

Name: _____

Welcome to America

Anna and her sister had to move. Their parents packed a bag for each of them. They were not sure where they were going. They knew they were going to have a better life. They were not moving to a new town. They were not moving to a new state. They were moving to a new country. The girls were excited. They were nervous. They did not know too much about the country they were going to. All that they knew was that a better life was waiting for them. Anna's family boarded a ship. They traveled across an ocean. They landed in America.



Anna's family were immigrants. An immigrant is a person who leaves one country and moves to another to live. From 1892 to 1954, over 12 million immigrants came to the United States. They first went to an island. The island was like a doorway to the U.S. It was called Ellis Island. Ellis Island is in the New York Harbor.

Ellis Island started as a small island. It was made of sand. The Native Americans had called it "Gull Island." Later, it became known as "Oyster Island." Fishermen often went there to catch oysters. Then, in 1770, Samuel Ellis bought the island. For many years the island was used for many things. It was a resting spot for ships. It was a military fort. Then it became an immigration station.

Before 1892, each state was in charge of who would enter the country. People came to the U.S. from England. They came from Ireland and Germany. People from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark traveled, too. The government opened a station. The station helped people enter the U.S. It was known as Ellis Island.

On January 1, 1892, Ellis Island opened. The next day, Annie Moore came to the U.S. She was from Ireland. She was 15 years old. She came with her two brothers. Annie was the first to come through Ellis Island.

Immigrants traveled to the U.S. by ship. Names were taken before getting on the ship. Each person was asked many questions. These questions were used again at Ellis Island. This was done to make sure that each person was telling the truth. Each person was checked over. They were checked to make sure they were not sick. Some people were checked on the ship. Those that had money were checked on the ship. They also rode in the best sections of the ship. They were free to go when they reached the island. If passengers did not have money, they rode in the worst parts of the ship. It was crowded. It was not clean. When they got to the U.S., they went to Ellis Island. They were given an exam. They stayed there for three to five hours. If they passed the inspection, they were free to go.

After World War I, something changed. The U.S. set up headquarters in other countries. These were called embassies. People would go there to do the paperwork to come to the U.S. A doctor would give them exams. Then, they would come to the U.S. and not go through Ellis Island. In 1954, Ellis Island officially closed.

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In 1965, President Johnson did not want Ellis Island to be forgotten. He made it a part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument. Today, the main building is a museum. About two million people visit each year.

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Questions

1. What is an immigrant?

_____ 2. Ellis Island was like a _____ to the U.S.

- A. hotel
- B. train
- C. magic carpet
- D. doorway

_____ 3. What was Ellis Island used for before it became an immigration station?

- A. a resting spot for ships
- B. a military fort
- C. both a and b
- D. none of the above

4. Before Ellis Island was opened, who was in charge of people entering the U.S.?

_____ 5. From what countries did most people come to the U.S.?

- A. England and Ireland
- B. Germany
- C. Norway, Sweden, Denmark
- D. all of the above

_____ 6. On January 1, 1892, Ellis Island opened.

- A. false
- B. true

7. Describe the first person to enter the U.S. through Ellis Island.

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8. What was the trip to the U.S. like for immigrants that had money?

9. What was the trip like for immigrants that did not have money?

_____ 10. What was set up in each country so that immigrants would not have to travel through Ellis Island?

- A. U.S. headquarters called embassies
- B. stores
- C. post offices
- D. airports

11. What is Ellis Island used for today?
