



KALEIDOSCOPE

GALLAGHER BLUEDORN • **University of Northern Iowa**

Voices From Ellis Island – Video available December 14-23, 2010 Digital Chapters and Discussion Questions

The performance is approximately 70 minutes long. You can watch it all at once or it can be broken up into the following 4 digital “chapters” with the accompanying discussion questions. Additional questions and resources are also available via Scholastic at

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/tour/>

[Student Study Guide](#): includes vocabulary, character review, about Ellis Island, and historical timeline.

Post-Show Assessment can be found on pages 3-4 of this document.

Chapter 1 – Crossing the Atlantic

Approx. 18 minutes

Start of show until 16 minutes 16 seconds

Each character introduces him or herself and tells about their experiences crossing the Atlantic Ocean by ship from their home country in Europe.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Describe the experience of one of the stories told in the performance. How would you have reacted in that situation?
 - 2) What were some of the stories that the characters share about their experiences crossing the Atlantic Ocean? How has travel changed since the ear of Ellis Island?
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Chapter 2 – First Impressions

Approx. 11 minutes

Start at 16 minutes 15 seconds, end at 27 minutes 3 seconds

The characters recount their first impression of New York Harbor and being taken to Ellis Island.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What details do you remember from when the characters described their first impressions of New York Harbor and Ellis Island?

- 2) Why do you think first and second class passengers did not have to go to Ellis Island but third class passengers did? Was this fair? Why or why not?
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Chapter 3 – Island of Hope/Island of Tears

Approx. 26 minutes

Start of show at 27 minutes 3 seconds, end at 53 minutes 9 seconds

The characters tell of the medical examinations and legal inspections immigrants went through to determine if they could enter America or if they would be sent back to their home countries.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Why were the doctors at Ellis Island so concerned with detecting contagious diseases? What were they worried about?
 - 2) Several of the characters in the play were children. What stood out to you about their experiences? What do you remember them saying about their parents?
 - 3) What were some of the requirements that women specifically had to meet in order to enter the United States? Think about the characters of Vera, Rifka, and Jeannie in particular.
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Chapter 4 – New Americans

Approx. 15 minutes

Start of show at 53 minutes 9 seconds

The characters recount their final interviews with the commissioners and their joy and feelings about begin allowed to start their new lives in America.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How does immigration today compare to the era of immigration at Ellis Island?
 - 2) How did Pippa White show the differences between the characters that she was playing? Did she use more than one technique?
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Post-Show Assessment Options

WRITE A REVIEW

Goal: To write a review of the performance.

Explanation: In this activity, students will reflect on the performance by writing their own review.

Activity:

1. Ask students to imagine that they are a critic for the school newspaper. They are going to write a review of Voices from Ellis Island to inform others about what they experienced.

2. In the review they should describe with detail:

- what they saw
- what they heard
- how the performance made them feel
- what the performance reminded them of
- what their favorite part was and why

3. Remind students that they must paint a picture of the experience with their words so that others who did not see the performance can imagine it as vividly as possible.

Follow-up Question:

1. What did you include in your review?
2. Why was it important to include?

STARTING A NEW LIFE

Goal: To understand some of the difficult decisions immigrants had to make when leaving their homes

Explanation: In this activity, students will decide which of their family belongings they would take with them if moving to a new country.

Activity:

1. Invite students to imagine that they are leaving their home and moving to a new country. They can only take with them items that can fit in one suitcase.

2. Invite students to make a list of things that their family owns.

3. Students should then re-write the list in two columns headed "To Take" and "To Leave".

4. Remind students that what is in the suitcase will be the only possessions that they will have for establishing their new home and life.

Follow-up Questions: 1. What did you choose to take with you? 2. How did you choose whether or not to take something with you?

AN IMMIGRANT'S JOURNAL

Goal: To better understand immigrants' experiences before, during and after their time at Ellis Island.

Explanation: In this activity, students will write a journal from the perspective of an immigrant who passed through Ellis Island

Activity:

1. Explain to students that they are going to write several journal or diary entries from the perspective of an immigrant who traveled through Ellis Island.
2. In mirroring the sections of the play, their journal will have at least four entries devoted to the following topics:
 - Crossing the Atlantic Ocean
 - Their first impressions of New York Harbor or Ellis Island
 - Their experience with the inspections at Ellis Island
 - Their feelings at being admitted into the United States (or not being allowed to enter)
3. Students should choose the age, gender and home country of the fictitious immigrant whose perspective they are writing from. They should also include details about who they are traveling with, if they are traveling alone, and who is waiting for them in America.
4. If possible, provide students with print or electronic resources about Ellis Island so that they can conduct further research and look at images to help them enrich the details in their writing.
5. Encourage students to use as much specific imagery in their writing as possible about what their person saw, heard, smelled and felt on their journey.

Follow-up Questions:

1. What sort of person did you write about? Why do you think he or she wanted to start a new life in America?
2. What sources did you draw from when writing your journal? Details from the play? Books? Online resources?
3. What gaps in their story did you have to fill in with your imagination? How did those details help your story feel more real?