Description: Students will learn what it was like to be a new immigrant coming to America. Students will learn about life on a ship during the long journey to America, and go through two processing stations that all immigrants went through at Ellis Island.

Learning Objectives:
• Students will learn about the difficulties many immigrants endured in coming to America.
• Students will learn how the process at Ellis Island worked and the importance of physical and mental health to ensure the safety of the community.

Activity Time: 55 minutes

Materials:
• One adult (if possible) for each of the two processing stations
• Ellis Island stations ticket — one for each student (page 6 of 7)
• Mock passports — one for each student (page 7 of 7)
• Chairs or desks that can be arranged for students to step up and down on
• Stopwatch
• Flashlight
• Tongue depressors or popsicle sticks (one for each student)

Directions:
Set up:
• Make a copy of the Ellis Island stations ticket (page 6 of 7) for each student.
• Prepare a passport (page 7 of 7) for each student, filling in their name and country.
• Create slips of paper labeled 1, 2 or 3 (one for each student).

Day of the Activity:
• Explain to students that they will be learning what it was like to be an immigrant coming to America.
• Give students their passports.
• Have students gather all of their “belongings” (backpacks, jackets, books, folders, etc.) and gather in the ship. The ship will be a corner of the classroom; pack students in tightly. Turn off the classroom lights.
• Describe the journey to America using the attached script.
Station #1 – Registry
Ask students these questions:

1.) Do you already have a job waiting for you? If “yes,” send the student back to the ship.
2.) Do you have a place to stay?
3.) Do you have a final destination? If “yes,” where?
4.) Do you have at least $25? If “no,” send the student back to the ship.

Anyone who doesn’t meet these criteria will be deported back to their home country. If all is OK, have the adult at the registry station initial the student’s Ellis Island stations ticket and send the student on to the medical examiner.

Station #2 – Medical Examiner

- Have each student walk over chairs or desks while carrying all of their belongings.
- Once they are through, take their pulse (using the stopwatch), and look at the person’s skin, throat (using the tongue depressor or popsicle sticks and the flashlight), hands and eyes.
- You are looking for the following:
  Skin = discoloration, major cuts or bruising
  Throat = redness, soreness, swollen
  Hands = nails for disease called Favus
  Eyes = Contagious disease called Trachoma

Have students draw a slip of paper from a jar that is labeled 1, 2 or 3. If they draw a 1, they pass the medical inspection; if they draw a 2, they are sick and will be sent to the hospital ward; if they draw a 3, they are seriously ill and highly contagious and will go back to the ship for deportation home.

- Have the medical examiner initial the student’s Ellis Island stations ticket.
- Once all students have been processed, lead a class discussion on what they feel were some of the greatest challenges for immigrants coming to America.

Extend the Activity: Have students write a paper on their experience as an immigrant.

Submitted by Heather Liput, McHenry Middle School, McHenry, Illinois
Correlation to National Curriculum Standards:

I. Culture
   b. explain how information and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference

II. Time, Continuity & Change
   c. identify and describe selected historical periods and patterns of change within and across cultures, such as the rise of civilizations, the development of transportation systems, the growth and breakdown of colonial systems and others
   e. develop critical sensivities such as empathy and skepticism regarding attitudes, values and behaviors of people in different historical contexts
   f. use knowledge of facts and concepts drawn from history, along with methods of historical inquiry to inform decision-making about and action-taking on public issues

III. People, Places & Environment
   h. interpret and analyze physical and cultural patterns and their interactions, such as land use, settlement patterns, cultural transmission of customs and ideas, and ecosystem changes
   i. describe ways that historical events have been influenced by, and have been influenced, physical and human geographic factors in local, regional, national and global settings

V. Individuals, Groups & Institutions
   a. demonstrate an understanding of concepts such as role, status and social class in describing the interactions of individuals and social groups
   b. analyze group and institutional influences on people, events and elements of culture
   f. describe the role of institutions in furthering both continuity and change

VI. Power, Authority & Governance
   a. examine persistent issue involving the rights, roles, and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare
   c. analyze and explain ideas and governmental mechanisms to meet needs and wants of citizens, regulate territory, manage conflict and establish order and security

IX. Global Connections
   b. analyze examples of conflict, cooperation and interdependence among groups, societies and nations

From National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, Middle grades
Teacher script – The Journey to America

(Shorten this script as necessary, depending on your class time)

• If there are no bad storms or other problems, the trip to America will take about 12—32 days. First and second-class passengers will get a private room and eat meals in a dining room. (Select one or two students and move them to a desk near the “ship”). Most of you are in steerage. There is no fresh air, and you sleep in hanging cots three high. In the winter it is very cold and some of you may become frostbitten. There is only one bath area for all of steerage. The pipes on the faucets often are broken, and it is very filthy. The food in steerage will be lukewarm soup, boiled potatoes, and stringy beef when available. Most meals consist of just bread, tea and herring (fish). Oh, by the way, just pick the worms and rat hairs off your food.

• When the weather is good, you may spend most of the daylight time on deck. Children can play marbles or dominoes or help the sailors with the chores. Women can wash their children’s hair to prevent lice and later deportation. Many of you will become seasick. You may become very dizzy and start vomiting.

• Sickness is very dangerous and spreads quickly on the ship. Last voyage, all the children came down with measles. Some died and were buried at sea. Please try to keep clean and healthy. Typhus or “ship fever” can be spread quickly through lice and cholera. Remember, if you are unhealthy when we reach America, you may be sent back to your home country.

• When we first arrive in America, look for the tall buildings and the Statue of Liberty welcoming you to the new world. All first and second-class passengers will get to go to Ellis Island and through customs right away. People in steerage will have to wait several hours to a few days before they are allowed to go to Ellis Island for processing. Once on Ellis Island get all your baggage and papers together. You will wait in line for processing, which can take several hours to a few days.

• We are now at Ellis Island, 20 days after beginning our journey. Here at Ellis Island you will enter into the Great Hall (about the size of a football stadium). Thousands of people are here with all their belongings. About 30 different languages are being spoken at once.

Explain that immigrants had to be processed through four stations.

• At the registry station, immigrants were checked to make sure all papers were in order and that no one arrived with a job already waiting for them. This would be against the rules and a reason for deportation. Each person arriving in America had to have a final destination, a place to stay and at least $25.
At the medical exam station, a medical examiner gave immigrants a “six second medical” where they look for lumps or difficulty breathing, and they also checked for other health problems. Only people healthy enough to work were allowed to enter America.

At the mental exam station, immigrants were given a short mental test because no feebleminded people were allowed into America.

At the legal station, immigrants were asked questions such as where were they going? Who paid for their passage? Did they already have a job? (If they did, they were deported.) Had they ever committed a crime? (If they had, they were deported.)

Explain that today the class will be processed through two stations: the registry and the medical exam station.

Continue to lead the activity:

- First and second-class passengers depart first. Have all your belongings and papers with you. Follow all directions given to you. (Hand the one or two students who were selected as first or second-class passengers their Ellis Island stations ticket. All other students stay on ship until these students are finished being processed.) Once first and second-class passengers/students are processed, proceed with the following:

- All right, passengers in steerage grab all of your belongings and papers. Remember to follow all directions given to you. (Hand these students their Ellis Island stations ticket and line them up behind the two stations.)
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