



## **Ellis Island**

### **Post-visit Activity: Oral History, Teacher-led Enrichment**

**Explanation:** Primary sources such as oral histories, fascinate students because history is humanized through them - they are real and they are personal. Using original sources, students are able to touch the lives of people about whom history is written. They participate in human emotions and in the values and attitudes of the past. These human expressions provide history with color and excitement as well as link students directly to its cast of characters.

This collection of oral history excerpts is from the Ellis Island Oral History Collection. The following audio clips (with accompanying transcripts) have been specifically selected to be useful in your classroom. Both the [audio file](#) and the [transcript](#) can be accessed online and also downloaded and saved for use later without needing to be connected to the internet.

### **Objectives:**

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Discuss the feelings immigrants encountered as they traveled to the United States
- Analyze how “push and pull” factors influenced immigrants’ decisions to leave their homeland
- Summarize the story about being processed at Ellis Island
- Reflect on the Ellis Island experience in a visual or written way

### **Procedure:**

1. Using the Ellis Island Oral History Collection divide students into groups of two. Ask each group to listen to/ and or read one Ellis Island immigrant interview found below. These can be teacher assigned or student selected as long as there are no two alike.

2. Each student group should work together to write a haiku or cinquain poem about the immigrant experience.



- Haiku poetry is written in the following structure:

Line one: 5 syllables

Line two: 7 syllables

Line three: 5 syllables

- Cinquain poetry has these basic elements:

Name:

Two adjectives:

Three Verbs:

Simile ("like a..." or "as..."):

Synonym for the first line:

3. Upon completion arrange the poetry on butcher paper under the headings below retelling the story of the immigrant experience from "Traveling to America" through "Adjusting to Life in America", creating what can be called "History of Ellis Island told through Poetry." These can also be illustrated.

4. Students groups will share their poem with the rest of the class. The teacher may display the "History of Ellis..." on the wall as a visual reminder of the Ellis Island experience.

### **Immigrant Interviews:**

<http://www.nps.gov/elis/learn/education/classrooms/oral-histories.htm>

### **Traveling to America**

- [Morris Remembers the Steamship](#)
- [William Remembers the Storm](#)
- [Emma and William Remember Packing](#)

### **Experience at Ellis Island**

- [Elda Remembers the Eye Exam](#)
- [Catherine Remembers the Hair Exam](#)



## Immigrant Expectations

- [Catherine Remembers Her First Day in America](#)
- [Gertrude Remembers Going to Chicago](#)

## Trying New Foods

- [Kathleen Remembers Trying Pizza](#)
- [Paul Remembers Trying Sandwiches](#)
- [Isadore Remembers Trying a Tomato](#)

## Holding onto Homeland Traditions

- [Emilie Remembers Cultural Festivities](#)
- [Charles Remembers Maintaining His Jewish Identity](#)
- [Helen Remembers Hungarian Lullaby](#)

## Adjusting to Life in America

- [Gertrude Remembers Changing Her Name](#)
- [Knud Remembers Hardships Caused by the Language Barrier](#)
- [Anna Remembers Meeting Family Members](#)
- [Birgitta Remembers Starting School](#)
- [Catherine Remembers Mother Learning English](#)
- [Friedrich Remembers Being Called a "Greenhorn"](#)
- [Armen Remembers Trying to "Fit In"](#)



**Example:**

**History of the Ellis Island Immigrant**

**Told Through Poetry**

**Traveling to America**

Morris Remembers Steamship

William Remembers Storm

Emma and William Packing

**Trying New Food**

Pizza

Sandwiches

Tomato

**Experience at Ellis Island**

Elda's Eye Exam

Catherine's Hair Exam

**Homeland Traditions**

Hungarian Lullaby

Jewish Identity

**Immigrant Expectations**

Catherine's First Day

Gertrude Going to Chicago

**Adjusting to America**

Changing Her Name

Trying to "Fit In"