Before the Welcome

Why immigrants came and what they faced at two processing centers

USH.C.1.4.A "Summarize the reasons for immigration and the immigrant experiences at processing centers such as Ellis Island and Angel Island."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two reasons people came to the United States. Circle details about processing at Ellis Island, and number details about processing at Angel Island.

The Last Stop Before Entry

1 At the turn of the twentieth century, a ticket across an ocean could mean a new job or a reunion. Many Europeans left because wages were low, farmland was scarce, or religious persecution made life dangerous. They hoped to earn money, own land, or join relatives in the United States. People from Asia also crossed the Pacific seeking work and family connections. Yet a reason to leave home was not a promise of entry. Federal laws and officers at ports decided who could enter. For newcomers, the journey often ended first in an inspection line rather than at a new home.

2 At Ellis Island in New York Harbor, arriving passengers from ships' lower-cost sections passed through a busy processing center. Starting in 1892, officers checked documents and asked questions about work, money, and where each person would go. Doctors watched for signs of illness and gave further examinations when needed. Some families feared that a medical or legal problem would separate them. Most people examined there were admitted, often after a few hours, but others faced longer detention or were denied entry. For someone hoping to join a brother in a nearby city, the inspection could feel like the last uncertain step of a long trip.

3 At Angel Island in San Francisco Bay, which opened as an immigration station in 1910, many arrivals from Asia faced a different process. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 barred most Chinese laborers, but some Chinese people could seek entry under exceptions, including merchants and certain family members. Officials questioned applicants closely about family ties, sometimes comparing their answers with relatives' statements. Detention could last weeks or months, and some detainees carved poems into barrack walls. Some were admitted, while others were turned away. Both centers tested eligibility, but exclusion laws and lengthy questioning made the experience at Angel Island especially restrictive for many Chinese immigrants.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Summarize two reasons people left their homes and two things they hoped to find in the United States.

2. Summarize what an immigrant might experience during processing at Ellis Island, from inspection to a possible decision.

3. How did the Chinese Exclusion Act shape some immigrants' experiences at Angel Island?

4. Compare the uncertainty immigrants faced at Ellis Island and Angel Island. What made the Angel Island experience especially restrictive for many Chinese immigrants?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a six-sentence conversation between two fictional arrivals, one at Ellis Island and one at Angel Island. Give each person a passage-based reason for traveling and an accurate processing detail, then compare the risks they faced without claiming either person was definitely admitted.

ANSWER KEY

Before the Welcome

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.1.4.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two reasons people came to the United States. Circle details about processing at Ellis Island, and number details about processing at Angel Island. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Summarize two reasons people left their homes and two things they hoped to find in the United States.	**People left because of low wages and religious persecution. They hoped to earn money and join relatives in the United States.**
2	Summarize what an immigrant might experience during processing at Ellis Island, from inspection to a possible decision.	**Officers checked documents and asked questions, while doctors looked for illness. Most immigrants examined there were admitted, but some were detained or denied entry.**
3	How did the Chinese Exclusion Act shape some immigrants' experiences at Angel Island?	**The law barred most Chinese laborers, so applicants seeking entry under exceptions could face close questioning about their eligibility. Some were detained for weeks or months, and some were turned away.**
4	Compare the uncertainty immigrants faced at Ellis Island and Angel Island. What made the Angel Island experience especially restrictive for many Chinese immigrants?	**At both centers, immigrants could be detained or denied entry. At Angel Island, exclusion laws and lengthy questioning made entry especially difficult for many Chinese immigrants.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Ellis traveler: I left Europe because wages were low, and I hoped to join my brother in New York. Angel traveler: I came from China to join my wife, and as a merchant I hoped to qualify for an exception to the exclusion law. Ellis traveler: An officer asked where I would go, and a doctor checked for illness. Angel traveler: Officers questioned me closely about my family ties and compared my answers with my wife's. Ellis traveler: I worried that a problem could keep me from my brother. Angel traveler: We both faced uncertain entry, but the exclusion law and the possibility of long detention made my inspection especially hard.

Accept other passage-supported reasons and processing details. In the conversation, look for a historically plausible contrast rather than a claim that either fictional traveler was admitted.