

Name _____ Date _____

The Journey to America: Ellis Island and Angel Island

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, many people from around the world wanted to come to the United States to start a new life. They had heard that America was a place where they could find freedom, work, and a better life for their families. But getting to America wasn't easy, and once they arrived, they had to go through a process to enter the country legally. Two of the most famous places where immigrants were processed were Ellis Island on the East Coast and Angel Island on the West Coast.

The Journey Across the Ocean

Most immigrants traveled to America by ship. The journey could take weeks, and the conditions on the ships were very difficult. People were crowded together in the lower parts of the ship, known as steerage, where it was dark, dirty, and uncomfortable. Many passengers got seasick, and there wasn't much fresh air. But even with these challenges, people were willing to endure the hardships for the chance to start a new life in America.

Ellis Island: The Gateway for Millions

Ellis Island is located in New York Harbor, near the Statue of Liberty. From 1892 to 1954, it was the main entry point for immigrants coming to the United States from Europe. When ships arrived, they would first stop at Ellis Island. The immigrants would then go through a series of inspections before they could enter the country.

First, they would have a medical exam. Doctors would check to see if they were healthy. If someone was sick, they might be sent to the hospital on Ellis Island or even sent back to their home country. Next, immigrants were asked a series of questions. They had to prove that they had money, knew someone in the United States, or had a job waiting for them. Immigrants also needed to have the proper paperwork to prove their identity and that they met the requirements to enter the United States. If they didn't have the correct paperwork, they could be held for further questioning or even sent back to their home country. This process could take hours or even days.

Angel Island: The West Coast Gateway

On the West Coast, many immigrants from Asia, especially China, arrived at Angel Island, located in San Francisco Bay. The process at Angel Island was often much tougher than at Ellis Island. Immigrants faced longer wait times and more intense questioning. This was partly because of laws like the Chinese Exclusion Act, which made it harder for Chinese immigrants to enter the United States.

At Angel Island, immigrants could be held for weeks, months, or even years while their paperwork was processed. They lived in barracks, which were crowded and uncomfortable. Despite these challenges, many immigrants persisted because they were determined to start a new life in America.

The Role of Immigrants in Building America

Once they were allowed to enter the United States, immigrants played a huge role in the growth and development of the country. They worked in factories, built railroads, and started businesses. Many lived in cities, where they formed communities with other immigrants from their home countries. These communities helped immigrants maintain their cultural traditions while adapting to life in America.

Immigrants also faced challenges after they arrived, such as learning a new language, finding work, and dealing with prejudice. Despite these difficulties, they contributed to the rich diversity of American culture and helped build the nation into what it is today.

Circle the best answer for each question.

1. Where did most immigrants enter the United States on the East Coast?
 - a. Angel Island
 - b. Ellis Island
 - c. San Francisco
 - d. Brooklyn

2. What were the conditions like in steerage during the journey to America?
 - a. Very comfortable with lots of space
 - b. Dark, dirty, and uncomfortable
 - c. Like a hotel room
 - d. Like a classroom

3. What was the first step for immigrants when they arrived at Ellis Island?

- a. A medical exam
- b. Taking a bus to the city
- c. Getting money
- d. Going to school

4. Why was the process at Angel Island often harder than at Ellis Island?

- a. The weather was colder
- b. The food was better
- c. There were fewer doctors
- d. The Chinese Exclusion Act made it harder for some immigrant to enter

5. Why did immigrants form new communities in American cities?

- a. To make new laws
- b. To build new schools
- c. To maintain cultural traditions and help each other
- d. To avoid working

6. Which law made it harder for Chinese immigrants to enter the United States?

- a. The Immigration Act
- b. The Chinese Exclusion Act
- c. The Ellis Island Act
- d. The San Francisco Law

7. What did immigrants have to prove during the questioning process at Ellis Island?

- a. That they had money, knew someone, or had a job waiting
- b. That they knew how to cook
- c. That they could speak English
- d. That they had been to American before

8. Where is Angel Island located?

- a. New York Harbor
- b. San Francisco Bay
- c. The Atlantic Ocean
- d. Boston

9. How long could immigrants be held at Angel Island?

- a. A few hours
- b. A few days
- c. Just one night
- d. Weeks, month, or even years

10. What happened at Ellis Island if an immigrant's paperwork was not in order?

- a. They were allowed to enter
- b. They were given new paperwork
- c. They were held for further questioning or even sent back to their home country
- d. They were sent to Angel Island

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The Statue of Liberty: A Symbol of Hope and Freedom

The Statue of Liberty is one of the most famous symbols of the United States. Standing tall in New York Harbor, she was a welcoming sight for millions of immigrants arriving by ship in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For these newcomers, the Statue of Liberty represented hope, freedom, and the opportunities that awaited them in America.

The statue was a gift from France to the United States, dedicated in 1886. It was meant to celebrate the friendship between the two countries. The statue holds a torch high in one hand, lighting the way to freedom, and in her other hand, she holds a tablet with the date of American independence, July 4, 1776. The torch symbolizes the light of freedom, and the tablet she symbolizes the nation's founding principles.

For immigrants, seeing the Statue of Liberty was often an emotional experience. They felt a mix of hope, relief, and excitement when they saw it. Many had left behind difficult lives in their home countries, seeking a better future in America. The statue seemed to promise that in this new land, they would find freedom from oppression, the chance to work hard, and the opportunity to build a better life for themselves.

The Statue of Liberty has since become an enduring symbol of the United States, reminding people of the values of freedom and opportunity that define the nation.

Answer each question using what you learned from the text.

1. What do the torch and the tablet held by the Statue of Liberty symbolize?

2. What did the Statue of Liberty represent for immigrants coming to the United States?

3. How did immigrants feel when they saw the Statue of Liberty?
