

Israel Zangwill, *The Melting Pot*

Israel Zangwill was a British playwright and novelist. He is best known for his play *The Melting Pot, A Drama in Four Acts*, which began in 1908. Read the following extract from the play and answer the questions that follow.

“American is God’s Crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming! Here you stand, good folk, think I, when I see them at Ellis Island, here you stand in your fifty groups, with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries. But you won’t be long like that, brothers, for these are the fires of God you’ve come to – these are the fires of God. A fig for your feuds and vendettas! Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians – into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American....

There she lies, the great Melting Pot – listen! Can’t you hear the roaring and the bubbling? There gapes her mouth – the harbour where a thousand mammoth feeders come from the ends of the world to pour in their human freight. Ah, what a stirring and a seething! Celt and Latin, Slav and Teuton, Greek and Syrian – black and yellow – Jew and Gentile... East and West, North and South...how the great Alchemist melts and fuses them with his purging flame! Here shall they all unite to build the Republic of Man....What is the glory of Rome and Jerusalem where all nations and races come to worship and look back compared with the glory of America, where all races and nations come to labor and look forward!”

Israel Zangwill, *The Melting Pot, A Drama in Four Acts* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1909)

Questions:

1. What future did Zangwill foresee for people coming to America?
2. What contrast did Zangwill make between America and the cities of Rome and Jerusalem?