

The following content will be used for items 9 - 11.

Here is a passage about people coming to America. Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Entering America's Gate

by Catherine Reef



The steamship sailed from a German port on May 13, 1920. Its three hundred passengers had paid twenty-five dollars each for their passage across the Atlantic Ocean to America. These people were immigrants. They had fled hunger and suffering in search of a better life. They came from different countries, including Russia, Romania, and Poland, and they spoke different languages. Yet they all had something in common—each hoped to make America his or her new home.

During the voyage, storms kept the immigrants from coming up on deck. Most people became seasick, and many wondered about the wisdom of leaving their native country.

On the seventh morning at sea, the sun broke through the clouds and the people came up from below. They crowded up on deck, breathing fresh air for the first time in days. And then the cry arose: There it is!

In the distance was a little dot on the horizon. As the ship moved closer, it got bigger and bigger—it was the Statue of Liberty. Her torch gleamed golden in the morning sunlight. "Lady Liberty!" the people shouted. They started laughing and singing. Some wept tears of joy. The welcoming Statue of Liberty seemed to promise that all of the immigrants' dreams would come true. But their trip was not yet over.

Just to the north of the Statue of Liberty was another well-known place—Ellis Island. As the passengers gazed out at this tiny island, they grew strangely quiet. Ellis Island was called the Gateway to America, but it was also called the Island of Tears. On this island, the United States government would decide whether the passengers would be allowed to stay in America or be sent back to their homelands.

The immigrants' ship docked in New York Harbor, and they were herded onto a ferry bound for Ellis Island. Dozens of ferries carrying hundreds of people made this trip to Ellis Island each day.

Inside the huge three-story red brick and concrete main building, immigration officers calling out in different languages directed the immigrants through their inspections. If the officials decided that the people were healthy and able to work, they were allowed to enter the country.

In all, about fifteen million immigrants were processed through Ellis Island between 1892 and 1954. Many had never been outside their villages before. Most didn't speak English, had very little money, and had left their families behind. Golda Meir, who later became the prime minister of Israel, emigrated from Russia in 1906 when she was eight. Golda said that coming to this unknown land was "almost like going to the moon!"

Most immigrants never returned to the land of their birth. One man remembers that his mother was crying very hard just before he left. He couldn't understand why. Years later he said, "I understand it now. I never saw her again."

Many times, a whole village pitched in to raise the money for a family's eldest son or daughter to buy a ticket to America. The immigrant would find work and after many months send back the sum borrowed. Then he or she would work to raise money to buy a ticket to bring other family members to America. Over a period of years, families emigrated in this way.

More immigrants were processed on Ellis Island than anywhere else in America. Almost half of the citizens living in the United States today are descended from immigrants who passed through Ellis Island's Registry Building.

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