

PRIMARY SOURCE Artifacts from Ellis Island

Ellis Island was the chief immigration station in the United States from 1892 to 1954. What impressions of Ellis Island do you get from these artifacts?

Literacy Test Card, 1919

Class No. 3 Serial Number 5698 Polish

Bądźcie posłuszni przewodnikom swoim, i ulegajcie im; albowiem oni czuwają nad duszami waszemi, jako mający zdać sprawę, aby to z radością czynili, a nie wzdychając; bo dla was to niepożyteczne.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

(Hebrews 13:17)

Ellis Island Literacy card—Polish. By courtesy of the Ellis Island Immigration Museum.

Immigrants 16 years and older had to pass a literacy test in order to enter the United States. They were required to read a 40-word passage from the Bible in their native language.

Immigrant's Telegram, 1912

Form 1

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THEO. W. WALK, PRESIDENT BELVIDERE BROOKS, GENERAL MANAGER

NUMBER 15 SENT BY 13 CREDIT BY 7 CHECK 9-43 a

RECEIVED AT _____ 191
DATED In Stoboken N.J. 11
TO M Goldfusz
164 Ludlow St

Arrived Steamer Boardman
meet me Ellis Island
immediately Freide Goldfusz

Ellis Island telegram. By courtesy of the Ellis Island Immigration Museum.

Freide Goldfusz traveled alone to America to join her husband Morris. She was not allowed to leave Ellis Island until immigration officials knew she was in safe hands. This is the telegram she sent to her relatives in New Jersey.

Detention Card, 1899

FORM 1508 *Kraiw* *20*
United States Immigration Service, *20*
ELLIS ISLAND, NEW YORK HARBOR.

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DETENTION CARD.

Name, *Francis [unclear] [unclear]*
Address, *[unclear] [unclear]*
Vessel, *Sea Dragon*
Date, *Oct 27 1899* M.

CAUSE OF DETENTION:
No ticket to Kansas

Registry Clerk. *[Signature]*

JAN. FEB. MARCH. APRIL. MAY. JUNE. JULY. AUG. SEPT. OCT. NOV. DEC.

Ellis Island Detention card. National Archives.

Immigrants who failed inspection received detention cards like this one and remained temporarily at Ellis Island. Inspectors recorded the reason why some immigrants were detained, including a lack of money or health problems.

Activity Options

1. Working with a group of classmates, draw up a list of questions you would like to ask an immigrant like Freide Goldfusz who passed through Ellis Island.
2. With your class, brainstorm a list of people in your community who emigrated to the United States. Choose one person from the list and invite him or her to speak to your class about immigration. Afterwards, compare the speaker's experiences with those of immigrants you have read about.
3. Write a poem about immigration from the point of view of Freide Goldfusz or another immigrant who arrived at Ellis Island. Share your poem with classmates.