



Checking In Grade 4-7 Lesson Plan

Overview:

For many immigrants, the legal examination in the Registry Room represented the greatest challenge for those processed at Ellis Island. Inspectors expected these newly-arrived passengers to remember information that they submitted up to four weeks earlier, right before the ship embarked for the United States. After arriving at Ellis Island, immigrants endured a medical inspection, and waited nervously for around five hours, before the legal examination was conducted. In this activity, students will play an immigrant about to be questioned at Ellis Island.

Note: This activity requires that “manifest information” (explained later) be taken before the field trip. Or if time and with enough supervision, ask students these questions on the boat. Answers need to be recorded on a “manifest chart” or similar sheet.

Time Frame:

30-35 minutes

Materials:

Pencils, Paper, a blank manifest record (resembling one that immigrant officials used at Ellis Island, is available found on the Ellis Island website) or something similar based on historical ships manifests already completed before arriving at Ellis Island.

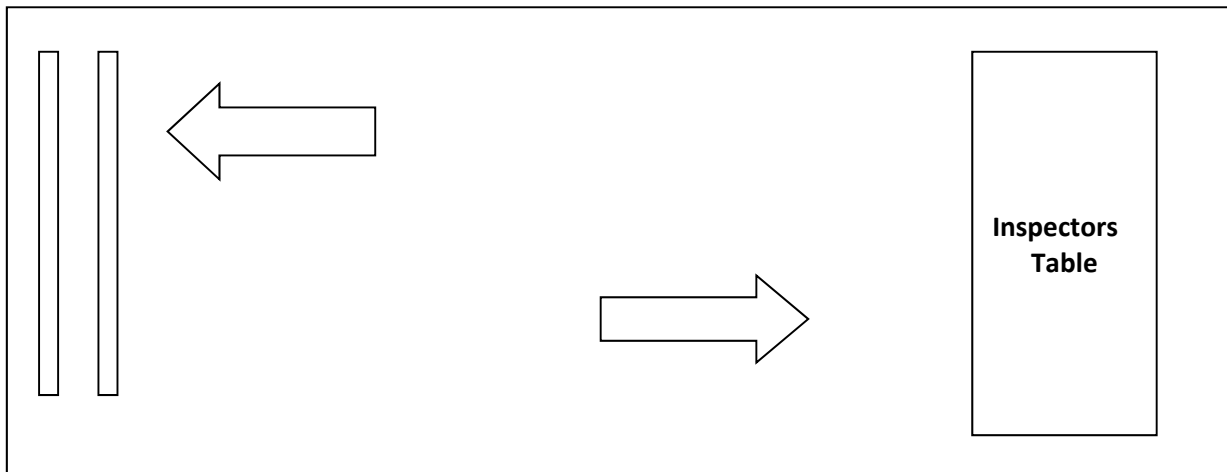
Objectives:

By the end of this activity, students will be able to:

- Describe some of the difficulties immigrants faced when processed at Ellis Island.
- Identify with some of the hopes and reservations (feelings) of immigrants arriving to the United States.
- Discuss some of the reasons why the American government questioned immigrants to be granted entry.

Procedure:

1. Set the classroom up to look the Great Hall at Ellis Island. Please see the diagram below.



2. Inform students that they will pretend to be immigrants about to be “checked in” to the United States. Pair students into groups of three-to-four and inform them that they will be a family waiting to be questioned. Explain that, during this “checking in” process, immigrants had to answer several questions before they were admitted to the country. Today, they will experience what it was like for immigrants.
3. Have students line up in two lines as they approach the wooden podiums. Using the already-completed “manifest chart,” ask the student some of or all of the questions asked of them before (i.e.: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” or “what city do you live in?” See “manifest chart”). One line should be established for each inspector (teacher, chaperone, etc.) The questions can be interchangeable to perhaps reflect what is going on in current events or to topic currently discussed in class.
4. Explain that the students will have to answer the questions asked before the trip. The group will line up as a family, but will answer separately when it is their turn to be interrogated. Also, inform students that whoever provides a different answer to one written on the sheet will be sent to political detention (or in “pretend trouble”).
5. After all students had their turn, the following questions should be asked and discussed.
 - How did it feel to be processed at Ellis Island? How do you think the immigrants felt as they were standing on line?
 - For those students detained, ask: What do you think it was like for passengers not allowed to immigrate to the United States?
 - How hard/difficult was it to answer questions, even easy questions, under pressure?
 - Now imagine that you and the inspector speak different languages! What problems might that cause? (Note: Luckily, interpreters/translators were there but it still would have been difficult to speak through an interpreter).

Manifest Record:

Before immigrants got on board, the shipping company clerks recorded information from passengers that will be verified when arriving at Ellis Island. This extensive survey asked immigrants a list of twenty-nine different questions, ranging from a person's birth and occupation, to whether the passengers declared themselves to be crazy or anarchists. Immigrant officials at Ellis Island referred to the responses of the manifest records for verification, often speed-firing nine-to-ten questions in sixty-seconds. Based on the answers, immigrants will either be admitted or be detained (held) for further questioning. A blank manifest record, resembling one that immigrant officials used at Ellis Island, is on the following page and is available at the "For Teachers" page on the Ellis Island website.

LIST OR MANIFEST FOR THE UNITED STATES IMMIGRATION OFFICER AT THE PORT OF ARRIVAL

No.	Passenger	Age	Country of Origin	Traveling with Family? (Yes or No?)	Why are you coming to the United States?	Job in America	How much money do you have?
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
6.							
7.							
8.							