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## An Ellis Island Christmas

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**Diverse Families Children’s Literature Lesson**

**Written by Alexandra McMillin**

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<p>Lesson Title</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Include the name, author/illustrator of the book</li> </ul>	<p><b>Lesson Plan Title: A New Beginning</b>  <b>Book Title: <i>An Ellis Island Christmas</i></b>  <b>Book Author: Maxinne Rhea Leighton</b>  <b>Book Illustrator: Dennis Nolan</b></p>
<p>Content Area(s) and Grade Level(s):</p>	<p>Social Studies, Language Arts/2-4</p>
<p>Lesson Objective(s)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students will be able to describe the importance of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty in relation to immigration.</li> <li>● Students will be able to use descriptive words and phrases in the book that are used to portray a theme and be able to determine the theme of the story.</li> <li>● Students will be able to recount key details in a text to determine the main idea of the text.</li> <li>● Students will be able to explain what Ellis Island is and describe the connection between immigrants and their journey to Ellis Island.</li> </ul>
<p>Florida Standards:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SS.2.A.2.6 Discuss the importance of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty to immigration from 1892 - 1954.</li> <li>● LAFS.2.RI.1.3 Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.</li> <li>● LAFS.3.RL.1.2 Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.</li> <li>● LAFS.4.RL.1.2-Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This lesson plan could also introduce the idea of primary sources. (SS.2.A.1.1 Examine primary and secondary sources.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Assessment:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students will be asked how the book made them feel and what words were used in the story to make them feel this way.</li> <li>● Students will be asked to explain how they would feel if they were in the position that the main character of the story is in.</li> <li>● Students will be asked what the word “immigrant” means to them.</li> <li>● Students will be asked what they would do/how they would feel if they were an immigrant leaving their homes to travel to America.</li> <li>● Teacher will observe students as they answer the questions to the motivating activity to see what they know/need to learn.</li> <li>● Teacher will observe students during their travel through Ellis Island to assess their understanding by listening to them discuss the facts listed at each stop.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exit slip: Students will write down 3 new things they learned about immigration and Ellis Island that they did not previously know, and turn it in to the teacher. Students may write things like:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>An immigrant is....</i></li> <li>○ <i>There were ten stops that immigrants had to go through at Ellis Island</i></li> <li>○ <i>Immigrants went to Ellis Island because...</i></li> <li>○ <i>Immigrants traveled to Ellis Island on a boat</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Motivating Activity &amp; Anticipatory Set/Access Prior Knowledge:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This lesson will begin with an activity based on the journey to Ellis Island. Each student will choose a slip from a jar. There will be ten slips labeled “guard” and the rest will be labeled “immigrant”. The guards will stand on dots that were previously placed in the classroom and they will each be given different notecards that have 5 questions about immigration. The immigrants will take turns going to the guards and answering one question at a time. If they answer the question correctly, they will go to the next guard. If they answer the question incorrectly, the immigrant will take the place of the guard and the guard will go to the next guard and answer a question. The goal is to make it past all 10 of the guards into America. America will contain a prize box full of fun prizes for students to pick one item from. (Prize box can contain prizes relating to Ellis Island including American flags and Statue of Liberty figurines, stickers, pencils, erasers, etc.)</li> <li>● The objective of this activity is to show the students the struggles that immigrants had to go through in order to make it to Ellis Island, there were 10 stops. The ten guards represent these stops.</li> <li>● It is important as the teacher to be listening to the students who are answering the questions that way we can evaluate what the students know and don’t know.</li> <li>● Some questions on the notecard can include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is Ellis Island?</li> <li>○ What is an immigrant?</li> <li>○ Why did people want to come to America?</li> <li>○ How did people get to America?</li> <li>○ Where is Ellis Island located?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>*Note that it is important to be lenient with students’ answers because we are trying to assess their background knowledge and not expect them to know a lot about something they haven’t learned.</p>
<p>Procedures:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teacher will read the story, <i>An Ellis Island Christmas</i> by Maxinne Rhea Leighton. Before beginning to read, the teacher will ask students to pay attention to certain words or phrases that describe the mood of the story. Some examples include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Cold and snowing”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Closure:

- “My feet hurt”
- “The soup was cold...the bread was white, dry, and hard”
- “It smelled bad”
- “Rougher”
  
- During the story, the teacher will emphasize the parts of the story listed above by changing tones and using gestures such as shivering when it says “cold”, and making a “stinky” face when the story says “it smelled bad.”
  
- After reading the story, the teacher will ask students questions relating to the theme and main idea of the story. **(UDL 7.2: Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity)** Students will also be asked questions about the plot of the story. **(EL Strategy: Teach questioning for clarification)**
  - *Teacher: What words did you notice in the story that explained the main character’s mood?*  
*Student: When she said the soup was cold and the bread was dry and that she felt sick I knew that she was not happy.*
  - *Teacher: How would you feel if you were in the main character’s position?*  
*Student: I would feel sad because I don’t want to leave my home.*
  - *Teacher: What was this book about?*  
*Student: This book was about a girl who was leaving her home in Poland with her family to travel to America to be with her Papa.*
  
- Next, students will be asked to work with their groups (EL Strategy: Promote cooperation (small groups) to come up with the main idea, and a central theme to the story. (UDL principle: 3.2 Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships.)
  
- After coming up with a main idea and theme of the story in groups, each group will share the theme they came up with and as a class, come up with a central theme.
  - *Main Idea: The main character was scared to leave her home but after the long journey, became hopeful of her new life.*
  - *Theme: The journey to America was difficult, but well worth it.*
  
- After coming up with a theme as a class, the students will be asked a few more questions about the book:
  - *Teacher: How do you think the little girl felt when she had to leave her home in Poland?*



*Student: Sad.*

- *Teacher: How do you think she felt when she got to America?*

*Student: Happy because the journey was over and she finally got to see her Papa.*

- *Teacher: In history, there were many people who traveled from other countries to America in search of a better life. Do you know what these people were called?*

*Student: ...*

*Teacher: They were called immigrants!*

- Next, the students will take a tour of Ellis Island. The classroom will be set up with the 10 different stops of Ellis Island. Each stop will contain a picture of what the stop looked like, with 1-3 facts about the stop.
  - *Stop 1: The passage- This stop will contain pictures of the steamships the immigrants used to travel to America.*  
*Fact #1: Immigrants traveled from Europe to America by steamship.*  
*Fact #2: About 3,000 people were crowded on each steamship.*
  - *Stop 2: The Arrival- Stop will contain pictures of the Statue of Liberty*  
*Fact #1: The Statue of Liberty stands on its own island in the harbor.*  
*Fact #2: At this stop, health officers boarded the ship in the harbor and checked immigrants for disease.*
  - *Stop 3: The Ellis Island Baggage Room- This stop will contain pictures of the baggage room and immigrants carrying their baggages.*  
*Fact #1: At this stop, the officers passed out number identity tags.*
  - *Stop 4: The Stairs to the Registry Room- This stop will contain pictures of the stairs and immigrants in the registry room.*  
*Fact #1: In this stage, doctors stood on the second floor and looked for people who had trouble walking or breathing.*
  - *Stop 5: The Registry Room- This stop will contain pictures of the registry room and all of the immigrants in the registry room.*  
*Fact #1: The registry was nicknamed the Great Hall because it was so big.*  
*Fact #2: In this stop, officials decided whether each person could enter the country right away or whether that person's case required further review.*
  - *Stop 6: The Medical Exam- This stop will contain photos of the medical exam room and a picture of the chalk symbols used at Ellis Island, and what each symbol meant.*  
*Fact #1: In this stop, doctors performed a "6-second physical" on each immigrant and looked for signs of contagious disease.*  
*Fact #2: If someone was considered a risk to the public health, his or her clothes were marked by a piece of chalk with an identifying letter.*



*Fact #3: Immigrants who were marked were taken out of the line and kept for further examination.*

- *Stop 7: The Legal Inspection- This stop will contain pictures of immigrants being questioned by officials.*

*Fact #1: Each arriving steamship's crew gave officials at Ellis Island a list of names of the passengers onboard. This list was called "the manifest"*

*Fact #2: Officials asked each person 29 questions including questions about their marriage, occupation, money, etc.*

- *Stop 8: Detainees- This stop will contain photos of dormitories on Ellis Island.*

*Fact #1: For people who failed the health or legal inspections, Ellis Island was called the "Isle of Tears".*

*Fact #2: Legal detainees lived in a dormitory room on the third floor where they would stay for a few days or even a month.*

*Fact #3: People who were detained for medical reasons were cared for at the island's hospital or kept in quarantine.*

- *Stop 9: The Stairs of Separation- This stop will contain photos of the stairs of separation and the railway station.*

*Fact #1: The Stairs of Separation had three separate aisles. One aisle for the immigrants who were being detained, one for people travelling west or south, and one for those going to New York City or north.*

*Fact #2: At the bottom of the stairs there was a post office and ticketing office for railways.*

- *Stop 10: The Kissing Post- This stop will contain images of the exterior of the main building and images of the immigrants standing outside, ready to begin their new life.*

*Fact #1: An area on the first floor of the building was named "The Kissing Post" because this is where people met with their loved ones.*

- Students will do a gallery walk and be sure to look at the pictures and read about the facts of Ellis Island at each stop. Next, we will regroup and play a game of Jeopardy with questions that contain the facts listed in the gallery walk, along with some other questions about immigration in general.
- Exit slip: Students will write down 3 new things they learned about immigration and Ellis Island that they did not previously know, and turn it in to the teacher.
- ❖ Additionally, students can create "immigrant cards" containing a picture that they drew of themselves, and information about themselves including things like hair color, eye color, ethnicity, homeland, and hobbies. This can be done



before the lesson or in the middle as a way to integrate arts and allow for students to be creative.

Materials:

- Paper slips with the words “immigrant” and “guard” written on them
- Jar
- Notecards with questions
- Paper dots (other items such as duct tape would also work)
- Prize box
- Book: Leighton, M. R., & Nolan, D. (2018). *An Ellis Island Christmas*. New York: Puffin Books.
- Pencil
- Paper
- Website:  
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/tour/stop10.htm#tab1-content>  
\*Facts for Gallery Walk will be derived from this website\*
- Website: <https://unsplash.com/s/photos/ellis-island>  
\*Pictures for Gallery Walk can be derived from this site\*
- Jeopardy Website URL:  
<https://www.superteachertools.us/jeopardyx/brandnewgame.php?>

Additional resources and activities to go along with the introduction of primary sources:

- <https://www.docsteach.org/activities/printactivity/ellis-island-the-journey-begins>
- <https://www.nps.gov/elis/learn/education/primary-sources-for-your-classroom.htm>
- <https://reimaginingmigration.org/ellis-island-island-hope-island-tears/>