bender both argue that the reason for Columbus’s voyage across the Atlantic in the first place was to find a quicker trade route to Asia. At the time, Asia held many luxury items that Europeans wanted, including silk, tea, coffee, sugar, spices, silver, and gold. When Columbus thought he had landed in Asia, the Spanish empire quickly mobilized a large fleet of explorers to colonize America in hopes of finding the riches of Asia. After many failed attempts to find Asia, the Spaniards realized their

mistake and instead decided to colonize America in hopes of taking advantage of the fertile land and Europeans' desire for sugar and silver. With the large number of male immigrants and their ability to exploit labor provided by local natives, this turned out to be both easy and profitable (Norton 15). However, Bender would also argue that even more important than the discovery of America was the discovery of the ocean and the way the ocean could be used for transatlantic migration in order to populate America as well as for creating larger trade and communication routes that later produced a global economy.

Bender and Norton would also agree that Europeans and, more specifically, the British were going through major social and economic problems, which could be aided by transatlantic migration. Overpopulation had led to an increasingly large number of unemployed and poor citizens. In addition, the plague was beginning to spread via a long trade route, "the silk road," from Asia. Also, the Protestant Reformation was taking place in England, in which unwilling citizens were required to worship according to the dictates of the Catholic Religion. Thus, the idea of a transatlantic migration provided a solution to many of these problems. To deal with overpopulation, Europeans were able to send their poor jobless citizens elsewhere where they could become indentured servants and later earn their freedom, while at the same time filling much needed labor positions in the new world that could produce goods that could be sent back home. Those seeking to evade the plague before catching the virus seemed to think the high seas and America was their best opportunity (Bender 28). Additionally, Puritans and Separatists were able to find refuge in America and the freedom to practice their own religion. They hoped to spread their religion to the natives in America (Norton 27).

Norton and Bender would also both argue that the final reason for transatlantic migration was the need for laborers in the new world. With the vast amounts of apparently unoccupied

harvestable land, free slave labor, and new ocean trade routes to Europe, American goods became extremely marketable. America soon became the primary exporter of items like sugar and tobacco. Bender argues that these items were now no longer luxury items but were demanded as everyday items. This growing demand increased the need for plantation workers, and, since Europe could not supply them fast enough, other measures were taken. Soon a triangular trade route was set up so that African slaves were sent to be the new workforce in America (Norton 46). In exchange, raw goods were sent to Europe and manufactured goods were sent from Europe to Africa. The emergence of slaves in America was the primary reason for American population growth and economic success. The ability to exploit this slave population was not only easy but produced incredibly hard workers who were only given, and sometimes not, the essentials to survive. In exchange, a few African traders became wealthy, while Africa's male-to-female gender ratio became skewed and the population became impoverished (Bender 36).

Although the Transatlantic Migration started out as being an exploration for Asia, Bender and Norton both agree that it soon blossomed into a scapegoat for jobless European citizens who in turn helped create (along with African slaves) an American plantation system that made America a trade giant as well as a desired place for those citizens seeking cheap land and religious freedom. This American Dream soon spread, and the migration of both European as well as African peoples continued.

Works Cited

Bender, Thomas. *A nation among nations: America's place in world history*. Macmillan, 2006.

Norton, Mary Beth, Carol Sheriff, David Blight, Howard Chudacof, and Fredrik Logovall. *A people and a nation: A history of the United States*, 7th ed. Cengage Learning, 2008.