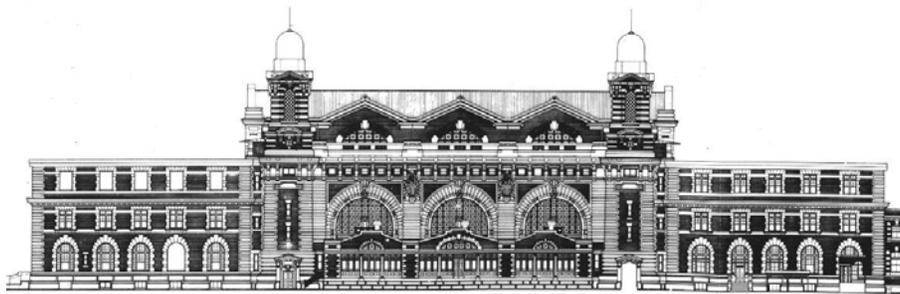


Shore To Shore



Educational Program Guide



Ellis Island Immigration Museum

Ellis Island is a unit of the National Park Service, part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument. Opened to the public as a museum of immigration in 1990, Ellis Island brings to life the importance of America's 400 years of immigration history and cultural heritage.

“Shore to Shore“ meets the standards set forth by New York State and the State of New Jersey. Although it has been developed for grades 4-6, it can be modified to meet various age levels.

New York Standards:

English/Language Arts:

Math/Science/Technology:

Social Studies

Standards 1 – 4.

Standards 1-3, 5, 6

Standards 1-5

New Jersey Standards:

Language Arts/Literacy:

Mathematics

Social Studies

Standards 3.1-3.5

Standards 4.1, 4.4, 4.5

Standards 6.1– 6.6

Suggestions for a Successful Visit to Ellis Island



Rules and Regulations: the following regulations are in place and are enforced to protect park resources as well as the visitors here to enjoy them.

Chaperones: All children 17 years old and under **MUST** be chaperoned at all times. There **MUST** be at least one chaperone for every ten children at all times.

Group Management: Group leaders, chaperones, teachers and parents are responsible for all members of your group. Ellis Island is visited by thousands of people daily and can be crowded– so stay with your group as it moves through the park.. To ensure that your day runs smoothly, please have all members of the group know what the rules are and what is expected.

Preserving the Resource: There is **NO** gum chewing allowed at the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Eating and drinking are **NOT** permitted anywhere inside the Statue of Liberty. Eating and drinking are not permitted inside the Ellis Island museum except in the food service areas. Smoking is not permitted inside any Government building. Please use trash receptacles located throughout the park.

Breaks: Please take bathroom breaks upon your arrival. The itinerary of the program does not include additional breaks.

Special Needs: Please notify our reservations coordinator (212) 363-3206, ext. 134. if your group has any special needs or considerations.

Program Materials: these materials have been developed to meet curriculum guidelines and enhance your students' learning experience. Our staff has incorporated these activities in the on-site portion of the program which will directly tie in with the activities that your students are doing in class. Please assist us in making this program an educational experience for your students.

Cancellations: We understand that visiting an island is not always conventional and may pose some transportation challenges. If you must cancel the program or if you're running late, please contact our reservations office at (212) 363-3206, ext. 134. Groups that cancel without notification may impact future bookings.

Arrival: when your boat reaches Ellis Island please present your reservation confirmation letter to our Information Desk staff.

Program Description



“Shore to Shore” offered at Ellis Island is a 90-minute curriculum-based program which includes an interpretive tour and hands-on activities. Students will learn about America’s immigration past during its busiest era in history, focusing on the years of 1892 through 1924. Students will explore the reasons behind this mass wave of migration from a global standpoint and the immigration processing at Ellis Island, the nation’s first Federal immigration station. Through hands-on activities, students will develop a real understanding of the trials and tribulations that many of our immigrant ancestors may have experienced as new immigrants. They will share the understanding and significance of the park’s resources and the importance that Ellis Island has in our nation’s immigration story, a story that continues today and into the future.

After a brief introduction in our orientation room, students will begin their exploration into the journey across the ocean. Once they have decided what to bring to the New World, students will travel the path of the immigrant, taking many of the same “immigrant” footsteps of the 12 million immigrants whose lives were forever changed by this island. Many of the same conditions may be in place as they were when over 5000 people per day were examined in the “Great Hall”. As students visit this cavernous space, they will examine the immigrant process and proceed through the medical and legal checkpoints.

After viewing the Ellis Island models, students will visit the restored “dormitory room” for a first hand look at immigrant sleeping quarters. Here students will realize the confined and oppressive conditions that immigrants faced in the “steerage” sections of steamships. Students will be asked to describe what they think life was like for the 20% of immigrants that stayed at Ellis Island each night.

Students will also participate in a re-enactment of an actual 1910 immigrant hearing when they visit the Board of Special Inquiry. The student board will have direct responsibility over the fate of one of their chosen classmates, covering many of the issues and reasons why immigrants could have been returned to their homelands.

The program will conclude with a brief look into where immigrants may have settled after leaving Ellis Island and a class exercise on the immigrant’s reach for U.S. Citizenship.

Upon returning to class, students will receive their own “Ellis Island Citizen Award” for their participation in learning about the immigrant experience and the importance of preserving Ellis Island. (www.nps.gov/stli/ellisaward/index.html)

American Immigration & Legislative History



For thousands of years as well as today, America has attracted millions of people from across the globe as a place to call home. It is truly a nation of immigrants. From the Bering land bridge to the dawn of the 21st century, discovery, expansionism, religious freedom, economic opportunity, including forced migration all play a part in America's immigration story. To learn more about the Bering Land Bridge and our Nation's original immigrants go to www.nps.gov/bela

After the founding of the nation in 1776, America would see unprecedented growth, both in population, territorial expansion, technological advances and industrialization. However, the Federal Government would soon find the need for regulatory and legislative control. By the 1790 census, there were no laws regulating those wanting to immigrate or become naturalized citizens. The following laws were instrumental in regulating Immigration to America. (From statistical data and legislative history - Immigration and Naturalization Service)

- **“Naturalization Act of April 14, 1802“.**
 - a) reduced the residence period for naturalization from fourteen to five years.
 - b) established basic requirements for naturalization, including good moral character, allegiance to the Constitution, a formal declaration of intention, and witnesses.

- **“Steerage Act of March 2, 1819“.**
 - a) Established the continuing reporting of immigration to the United States by requiring that passengers lists or manifests of all arriving vessels be delivered to the local Collector of Customs, copies transmitted to the Secretary of State, and the information reported to Congress.
 - b) Set specific sustenance rules for passengers of ships leaving U.S. ports for Europe.
 - c) Restricted the number of passengers on all vessels either coming to or leaving the United States.

- **“Immigration Act of March 3, 1891“.**

Establishes the Bureau of Immigration under the U.S. Treasury Department to administer all immigration laws, except the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Under this law, the establishment of a Federal immigration station in New York Harbor, known as Ellis Island, occurred. The “Act” also set forth the establishment of classes of inadmissible aliens and provided adequate procedures for the returning of such persons and those entering the United States under unlawful means.

This broad definition of who could enter America and who could justifiably be returned to their country of origin was vast. **“Likely to Become a Public Charge”** was the definition used by the Bureau of Immigration, later to be known as the Immigration and Naturalization Service, to prevent the admission of aliens, who could not prove beyond a reasonable doubt, that they were persons of good health and had the ability to earn a living and not become a charity case. In 1893, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the law and re-affirmed that the Federal Government could, as an administrative function, send immigrants back who did not meet these or any other criteria which existed under Immigration law, at the expense of shipping companies. Today, airlines still face this legal responsibility.

The New World

As Industrialization in Europe took hold, millions of people found themselves in a world of change. Production for the masses became the standard. People moved from rural and suburban areas to cities where there were jobs. The local farmer was now unable to compete with large high output producers. People with skilled trades moved to find work in the factories of the cities. Laborers spent their workday, working for someone else. By the latter half of the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution and its ability to change the course of millions of lives had both its benefits and problems. Many people found themselves poorer than ever before. Millions of people who were once self supporting, were now reliant on a company or someone else for a job. Industrialization brought poverty, disease, and crime to Europe and many would seek to leave to America, where many said that the “streets were paved with gold”. Industrialization, economic opportunity, and freedom from war and persecution now attracted millions of people to America. The advent of the modern steamship made that journey across the ocean more affordable and faster, making it possible for millions of people to cross the Atlantic.

Massive migration from Europe to the New World fostered most to travel to major cities along the Eastern Coast of the United States. Cities like Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Miami were popular entry points. However one Port of Entry stands out historically as the most popular place for immigrants to reach the New World, that was New York City. By all accounts: economically, socially, politically, and geographically, New York had become the leading metropolis. As high as 70% of immigrants, travelling days or even weeks aboard steamships to America, sailed mostly to New York City.

From 1855 to 1890, immigrants arriving in New York were processed by the state facility known as Castle Garden not by the Federal Government. After the “Act of 1891” was passed, the Federal Government constructed Ellis Island, to handle the thousands of immigrants who arrived daily at our shores. Ellis Island processed only third and “steerage” class passengers. The few who could afford a first or second class ticket were inspected on board the ships as they entered the harbor. After arriving at the Hudson River passenger terminals, those traveling first and second class were released. All third class and steerage immigrants were transferred to ferries or barges for a ride to a tiny island in New York Harbor called Ellis Island. Most immigrants faced a day-long experience of being medically examined by U.S. Public Health Service physicians and legally inspected by U.S. Immigration Inspectors. Approximately 80 % of those arriving each day at Ellis Island passed through successfully by days end. The remaining 20% were detained for legal reasons or held in one of the island’s hospital or quarantine buildings for observation or treatment.

Immigrants who did not pass inspection were seen by the “Board of Special Inquiry” to determine an immigrant’s admissibility. In 8 out of every 10 cases heard before the Board, immigrants were allowed to stay in the United States. If admissibility was denied, the immigrant would be returned to their country of origin usually within 2 weeks. During the time that Ellis Island processed immigrants, between 1892 and 1954, over 12 million people passed through its doors to begin their new lives here in America. Only 2%, about 250,000 people, were denied entry and returned.

Ports of Entry



Although about 70% of arriving immigrants passed through Ellis Island and the Port of New York, the Federal Government operated dozens of small receiving stations around the country, most bordering the perimeter of the nation's coastline.

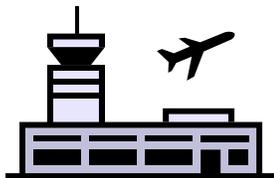
Partial Listing of historical Ports of Entry:

- Ellis Island, New York Harbor
- Boston, MA
- Philadelphia, PA
- Baltimore, MD
- St. Albans, Vermont
- New Orleans, LA
- Miami, FL
- Galveston, TX
- Providence, RI
- Buffalo, NY
- San Juan, Puerto Rico
- Seattle, WA
- San Diego, CA
- San Francisco, CA
- Portland, ME

Today, the Immigration and Naturalization Service controls hundreds of potential entry points from land, sea, and air, processing millions of citizens and aliens and about 3000 immigrants arriving each day. The Immigration Service (INS) continues to work in conjunction with the U.S. Customs Service and the U.S. Public Health Service to determine the admissibility of aliens coming to the United States.

What is the most popular Port of Entry for legal immigration today? _____

(See below for answer)



AIR



SEA



LAND

Name some entry points in each of these categories

Year	Total Population	Foreign Born	% American Born	% Foreign Born
1850	23,191,876	2,244,602	90.3	9.7
1860	31,443,321	4,138,697	86.8	13.2
1870	38,558,371	5,567,229	85.6	14.4
1880	50,155,783	6,679,943	86.7	13.3
1890	62,622,250	9,249,547	85.2	14.8
1900	75,994,575	10,341,276	86.4	13.6
1910	91,972,266	13,515,886	85.3	14.7
1920	105,710,620	13,920,692	86.8	13.2
1930	122,775,046	14,204,149	88.4	11.6
1940	131,669,275	11,594,896	91.2	8.8
1950	150,216,110	10,347,395	93.1	6.9
1960	179,325,671	9,738,091	94.6	5.4
1970	203,210,158	9,619,302	95.3	4.7
1980	226,545,805	14,079,096	93.8	6.2
1990	248,709,873	19,767,316	92.1	7.9
2000	276,000,000	?	?	?
2010 ?	?	?	?	?

U.S. Population in 1900

75,994,575

U.S. Population in 2000

276,000,000

*Students can check the current population clock by visiting the United States Census Bureau at: www.census.gov

What is the current estimated U.S. population today?

Pre-Visit Activities



1. Destination America !

Tens of millions of people have immigrated to the United States during the last 150 years. Through Ellis Island oral histories, students will be able to explain why people left their homelands for America and what conditions existed on both sides of the Atlantic to make that journey possible. Have students list and discuss such things as technology and social conditions to support their answers.

Class Preparation: *Students should read oral histories (page 19) and information on the Industrial Revolution. Have them view a map of New York Harbor and discuss why America, particularly New York City, was the most desired location for immigrants.*

2. Ports to Freedom

Once immigrants decided to emigrate to America, many were ill-prepared for the unknown experience of traveling “Steerage”. They still had to reach a port city where the great steamships would start their 2-week transatlantic crossing for the New World. To better understand these unknowns, students should participate in the following activities:

- a. Have students investigate what port they might have emigrated from based on their heritage.
- b. How long they might have traveled to get to the port. Methods of land transportation in 1900
The costs associated with this travel as well as the steerage expense. Who in their families would go? Why?
- c. Describe the different shifts in immigrant populations from Northern and Western Europe to Southern & Eastern nations. The challenges that different ethnic groups may have faced in their travels to the great port cities.

Class Preparation: *With the use of a world map, have students point out the major ports of embarkation in Europe and other locations. Compare them to immigration patterns today: Asia, Latin America, Middle East etc. (Visit the world globe in the Railroad Ticket Office.)*

3. Preparing for America

As the time to cross the ocean grew nearer, thinking about what to bring would be very important. If you were going to move to a new country with no prospect of going back to the old world, what would you bring if all you could carry had to fit into one old trunk.

Class Preparation: *Students should prepare a list of things they would take with them if they were leaving their home. Create a time capsule for future classes in your school about your visit to Ellis Island. Be prepared to explain your choices during the Ellis Island Ranger program.*



4. Experiencing “Steerage”

Once on-board the great steamships of the day, immigrants to America soon realized that traveling in steerage would be the worst part of the experience. Originally designed to hold cargo, steerage compartments were often dark, unhealthy, overcrowded, and located below the upper decks of the rich and famous and those who could afford to travel in more humane conditions.

Class Preparation: Have students measure their classroom (length x width) to find the livable space of the room. Review the requirements set by the “Passenger Act of 1819” and amended by the “Act of 1908”

- a. (DBQ) Students should review the drawing “Life on the deck of an Ocean Liner” (page 15). What can be determined about the immigrant’s experience travelling in “steerage”? Discuss in class.
- b. If their classroom were steerage, how many people would they have to share the space with?
- c. Have students read the historical accounts of the conditions of steerage (page 17-18). Have them write a letter to relatives back in the old world about the experience of crossing the ocean in steerage.
- d. How similar/different were their comments of the drawing with the historical accounts in the Historical Commission Report?

Dimensions of sleeping quarters (berths) in Steerage

American Law of 1882
6' X 2' = 12 square feet

Cubic air space for steerage passengers by U.S. Passenger Act of 1908 (How does your classroom compare to “Steerage”)

Example:

If your class measured 20’ x 20’ with 8 ft. ceilings, your class would be 20 x 20 x 8 = 3200 cubic feet in size.

Use this chart to find the number of cubic feet required per person (144) and divide into 3200 for the number of passengers allowed in your “steerage” classroom. **Answer– 22 persons.**

Height between Decks. (floor to ceiling)	Lower passenger Decks (steerage)
Feet	Cubic feet
6	108
7	126
8	144
9	162

Class Activity

Record the dimensions of your classroom and bring them with you for further investigation during your trip to Ellis Island.

5. *Reaching Ellis Island – “Gateway to America”.*

After almost 2 weeks at sea, steamships entered New York Harbor and released all passengers at the New York passenger terminals. Those traveling in third class and steerage were transferred to ferries and barges headed for Ellis Island. Those traveling in first or second class were inspected on board ship and released into Manhattan.

Have students prepare a written description of a new experience they encountered – such as moving to a new destination, going to school or being treated in a hospital.

This activity should mirror similar feelings shared by immigrants that made the journey to America. Have students read their experiences in class as a Post Visit activity and see how they relate to the immigrant experience. (See DBQ # 1 – Page 16)

Recommendation:

These activities will prepare your class for an interactive tour of Ellis Island led by a U.S. Park Ranger. References to materials and topics included here will be made during the tour. In order to maximize students’ understanding of Ellis Island and the immigration process, it is imperative that your class do as much preparation as possible.

Have students complete the blank manifest tags. Tags should be worn during Ellis Island ranger-program . A manifest tag template can be downloaded at: www.nps.gov/stli/tag/index.html

Class Activity *Students should prepare themselves for the experience of being processed through Ellis Island.*

- A) *As your ferry approaches Ellis Island, what might immigrants be thinking about the building?, the island’s location?, the Statue of Liberty?, Manhattan? , their families, etc.*
- B) *As your class enters the baggage room, have them record their thoughts and observations in their journals. Keep in mind that students may want to tell their story to future generations.*
- C) *Medical/Legal Exam – What things were physicians of the U.S. Public Health Service looking for? Are they the same things immigrants are checked for today? (check our web-page at www.nps.gov/stli/medmarkings/index.html) for medical markings used at Ellis Island. Have the class create their own list of diseases & conditions along with their symbols.*
- D) *If you pass inspection, where would you go? How would you earn a living? Develop a class listing of the top 10 questions that Immigration Inspectors would ask immigrants today. View the historical manifest at : www.nps.gov/stli/manifest/index.html*
- E) *If you did not pass the initial inspection, what would you say in the Board of Special Inquiry? (Prepare for Special Inquiry case of William McCracken (see handout & DBQ #2 – Page 16) Download the hearing to prepare for your trip to Ellis Island: www.nps.gov/stli/hearing/index.html*



Post-Visit Activities

1. “I Lift my Lamp beside the Golden Door”

The Statue of Liberty gave immigrants hope for freedom and opportunity of a better life here in America. It is purely coincidental that Ellis Island, the gateway for over 12 million people, would stand by Liberty’s side only a few hundred feet away.

Class Activity:

Discuss the sonnet “New Colossus” written by Emma Lazarus. This poem is on a bronze plaque and is located in the museum of the Statue of Liberty.

What does this poem represent?

What does the “golden door” refer to?

The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset-gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome, her mild eyes
command

The air-bridged harbor that twin-cities frame.

“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp! cries she,
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore;
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

Emma Lazarus

November 2, 1883

2. I do hereby take the oath. . .

The objective for most immigrants was to eventually become American citizens.

Once a candidate

acquires naturalization, he/she can fully enjoy the rights, benefits, and privileges guaranteed by the constitution. Before that can happen, an immigrant has to meet requirements of residency (usually 5 years), having a command of the English language, a knowledge of American history, and not have any serious violations of the law.

Class Activity:

1. Have students discuss the rights that they enjoy as citizens. Compare them to the first 10 amendments of the U.S. Constitution /Bill of Rights. (Visit the National Archives at: www.nara.gov)

2. What is the most important right that a citizen has? _____

3. Have students review the Citizenship Test (www.nps.gov/stli/citizentest/index.html) **and come up with ways of how they could help an immigrant child pass the current test.**
(Teachers: view the answer key at: www.nps.gov/stli/citizenkey/index.html)

3. For Future Generations. . .

Even before the Ellis Island Immigration Museum opened to the public in 1990, an extensive effort was in place to record the stories of those who have originally passed through the immigration depot. Currently, the Ellis Island Oral History department contains approximately 2000 oral histories from immigrants and staff.

Class Activity:

Students will conduct an oral history of a family member who immigrated to America. (Seek prior permission from the person who will be interviewed before you start and have proper supervision). Find out important facts and first-person accounts of their experiences and any important information that you would want to leave in a time capsule which would be opened in the year 2101. If no available family member is an immigrant, interview a family friend.

4. “Headed for the Future“

Class Activity:

Change has played a key role in immigration, from the founding of our nation to changes in technology, trends, and environments. America’s immigration story began with the first immigrants who walked across the Bering Strait to the Sailing Ships of Columbus and the great steamships which brought millions to Ellis Island. With the thousands of immigrants who arrive on modern aircraft each day, what will the next chapter tell?

Have your class discuss innovative ways in which immigrants may get to America in the year 2100. Be as creative as your imagination will allow. Will planets replace countries as destination places for immigrants? What would the implications be for America/Earth if that were true?

5. Immigration: Which side of the scale are you on?



Class Activity:

Our United States legislature introduces many bills that change the way immigration is handled. Many times, the public’s demand for change has fueled our lawmakers to enact legislation either for or against immigration. Using your knowledge of Ellis Island, would there be anything that you would have changed about the way Ellis Island processed immigrants?

- *What arguments would you make to keep or change the way immigration is handled today? Look for examples of current events, articles, oral histories, personal experiences, or photos to justify your argument. Should we continue to be a nation of immigrants?*

Based on the above class assignment and discussion, have your students debate the reasons “for or against” American immigration and why. Have them set up a class debate panel to resolve this important topic. Should America have an “Open Door Policy” or should we restrict who should be allowed to enter our country?



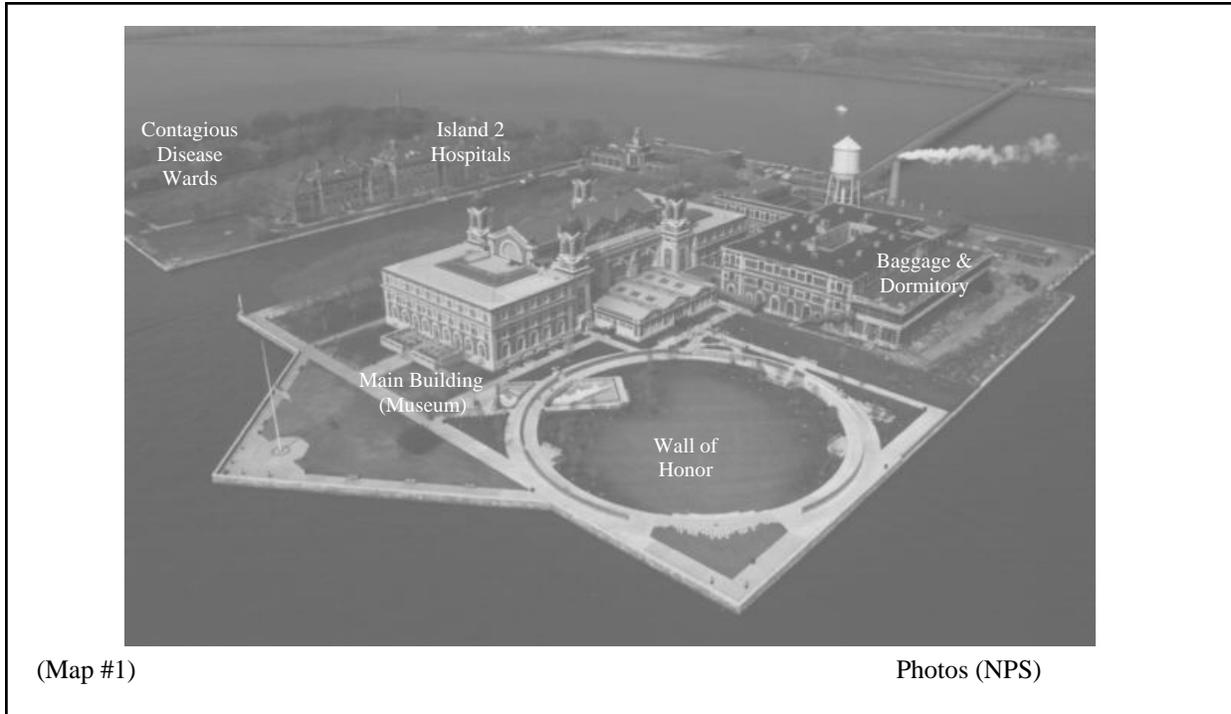
Glossary

Find the meanings to the following words

Alien	_____
Almshouse	_____
Anarchist	_____
Ancestor	_____
Asylum	_____
Button Hook	_____
Census	_____
Commissioner	_____
Consulate	_____
Contract Labor	_____
Customs	_____
Deportation	_____
Detention	_____
Discrimination	_____
Ellis Island	_____
Emigrant	_____
Excluded	_____
Famine	_____
Gateway	_____
Genealogy	_____
Heritage	_____
Immigrant	_____
Indentured	_____
Inquiry	_____
Inspector	_____
Interpreter	_____
Manifest	_____
Naturalization	_____
Oral History	_____
Passport	_____
Port of Entry	_____
Public Charge	_____
Quarantine	_____
Quota	_____
Refugee	_____
Sponsor	_____
Steamship	_____
Steerage	_____
Trachoma	_____
Tuberculosis	_____



Island Map



Map #2

Source (NPS)

Photos – Document Based Question #1



“Life on the Deck of an Ocean Liner”
(Library of Congress)

DBQ – Document-Based Question #1

1. What can you conclude about the experience of traveling in steerage?
2. What are most immigrants in this picture doing?
3. What effects could steerage have on some immigrants?

Photo Observations: _____



Photos – Document Based Question #2



Detention at Ellis Island
(Library of Congress)

Although the mental and legal examinations occurred quickly, immigrants spent much time in waiting at Ellis Island. The worse part of being at Ellis Island was fearing the unknown.

Immigrants' lives were often in the balance waiting for doctors and inspectors to decide on their fate.

DBQ – Document-Based Question # 2

1. Describe the significance of this photo
2. Where do you think these immigrants were?
3. What group seems least effected in this photo? Why?
4. Explain how you think children were processed during the medical inspection.
5. What groups were not directly examined during the legal inspection?
6. Does the law treat various groups in society differently? How ? Give examples!
7. What's your overall impressions/concerns would you think adults had vs. children during the to America and their experience of going through Ellis Island?

Photo Observations: _____

Oral Histories



Class Activity: Report of the Immigration Commission – Have your students read this account of steerage conditions. Discuss the significance of this report and ways that your students would change steamship travel for steerage passengers.

At the turn of the 20th century, the United States Government formed an Immigration Commission to report their findings on the conditions of “Steerage” and the thousands of men, women, and children who traveled to America this way. These observations and descriptions of steerage will enlighten your students to the hardships and conditions that many of our ancestors endured and ultimately overcame. Although laws were enacted in 1819 by the United States to protect ocean travelers, the government never observed if these laws were carried out until the turn of the 20th century. Members of the commission personally traveled undercover in steerage on nearly a dozen crossings and published their findings. Improvements to many of these laws were then put in place in 1908, soon after this commission published their results.

“The universal human needs of space, air, food, sleep, and privacy are recognized to the degree now made compulsory by law. Beyond that, the persons carried are looked upon as so much freight, with mere transportation as their only due. The sleeping quarters are large compartments, accommodating as many as 300 or more persons each. Passengers are divided into three classes, namely women without male escorts, men traveling alone, and families. Each class is housed in a separate compartment and are often in different parts of the vessel. The berths are two tiers, with an interval of 2 feet and 6 inches of space above each. They consist of an iron framework containing a mattress, a pillow, or often a life-preserver as a substitute and a blanket. The mattress and pillow, if there is one, are often filled with seaweed. Generally the passenger must retire almost fully dressed to keep warm. Through the entire voyage, from seven to seventeen days, the berths receive no attention from stewards.

No space is designated for hand baggage. As practically every traveler has some bag or bundle, that must be kept in the berth. Floors are generally made of wood and sweeping is the only form of cleaning done. At least two large transportation lines furnished the steerage passengers utensils and require each one to retain these throughout the voyage.

The open deck available to the steerage is very limited, and regular separable compartments are not included in the construction. The sleeping compartments must therefore be the constant abode of the majority of the passengers. During days of continued storm, when the unprotected open deck can not be used at all, the berths and the passageways between them are the only space where the steerage passenger can pass the time away.

When to this very limited space and much filth is added, inadequate means of ventilation, the result is almost unendurable. The air was found to be invariable bad.

Report of the Immigration Commission :

Continued.

Wash rooms and lavatories, separate for men and for women, are required by law, which also states that they be kept in a "clean and serviceable condition throughout the voyage." The indifferent obedience to this provision is responsible for further uncomfortable and unhygienic conditions. Ten persons could have scarcely used this room at one time. The only provisions for counteracting all the dirt of this kind of travel is cold salt water, with sometimes a single faucet of warm water to an entire wash room. Floors are damp and filthy until the last day of voyage, when they are cleaned in preparation for the inspection at the port of entry.

Regular dining rooms are not a part of steerage. Passengers, each carrying their utensils, pass in single file before the three or four stewards who are serving and each receives his rations. Then he finds a place wherever he can eat them, and later washes his dishes and finds a hiding place for them where they may be safe until the next meal. Laundry basins also served as a dishpan for greasy tins, as a laundry tub for soiled handkerchiefs and clothing, and as a basin for shampoos, and without receiving any special cleaning. It was the only receptacle to be found for use in the case of seasickness.

The food may be generally described as fair in quality and sufficient in quantity, and yet it is neither; fairly good materials are usually spoiled by being wretchedly prepared. Bread, potatoes, and meat when not old leavings from the first and second galleys, form a fair substantial diet. Vegetables, fruits, and pickles form an insignificant part of the diet and are generally of a very inferior quality. Milk is supplied for small children. The white bread, potatoes, and soup, when hot, were the only foods that were good. And received the same favorable criticisms from passengers of all nationalities.

The new type of steerage, follows the plans of second-class passengers. Unfortunately, it is found only on those lines that carry emigrants from the north of Europe. Legislation however may complete what competition began." On newer vessels after 1909, conditions were often better and simulated those on second class. "

Mistreatment of steerage passengers, by crew, was often commonplace. Women traveling alone were often vulnerable. There was no one to whom they might appeal. Besides, most of them did not know the official language on the steamer, nor were they experienced enough to know they were entitled to protection."

Because conditions were harsh, most immigrants traveling in steerage would find the journey across the ocean to be the most difficult part of the immigrant experience. Compared to steerage travel, conditions on Ellis Island were a marked improvement. The worse part of being processed at Ellis Island was the lack of communication and the fear of the unknown. Observing the direct release of first and second-class passengers at New York passenger terminals, steerage immigrants bound for Ellis Island, often became confused and uncertain about their admission to America.

***(only third and steerage passengers were required to pass inspection at Ellis Island. First and second-class immigrants were inspected on board the steamships and then released in New York.)**

Oral Histories – Ellis Island



Class Activities: Read and comment on oral histories and the significance of their stories as it pertains to America and particularly New York and why they were the places of choice for immigrants.

The following are excerpts of Oral Histories of Ellis Island immigrants. They bring their sentiments of hope and expectation for a better life despite all the hardships and obstacles that were sometimes placed before them.

Edward Myrbeck, Sweden:

“The school teacher said, why in the world anybody would want to go to America, he said. You know, we have all these resources in Sweden. We have iron. We have coal. We have forests. We have land. And he gave quite a dissertation on this. I went home to my father. And I told him. It’s the only time I heard him swear. And he said, you go back and tell that teacher if I can have one of those resources, I’ll stay in Sweden.”

Rocco Morelli, Italy:

“ My mother said, look, I do not want to raise my children in this country any longer. I don’t want no wars. I don’t want no famine. I don’t want no poverty. I don’t want... I want to go to the United States. You work over there. The children will work over there. And at least, we’ll eat. You got two mothers, the United States and Italy. I do love them both.”

Inga Nastke, Germany:

“And the official said, follow me. You will be brought to Manhattan. So, we went down to the piers, boarded a little boat. And off we went. And I just couldn’t believe. I thought, oh, I’m really released. And I took a last look at the Statue of Liberty. And I was wondering, would I ever meet again? And then, I looked at Ellis Island. I thought, oh, how many tears I had to shed there.”

Bessie Akawie, Ukraine:

“By the time we came to New York, we had somehow, the experience of Ellis Island had aged us.”

Pearl Pohrille, Germany:

“For one thing, Ellis Island gave me a chance to stay here and live here and bring my children up here. And for that, I’m grateful to that little island.”

Victor Tarantini, Italy:

“When I saw the Statue of Liberty, it was something beautiful. I knew I was in America, you know. I knew I was going to see my stepmother. I had somebody to love.”



Resources

List of reading resources and web sites regarding immigration, population, and Ellis Island.

- 1) **Statue of Liberty National Monument & Ellis Island Oral History Department:** collection of 2000 oral histories. Call for information (212) 363-3206, ext. 157. www.nps.gov/stli
- 2) **National Archives and Records Administration:** collection of passenger manifests, census data, military records, etc. Address at 7th & Pennsylvania Ave NW, Wash. DC 20408. NY regional office at 201 Varick St. NY, NY 10014, Tel. (212) 337-1300. www.nara.gov
- 3) **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (formerly INS)** – for statistical information on immigration from 1892 to the present. <http://uscis.gov/graphics/aboutus/index.htm>
- 4) **U.S. Census Bureau** – U.S. & World population clocks updated daily. www.census.gov
- 5) **Library of Congress** – contains thousands of photos pertaining to immigration, Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, steerage etc. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amtitle.html>
- 6) **American Family Immigration History Center**– new center at Ellis Island containing the ship manifests of passenger records for Port of NY between 1892-1924. www.ellislandrecords.org
- 7) **Ellis Island: Gateway to the American Dream**, by Pamela Reeves.
- 8) **Sam Ellis' Island:** by Beatrice Siegal.
- 9) **Ellis Island: A Pictorial History**, by Barbara Benton.
- 10) **Morton Allen Directory of European Steamship Arrivals**
- 11) **The Story of Ellis Island** by Willard A. Heaps.

Ellis Island is a unit of the National Park Service and was included as part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument in 1965. After an extensive \$156 million dollar restoration during the 1980's, Ellis Island's Main Building opened to the public in September of 1990 as a national immigration museum. Today with annual visitation of over 5 million visitors, the interpretation and education department offers this curriculum-based educational program to students as well as a wide variety of public interpretive programs, enhancing the visitor experience. We hope your experience with us will be an educational and lasting one.

Comments/Questions

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