

DISCOVER AMERICA

Teacher Guide



Journey to Ellis Island: Exploring Immigration

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Key Themes

- American Freedom and Opportunity
- Immigration
- Journey and Exploration
- Important American Symbols

Core Values

- Community
- Life
- Faith
- Liberty



Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- Explain the historical significance of Ellis Island.
- Define immigration.
- Compare and contrast “push” and “pull” factors.
- Analyze the “Transatlantic Journey” and its significance for immigrants.
- Describe what immigrants experienced on the “Transatlantic Journey.”

Key Terms

- 0 1 **gateway:** something that gives you the opportunity to make progress or to further success in that activity.
- 0 2 **immigrant:** someone who moves from their home country to another country to start a new life.
- 0 3 **pull factor:** something that attracts individuals to a new country like the United States such as employment opportunities, economic prosperity, liberty, security, and the natural beauty of our nation.
- 0 4 **push factor:** something that makes an immigrant want to leave their home country, such as famine, conflict, unemployment, religious oppression, or political instability.
- 0 5 **ship's manifest:** a list detailing everything loaded for a specific sea journey.
- 0 6 **steerage passenger:** a passenger on the lowest level of a boat.

Introduction

ASK Students 📷

What do you know about Chef Boyardee and Albert Einstein? **[Reference Chef Boyardee and Albert Einstein Images]** How are Chef Boyardee and Albert Einstein similar?

TELL Students 🗣️

They were both American immigrants! An **immigrant** is someone who leaves their home country to start a new life in a different one. American immigrants come from various parts of the world and have different reasons for making the journey. The reasons behind their decisions are termed as "push" and "pull" factors. A **push factor** is something that makes someone want to leave their home country. For example, if there is famine, which means not enough food for people to eat, families may feel they have no choice but to leave in search of better living conditions.

ASK Students

What are some examples of push factors that might make people want to leave their home countries, and how do you think these factors can affect families and their decisions to immigrate?

TELL Students

Conflict, like wars or fighting, can also make people leave their homes because they want to find a safe place to live. Unemployment, or not being able to find a job, can be another push factor. When people cannot work or provide for their families, they might decide to look for opportunities elsewhere. Sometimes, people leave their home country because they face religious oppression, which means they can't practice their beliefs freely. Political instability, like a government that isn't fair or that causes trouble for its citizens, can also push people to seek a better life in another country.

ASK Students

What do you think are some of the feelings that families might experience when they have to leave their homes due to conflict, unemployment, or other push factors, and how do you think those feelings could influence their journey to a new country?

Introduction

TELL Students

Families might feel scared and uncertain when they have to leave their homes due to conflict, unemployment, or other push factors. These feelings can make their journey to a new country even more challenging, as they seek safety and hope for a better life. On the other hand, pull factors are what attract people to a wonderful country, like the United States! **[Reference American Flag Image]** For example, many people come here because of the promise of good jobs and employment opportunities. The chance to earn money and support their families can be a big draw. Another pull factor is economic prosperity, which means having a strong economy where people can thrive and enjoy a good quality of life. Many people are also attracted to the idea of liberty, or the freedom to express themselves and live their lives as they choose. Safety and security are important pull factors, too. People want to live in a place where they feel safe from harm. Lastly, the natural beauty of America, with its mountains, forests, and parks, can also entice individuals and families to come and explore this diverse and beautiful land. Push factors encourage people to leave their home countries because of difficult circumstances, while pull factors attract them to new countries with the promise of a better life.

ASK Students

What are push and pull factors? How are these factors related to Ellis Island?

TELL Students

Today, we are going to explore the fascinating history of Ellis Island, a significant landmark located in New York Harbor. This island served as the first federal immigration inspection station in the United States. Between 1892 and 1924, more than 12 million immigrants, the majority of whom came from various European countries, passed through its gates in search of new opportunities and a better life. Ellis Island was more than just a processing center; it was a symbol of hope and a fresh start for countless families. Each person who arrived had their own unique story and dreams, and Ellis Island played a crucial role in welcoming them to their new home. Let's dive deeper into the experiences of those who journeyed through Ellis Island and discover why it holds such an important place in American history by watching another episode of Star Spangled Adventures to learn more!

Introduction

WATCH ▶

Star Spangled Adventures Cartoon [Ep. 21: Ellis Island](#)



Lesson

TELL Students

Before becoming a gateway to America, Ellis Island was called “Gibbet Island.” Gibbet Island served as a punishment ground for pirates and criminals. **[Reference Gibbet Island Image]** A **gateway** is something that gives you the opportunity to make progress or to further success in that activity. Ellis Island was called the ‘gateway to America’ because it was the place where people entered the country, like how a gate lets you through a fence. Ellis Island is named after its last private owner, Samuel Ellis. In 1808, the state of New York purchased the island from Samuel Ellis’ family, and later it became property of the federal government. **[Reference Samuel Ellis Image]**

ASK Students

Why do you think it’s significant that Ellis Island changed from a place for punishing criminals to a welcoming entry point for immigrants?

TELL Students

In the late 19th century, many immigrants began arriving in America on steamboats. Before steamboats, travelers relied on wind-powered sailing ships. **[Reference Wind-Powered Sailing Ship Image]** The sailing ships took three months to sail from Europe to America. Although the journey was still hard, steamboats drastically reduced travel time to just 10 days. **[Reference Steamboat Image]** Most immigrants that entered the United States through Ellis Island followed the “Transatlantic Journey” across the Atlantic Ocean from Europe. **[Reference Transatlantic Journey Image]**

ASK Students

What is the “Transatlantic Journey?” How did the steamboat transform this journey?

TELL Students

Steamboats changed how people traveled. Because of steamboats, more people could afford to go on trips. Travelers could choose between first or second-class tickets for spacious rooms and meals. Travelers could also purchase cheaper tickets to travel as steerage passengers. **Steerage passengers**, those below deck, endured crowded quarters and often suffered from seasickness during the voyage.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

Please read the paragraph below to learn more about the first person to arrive at Ellis Island.

[Please print and disseminate fourth grade student text.]

Annie Moore, a 17-year-old Irish immigrant, was the first person to arrive at Ellis Island.

Accompanied by her younger brothers, ages 11 and 7, she made history as the first immigrant to set foot on the island. Today, a statue honors the Moore siblings at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum.

ASK Students

What do you think it was like for Annie Moore, the first immigrant to arrive at Ellis Island, and how do you think her experience compares to the different ways people traveled on steamboats?

TELL Students

Annie Moore's experience as the first immigrant to arrive at Ellis Island was likely filled with excitement and nervousness as she stepped into a new country with her younger brothers. Compared to the different ways people traveled on steamboats, her journey as an immigrant marked a significant moment in history, symbolizing hope for many others who would follow in her footsteps. When steamboats arrived, they couldn't dock at Ellis Island. They docked in Manhattan. **[Reference Map Area Ellis Island/Manhattan Image]** First and second-class passengers met Ellis Island inspectors onboard and began their new lives if no issues arose. Steerage ticket holders faced a longer process. They had to board a ferry to Ellis Island for medical and legal inspections.

ASK Students

How do you think the different experiences of first and second-class passengers compared to steerage passengers affected their feelings about arriving in America?

TELL Students

First and second-class passengers likely felt a sense of excitement and relief when they arrived in America, as they had a smoother process meeting inspectors onboard the ship. In contrast, steerage passengers faced a longer and more challenging journey, which might have made them feel anxious or nervous about the inspections ahead.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

Once steerage passengers arrived at Ellis Island, they had to undergo medical inspections to ensure they were healthy enough to enter the country. Doctors looked for signs of illness, and those who showed any health issues had to be treated before they could continue their journey. This process was important for keeping everyone safe. Medical inspections aimed to prevent diseases from spreading. Due to the high number of immigrant arrivals, doctors conducted brief "six-second inspections." They looked for physical signs of illness like fever or unusual behavior. Doctors also checked for trachoma, a disease causing eyelid bumps, which could lead to vision loss and was a common reason for immigration denial.

ASK Students

Why was a "six-second inspection" conducted?

TELL Students

Most immigrants passed medical inspections. Those who didn't were treated at Ellis Island hospitals. Then, immigrants had legal inspections where they answered questions from their ship's manifest. A **ship's manifest** is a list detailing everything loaded for a specific sea journey. The legal inspection also included questions about housing plans, finances, and criminal history. The majority of immigrants passed. A few immigrants had to attend hearings to resolve issues. Overall, only two percent were denied entry, half for medical reasons and half for legal issues.

ASK Students

What happened during the medical and legal investigations?

TELL Students

After passing their inspections, immigrants were ready to start their new lives in America. While some immigrants found work in farming, mining, or factories, others pursued entrepreneurship, construction, and even achieved celebrity status! Please read the following passage about a famous American immigrant:

Hector Boiardi's original first name was Ettore, and was later changed to Hector Boyardee.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

He arrived at Ellis Island in 1914. He started as a chef at New York's Plaza Hotel. Hector eventually became head chef and later worked at the Greenbrier Hotel in West Virginia. He even catered President Woodrow Wilson's wedding. Inspired by his success, he opened his own restaurant in Cleveland, where his Italian pasta dishes gained immense popularity. To share his creations with more people, he began selling his pasta sauce in cleaned milk bottles, leading to the establishment of the Chef Boyardee company, known for its well-known products available in stores today!

ASK Students

How did Chef Boyardee make the most of his opportunity in America? Which other famous immigrant did you learn about earlier?

TELL Students

Yes! Albert Einstein is another famous American immigrant. His name is even recorded in Ellis Island's passenger logs from his first trip to the United States in 1921. **[Reference Einstein Image]** Einstein is known as one of history's most accomplished physicists and was awarded the Nobel Prize for his groundbreaking work.

ASK Students

Why is Ellis Island important? How did immigrants contribute to American history?

TELL Students

Ellis Island is important because it was the first federal immigration station in the United States, where millions of immigrants arrived in search of new opportunities and a better life. It represents hope and the American Dream, as many of those who came through its gates went on to create successful lives. Immigrants have made a big impact on American history by using skills and hard work to help shape the nation. They worked in many jobs, built communities, and played key roles in the economy, from farming to manufacturing. Their contributions have made America a diverse and exciting place, full of unique stories and experiences! Immigrants came to America for different reasons. But, they all made the brave journey.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

They knew that our country offered opportunities for a good life. Today, the Statue of Liberty stands near Ellis Island. It represents the spirit of America. **[Reference Statue of Liberty Image]**

ASK Students ✍

What does the Statue of Liberty mean to you? Turn to your neighbor and discuss the freedom and opportunities available in our country. [Give students five minutes to discuss with a neighbor and then discuss as a class.]

TELL Students

The Statue of Liberty is a powerful symbol of freedom and hope. Gifted to the United States by France in 1886, she stands on Liberty Island in New York Harbor, welcoming newcomers arriving by sea. The statue represents the ideals of liberty, democracy, and the pursuit of happiness. Lady Liberty holds a torch in one hand, which signifies enlightenment and the idea of shining a light on the path to freedom. In her other hand, she carries a tablet inscribed with the date of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, reminding people of the importance of liberty and justice. For immigrants arriving in America, the Statue of Liberty has long been a symbol of hope, as she represents the opportunity for a new beginning and the chance to build a better life. Her presence continues to inspire people around the world to seek freedom and equality.



Ellis Island Immigration Simulation

Objective

To simulate the experience of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island and understand the challenges they faced during the immigration process.

Materials Needed

- Large open space (such as a classroom or gym)
- Chairs or benches arranged in rows to simulate the interior of a ship
- Tables set up as inspection stations
- Signs or labels for different stations (e.g., medical Inspection, legal Inspection)
- Question cards with sample questions asked during inspections
- Immigrant identification cards (optional)
- Timer or stopwatch

Introduction

- Gather students in the designated area and explain that they will be participating in a simulation of the immigration process at Ellis Island.
- Briefly discuss the historical context of Ellis Island and its significance as an immigration gateway to the United States.

Set Up

- Arrange chairs or benches in rows to represent a steamboat.
- Place tables at various stations around the room to represent the different inspection processes immigrants underwent at Ellis Island.
- Assign roles to each student. Roles include immigrants, inspectors, and officials.

Immigration Simulation

- Divide the students into groups, with each group representing a different wave of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island (e.g., Italian immigrants, Irish immigrants, Eastern European immigrants).
- Instruct the "immigrants" to line up and enter the simulation area, where they will proceed through the various inspection stations.



Ellis Island Immigration Simulation

Immigration Simulation (continued)

- At each station, students playing the role of inspectors will ask questions and conduct inspections based on the sample question cards provided.
- Encourage role-playing and interaction between the students to make the simulation more realistic.

Inspection Stations

- *Medical Inspection:* Inspectors check for signs of illness and disease, using props such as flashlights and bandages.
- *Legal Inspection:* Inspectors ask questions about the immigrant's background, family, occupation, and plans for living in the United States.
- *Processing Station:* Officials review immigrants' documents and decide whether they are eligible to enter the United States.

Debriefing

- After all groups have completed the simulation, gather the students for a debriefing discussion.
- Reflect on the experience and discuss the challenges faced by immigrants during the immigration process.
- Encourage students to share their thoughts and feelings about the simulation and what they learned about Ellis Island.

Reflection

- Have each student write a reflection on their experience participating in the Ellis Island simulation.
- Ask students to consider how the simulation helped them understand the immigrant experience and the importance of Ellis Island in American history.

Optional Extension Activity

- Invite students to research and share stories of real immigrants who passed through Ellis Island.
- Create a classroom display showcasing immigrant stories, photos, and artifacts related to Ellis Island.

Virtual Tour and Immigration Assignment

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Objective

To explore the history of Ellis Island and gain an understanding of the immigration process during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Instructions

Virtual Tour of Ellis Island:

- Use a computer or tablet to take a virtual tour of Ellis Island. There are many online resources available that provide interactive tours of the island and its immigration facilities. Use an online resource that is teacher and parent approved.
- As you explore, pay close attention to the different buildings, checkpoints, and areas where immigrants underwent medical and legal inspections.

Research Immigration Stories:

- Choose one immigrant story from Ellis Island to research. You can find these stories in books, articles, or online resources.
- Learn about the immigrant's journey to America, their experiences at Ellis Island, and their life in the United States after immigrating.
- Take notes on important details such as the immigrant's name, country of origin, reasons for immigrating, and challenges they faced.

Create an Immigration Story:

- Using the information gathered from your research, write a fictional immigration story based on the experiences of the immigrant you chose.
- Include details about their background, the journey to America, the inspection process at Ellis Island, and their hopes for the future in the United States.
- Be creative and use descriptive language to bring the immigrant's story to life.
- Consider the significance of Ellis Island in American history and how immigration has shaped the country.
- Think about how the stories of immigrants from the past can help us better understand and appreciate the diversity of America today.

Virtual Tour and Immigration Assignment

Optional Extension

- Create a visual representation of Ellis Island, such as a diorama or poster, to display in the classroom.
- Research your own family's immigration history and share it with the class, if possible.

Remember to take your time with each step of the assignment and ask your teacher if you have any questions or need assistance. Have fun exploring the fascinating history of Ellis Island!



Student Text

Please read the following paragraphs to learn more.

Annie Moore, a 17-year-old Irish immigrant, was the first person to arrive at Ellis Island. Accompanied by her younger brothers, ages 11 and 7, she made history as the first immigrant to set foot on the island. Today, a statue honors the Moore siblings at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum.

Hector Boiardi's original first name was Ettore, and was later changed to Hector Boyardee. He arrived at Ellis Island in 1914. He started as a chef at New York's Plaza Hotel. Hector eventually became head chef and later worked at the Greenbrier Hotel in West Virginia. He even catered President Woodrow Wilson's wedding. Inspired by his success, he opened his own restaurant in Cleveland, where his Italian pasta dishes gained immense popularity. To share his creations with more people, he began selling his pasta sauce in cleaned milk bottles, leading to the establishment of the Chef Boyardee company, known for its well-known products available in stores today!



Resources

- <https://www.nps.gov/media/video/view.htm?id=4BA86258-4024-4710-9329-40BDA66102EF>
- <https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/ellis-island>
- <https://www.nps.gov/elis/learn/education/eie-series.htm>
- <https://daily.jstor.org/the-curious-history-of-ellis-island/>
- <https://www.history.com/news/9-things-you-may-not-know-about-ellis-island>
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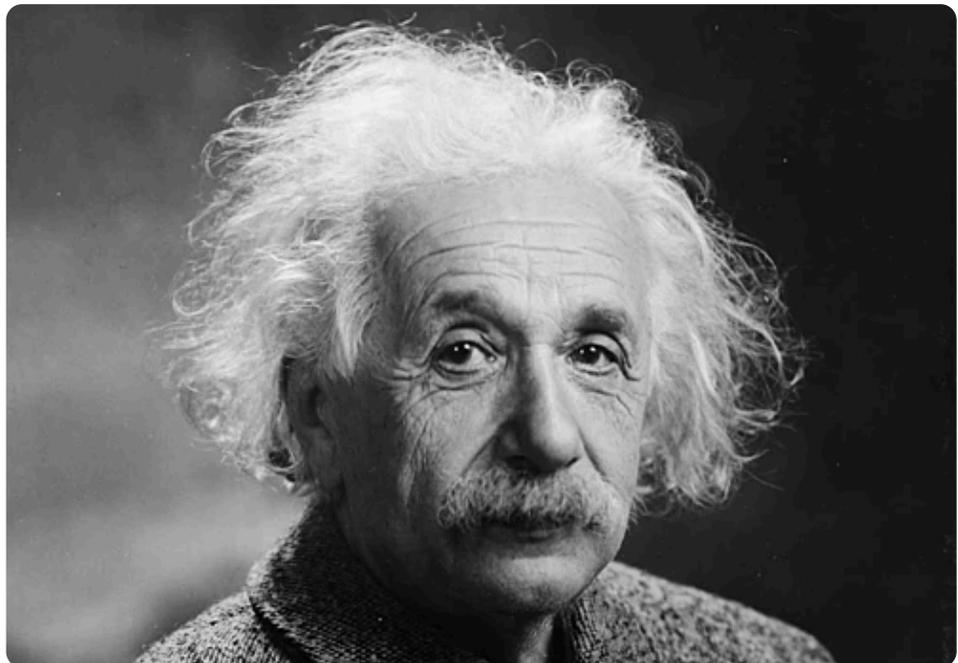
Images

Chef Boyardee



Credit: Chef Boyardee.

Albert Einstein



Credit: Wikipedia.

Images

American Flag



Credit: Canva Pro.

Gibbet Island



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

Samuel Ellis



Credit: History.com

Wind-Powered Sailing



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

Steamboat



Credit: Canva Pro.

Transatlantic Journey



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

**Map Area Ellis
Island/
Manhattan]**



Credit: Canva Pro.

Statue of Liberty



Credit: Canva Pro.

