

Fifth Grade Lesson on Turn of Century Immigration

GA Social Studies Standards

SS5HI Describe how life changed in America at the turn of the century.

d. Describe the reasons people immigrated to the United States, from where they emigrated, and where they settled.

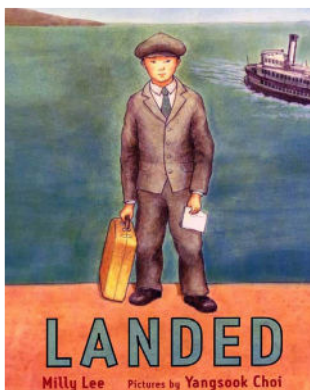
When teaching about immigration only focuses on Ellis Island and its mostly European immigrants, students don't get the opportunity to learn about immigration to the United States from other continents. Teaching about the Angel Island Immigration Station, located on the West Coast in the San Francisco Bay, will allow students to better understand our nation's rich diversity and its complicated past related to Asian immigrants.



San Francisco was the largest point of entry for Asian immigrants in the United States, processing one million people on their way into or out of the country between 1910 and 1940.

The history of Angel Island is directly related to anti-Chinese and anti-Asian immigration laws. When the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, immigration officials were required to carefully review the documents of all Chinese arrivals. This required passengers to be detained somewhere after

disembarking from their ships. Initially, other ships were used; but it soon became clear that a more permanent space was needed. Thus, Angel Island Immigration Station was built.



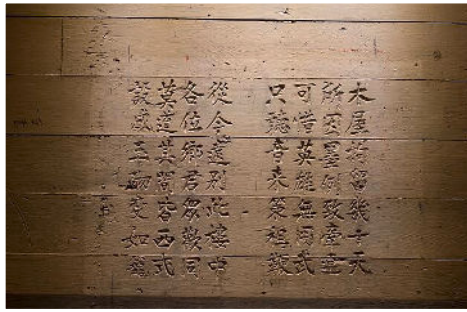
While Ellis Island Immigration Station was processing immigrants mostly from Europe, Angel

Island Immigration Station was processing immigrants mostly from Asia as well as Russia, Australia, and Latin America. The greatest distinction between Ellis and Angel Islands is that the former was meant to welcome immigrants to the United States while the latter was designed specifically to exclude them—at least the ones who were Chinese.



For comparison, the Ellis Island detention rates were 10% whereas 70% of the immigrants who arrived at Angel Island were detained. Part of the rationale behind these detentions was in response to a system of false immigration claims. In 1906, the San Francisco earthquake destroyed all of the city's birth records. This created an opportunity for members of the exempt classes of Chinese—who were still allowed to legally immigrate to the U.S.—to claim family members who didn't exist. Chinese who held fake identification papers were known as “paper sons” or “paper daughters.”





The lengthy detentions experienced by immigrants resulted in intense feelings of isolation and anger, and some carved poems expressing their feelings into the barrack walls. Over 200 poems have been preserved, mostly in Chinese but also in Russian, English, Japanese, and other languages.

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There are many teaching resources including primary sources, websites, virtual galleries, 3D tours of the immigration station, video clips, and picturebooks. Use QR code for the complete article and teaching suggestions.

Do you want to include more stories of Asian America into your lessons? Check out this fabulous book, *Teaching Asian America in Elementary Classrooms* by Noreen Naseem Rodríguez, Sohyun An, & Ester June Kim.

Complete Article and Lesson Plan



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Design by Justine Chung

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(Top to Bottom, Left to Right)

1. Highsmith, Carol M., 1946-photographer. The Jon B. Lovelace Collection of California Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America Project, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.
2. Lee, Milly and Yangsook Choi. *Landed*. 1st ed. Farrar Straus Giroux 2006.
3. Leung, Julie and Chris Sasaki. *Paper Son: The Inspiring Story of Tyrus Wong Immigrant and Artist*. First ed. Schwartz & Wade Books 2019.
4. Highsmith, Carol M., 1946-photographer. The Jon B. Lovelace Collection of California Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America Project, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

