

The American Dream

January 22 & 23, 2025

Gates of East & West

Classroom Discussion Activity

During the early 1900s, the United States had a major immigration station on its east and west coasts: Ellis Island in New York City and Angel Island in San Francisco Bay. These two ports of entry had many similarities as well as significant differences. Use this activity with students to learn more about the history of Ellis & Angel Islands.

Step 1: Research

Have students review the following recommended resources about the history of Angel Island and Ellis Island, either as individual homework or together in class. Remind students to take notes as they review each resource:

Angel Island

1. **U.S. Immigration Station, Angel Island (National Park Service)**
<https://www.nps.gov/places/u-s-immigration-station-angel-island.htm> (10 min read)
2. **Angel Island Immigration Station Tour (Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation)**
<https://youtu.be/RtQYhNuIXxQ> (8 min video)
3. **History of Angel Island Immigration Station (Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation)**
<https://www.aiisf.org/history> (15 min read)
4. **The Immigrants of Angel Island (TIME)**
<https://youtu.be/wkKBZ8aEeLY> (12 min video)

Note: This video contains a brief reference to suicide (timestamp 7:00-7:30)



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Ellis Island

1. **Immigrants at Ellis Island** (History Channel)
<https://youtu.be/bDNKHWzQiz8> (5 min video)
2. **Ellis Island Overview** (The Ellis Island-Statue of Liberty Foundation)
<https://www.statueofliberty.org/ellis-island/overview-history/> (8 min read)
3. **Film from 1974 Offers Rare Glimpse Inside an Abandoned Ellis Island**
(New York Times)
<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/28/opinion/ellis-island-immigration.html> (7 min video)
4. **Ellis Island: The Making of a Monument** (History Associates)
<https://www.historyassociates.com/ellis-island-the-making-of-a-monument/> (10 min read)



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Step 2: Discuss

Reflect together as a group to discuss the following questions:

- What years were Angel Island open? How many immigrants did it serve? From what countries did immigrants arrive? Why did it close?
- What years were Ellis Island open? How many immigrants did it serve? From what countries did immigrants arrive? Why did it close?
- What was the intake process at Angel Island? How long did it take? Was it the same for everyone? Why or why not?
- What was the intake process at Ellis Island? How long did it take? Was it the same for everyone? Why or why not?
- Compare what you know about Angel Island and Ellis Island. What similarities do you notice? What is different? Why do you think those differences existed?
- What else do you want to know about the immigration process? What is the first step you will take to find out?