

Job Hunting in NYC

The year is 1901, and you are a 16-year-old girl who has immigrated to America from Poland. You are Jewish, and your family fled Poland because of religious discrimination. In Poland, Jewish people can only live in certain areas, and they are excluded from big cities. There has also been a rise in violent riots against Jewish citizens. Your family decided to take a chance and move to America for better opportunities.

After many days at sea, you arrived in New York City. The first stop was the immigration station at Ellis Island. You do not speak English very well, and it was difficult to understand the guards. The worst part was when the doctor put a metal tool in your eye. Ouch!

Your family has little money, and you are renting a small apartment in a tenement building on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. People from all over the world have immigrated to the city, and when you walk down the street, you hear people speaking Polish, Russian, Italian, and Chinese.

Your father has found a job as a janitor at Grand Central Station, the biggest train station in New York City. Your mother works at a local bakery, making bagels before sunrise.

It is time for you to find a job. Your only skills are cooking, cleaning, and sewing. After searching around the neighborhood, you found two options that both pay the same amount:

Job 1- Servant- You can work as a servant for a wealthy family in the Greenwich Village neighborhood. At this job, your main responsibility is to clean their large apartment, including laundry and washing dishes. Sometimes you will assist the head cook. You will be on your feet for the entire 10-hour shift.

Job 2- Seamstress- You also found a job at a clothing factory. At this job, you will sit in a wooden chair, and use an electric-powered sewing machine to make white cotton shirts for women. The shirts are beautiful, but the job is very repetitive, and the hours are long. You are not allowed to talk to the other women in the room while you are working.

