

## **The New American study guide**

**Objective:** Through the viewing of and participation in the live presentation of *The New American*, as well as the use of this packet for pre and post performance exploration, students will gain a greater understanding of the process of immigration and assimilation in the early twentieth century, then will be able to draw parallels between immigration to the United States and other historical events.

### **Story synopsis**

Bridget Fitzgerald is born and raised in County Clare, Ireland in the early twentieth century. Like people in many countries around the world, her family faces many hardships brought on by economic and political forces beyond their control. Bridget's father finds it increasingly difficult to make enough money to pay the landlord's rent on their farm. Hoping for a little extra income, Father sends Bridget's older brother, Denny, to Dublin to work in the factories. Things are looking better until Denny disappears with no trace. Father is forced to send his youngest child, Bridget, to America where they have a distant cousin who will take her in and allow her to work in his home. They hope that she'll be able to make a great deal of money and save the farm and family.

In 1910, Bridget travels across the Atlantic in the steerage compartment of a steamship with hundreds of other hopeful immigrants. She makes friends with another young Irish girl named Katie, who helps Bridget survive the cramped and difficult journey at sea. Katie is traveling to America to marry a man named Johnny whom she only knows through a photograph and some letters.

Upon arrival at Ellis Island, Bridget is assaulted with a barrage of tests and questions, as well as the noise and crowds of thousands of people from around the world. She worries about failing the inspection, which would mean she could be sent back to Ireland, and disaster for her and her family. Katie is marked for suspicion for an eye disease, but a friendly neighbor advises her to hide the letter "E" that has been drawn on her shawl and continue through. Both Bridget and Katie are approved for entry into the United States. Katie, however, may not leave Ellis Island until she is married to Johnny, as young women are not allowed off the island with a man not related to them. Bridget is permitted to leave when her cousin picks her up.

Once in New York's Lower East Side, Bridget learns that her cousin is really the janitor in a tenement building, where she is expected to work for no pay. Knowing that she will never be able to earn the money needed to save her father and the farm this way, Bridget strikes out into the streets where she discovers people of all nationalities, languages, and cultures living in small neighborhoods. At the Irish Aid Society, she is invited to live in their home for young women, and she finds Katie working there. The matron helps Bridget get a job at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, where she is one of the only Irish girls among mostly Italian and Jewish workers. To her surprise, she makes friends with an English girl named Rose: this friendship would never have happened in Ireland. Finally, she is earning enough money to send home, which helps her father bring the farm out of debt.

One afternoon, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory catches fire and Bridget narrowly escapes being a victim in one of America's worst factory disasters. Afterwards, with the help of Katie and Johnny, Bridget gets a new job in the household of a rich Irish politician, sending even more money home than she had been from the factory.

Bridget's father sends word that her brother Denny was killed by British troops during an incident in Dublin. He is regarded as a political hero. Father then informs Bridget that he intends to give the farm to their cousin Patrick and that she should consider staying in America. Bridget realizes that there is no life for her in Ireland any more, and decides to become a citizen of the United States. Although a part of

her still thinks of Ireland, she realizes that she now belongs with the people from around the world who have come together to create a new way of life in a new world. She knows that she is an American.

### **Chronology: Changes in Immigration and Naturalization Laws**

Source: <http://www.immigrationforum.org/pubs/articles/chronology2001.htm>

**1790** - Naturalization is authorized for "free white persons" who have resided in the United States for at least two years and swear loyalty to the U.S. Constitution. The racial requirement would remain on the federal books until 1952, although naturalization was opened to certain Asian nationalities in the 1940s.

**1798** - The ***Alien and Sedition Acts*** authorize the President to deport any foreigner deemed to be dangerous and make it a crime to speak, write, or publish anything "of a false, scandalous and malicious nature" about the President or Congress. An amended Naturalization Act imposes a 14-year residency requirement for prospective citizens; in 1802, Congress would reduce the waiting period to five years, a provision that remains in effect today.

**1882** - The ***Chinese Exclusion Act*** suspends immigration by Chinese laborers for ten years; the measure would be extended and tightened in 1892 and a permanent ban enacted in 1902. This marks the first time the United States has restricted immigration on the basis of race or national origin.

**1891** - To the list of undesirables ineligible for immigration, Congress adds polygamists, "persons suffering from a loathsome or a dangerous contagious disease," and those convicted of "a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude."

**1906** - The first **language requirement** is adopted for naturalization: ability to speak and understand English.

**1907-8** - Under a so-called "**Gentlemen's Agreement**," the United States promises not to ban Japanese immigration in exchange for Japan's pledge not to issue passports to Japanese laborers for travel to the continental United States (although they remain welcome to become agricultural workers in Hawaii). By a separate executive order, President Theodore Roosevelt prohibits secondary migration by Japanese from Hawaii to the mainland.

**1917** - Over President Wilson's veto, Congress enacts a literacy requirement for all new immigrants: ability to read 40 words in some language. Most significant in limiting the flow of newcomers, it **designates Asia as a "barred zone"** (excepting Japan and the Philippines) from which immigration will be prohibited.

**1921** - A new form of immigration restriction is born: **the national-origins quota system**. Admissions from each European country will be limited to 3% of each foreign-born nationality in the 1910 census. The effect is to favor Northern Europeans at the expense of Southern and Eastern Europeans. Immigration from Western Hemisphere nations remains unrestricted; most Asians will continue to face exclusion.

**1924** - Restrictionists' decisive stroke, the ***Johnson-Reed Act***, embodies the principle of preserving America's "racial" composition. Immigration quotas will be based on the ethnic makeup of the U.S. population as a whole in 1920. The new national-origins quota system is even more discriminatory than the 1921 version. "America must be kept American," says President Coolidge as he signs the bill into law. Another provision bans all immigration by persons "ineligible to citizenship"--primarily affecting the Japanese.

**1943** - To appease a wartime ally, a token quota (105) is created for Chinese immigration. Yet unlike white immigrants, whose quotas depend on country of residence, all persons of "Chinese race" will be counted under the Chinese quota regardless of where they reside.

**1950** - The ***Internal Security Act***, enacted over President Truman's veto, bars admission to any foreigner who might engage in activities "which would be prejudicial to the public interest, or would endanger the welfare or safety of the United States." It excludes or permits deportation of noncitizens who belong to the U.S. Communist Party or whose future activities might be "subversive to the national security."

**1952** - The ***McCarran-Walter Act*** retains the national-origins quota system and "internal security" restrictions, despite Truman's opposition. For the first time, however, Congress sets aside minimum annual quotas for all countries, opening the door to numerous nationalities previously kept out on racial grounds. Naturalization now requires ability to read and write, as well as speak and understand, English.

**1965** - The United States finally **eliminates racial criteria** from its immigration laws. Each country, regardless of ethnicity, will receive an annual quota of 20,000, under a ceiling of 170,000. Up to 120,000 may immigrate from Western Hemisphere nations, which are still not subject to country quotas (an exception Congress would eliminate in 1976).

**1986** - The ***Immigration Reform and Control Act*** gives amnesty to approximately three million undocumented residents. For the first time, the law punishes employers who hire persons who are here illegally. The aim of employer sanctions is to make it difficult for the undocumented to find employment. The law has a side effect: employment discrimination against those who look or sound "foreign."

**1990** - The ***Immigration Act of 1990***, raises the limit for legal immigration to 700,000 people a year.

**1996** - A persistent recession in the U.S. in the early 90's, among other reasons, leads to calls for new restrictions on immigration. The ***Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act*** is passed, toughening border enforcement, closing opportunities for undocumented immigrants to adjust their status, and making it more difficult to gain asylum. The law greatly expands the grounds for deporting even long-resident immigrants. It strips immigrants of many due process rights, and their access to the courts. New income requirements are established for sponsors of legal immigrants. In the ***Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act***, Congress makes citizenship a condition of eligibility for public benefits for most immigrants.

**1997** - A new Congress mitigates some of the overly harsh restrictions passed by the previous Congress. In the Balanced Budget Agreement with the President, **some public benefits are restored** for some elderly and disabled immigrants who had been receiving them prior to the 1996 changes. With the ***Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act***, Congress restores an opportunity for certain war refugees living in legal limbo to become permanent residents.

**1998** - Congress continues to mitigate some of the nativist provisions passed by the Congress in 1996 by partially restoring access to public benefits for additional groups of legal immigrants. The ***Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act*** resolves the legal limbo status of certain Haitian refugees, and allows them to become permanent U.S. residents. Responding to the pleas of powerful employer groups, Congress passes the ***American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act***, which significantly raises the number of skilled temporary foreign workers U.S. employers are allowed to bring to the U.S.

**2000** - Congress continues to move incrementally in a pro-immigrant direction, passing the compromise ***Legal Immigration Family Equity Act***, which creates a narrow window for immigrants with family or

employer sponsors to adjust to legal status in the U.S.; resolves the legal limbo of certain immigrants denied legalization in the mid-1980's; and provides temporary visas for certain family-sponsored immigrants waiting for their green cards. For the second time in three years, Congress significantly raises the ceiling for skilled temporary workers. The *Child Citizenship Act* grants automatic U.S. citizenship to foreign-born adopted children. The *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act* provides visas for trafficking and crime victims. Congress modifies the Naturalization law to allow severely disabled immigrants to become citizens even if they cannot understand the Oath of Allegiance.

#### **SOURCES:**

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Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1950* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988);

John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, 2d ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988);

Maldwyn Allen Jones, *American Immigration*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

#### **Facts on Refugees and Asylees**

Source: <http://www.immigrationforum.org/pubs/articles/refugeesasylees.htm>

#### **What's the difference between a refugee and an asylee?**

Refugees and asylees are people seeking protection in the U.S. on the grounds that they fear persecution in their homeland. A refugee applies for protection while outside the United States. An asylee first comes to the United States and, once here, applies for protection. Refugees generally apply in refugee camps or at designated processing sites outside their home countries. In some instances, refugees may apply for protection within their home countries, such as in the Former Soviet Union, Cuba, and Vietnam. If accepted as a refugee, the person is sent to the U.S. and receives assistance through the "refugee resettlement program."

#### **How many refugees does the U.S. accept?**

The United States accepts a limited number of refugees each year. This number is determined by the President in consultation with Congress. In fiscal year 2002, for example, 70,000 refugees were permitted to come to the U.S. The total number of refugees admitted is divided among different regions of the world. In fiscal year 2002, the regions and the numbers of admissions were:

- Africa—22,000
- Eastern Europe—9,000
- Former Soviet Union—17,000
- East Asia—4,000
- Near East/South Asia—15,000
- Latin America and the Caribbean—3,000

#### **How does someone gain refugee status?**

To qualify for refugee resettlement in the U.S., a person must come from a country designated by the Department of State. The person must meet the definition of a refugee by proving that she has a **well-founded fear of persecution**. The refugee applicant must prove that this fear is based on the possibility of persecution because of her *race, religion, membership in a social group, political opinion, or national origin*. In addition, a refugee must fit into one of a set of "priority" categories, which factor in

degree of risk to the refugee's life, membership in certain groups of special concern to the U.S., and existence of family members in the U.S.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), makes a determination on refugee status on a case by case basis. If the INS decides the individual meets the refugee criteria, the refugee must undergo an additional screening for possible medical or security reasons that might make him or her inadmissible to the U.S.

After refugees have been in the U.S. for one year, they are eligible to become permanent residents. There is no limit to the number of refugees who may become permanent residents each year.

### **What benefits do refugees receive?**

The circumstances under which refugees leave their country are different from those of other immigrants. Often they are fleeing persecution without the luxury of bringing personal possessions or preparing themselves for life in a new culture. Recognizing this fact, the federal government provides transitional resettlement assistance to newly arrived refugees.

In the first 90 days, private voluntary agencies contract with the Department of State to provide for a refugee's food, housing, employment, medical care, counseling, and other services to help the refugee make the transition to economic self-sufficiency. Certain refugees are entitled to a special program of Refugee Cash and Medical Assistance, provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and administered by the state in which the refugee resides.

While most newly arriving immigrants are barred from receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid, and Food Stamps until they become citizens, refugees are exempt from this ban for the first seven years after they gain refugee status.

### **How does someone become an asylee?**

Like a refugee, an asylum applicant must also prove that he has a "well-founded fear of persecution" based on his *race, religion, membership in a social group, political opinion, or national origin*. Once granted asylum, the person is called an "asylee."

Individuals **inside the U.S.** may apply for asylum in one of two ways. The application may be submitted "**affirmatively**" by mailing it to an Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Service Center. The INS will schedule an interview with a specially-trained asylum officer in one of eight asylum offices in the U.S. A "**defensive**" application is submitted as a way to prevent deportation **when an asylum seeker is in removal proceedings**. In defensive cases, an Immigration Judge decides the application. In either instance, the application must be submitted within one year of entry to the U.S., or the person will be found automatically ineligible. Exceptions are allowed for extraordinary circumstances. While there is no limit on the number of people who may apply for asylum, of those applicants who apply based on a claim of persecution for coercive family planning reasons, only 1,000 per year may be granted. In Fiscal Year 2001, more than 20,600 asylum applications were approved.

Like refugees, asylum seekers must, in addition to proving a well-founded fear of persecution, be screened to ensure they are not inadmissible to the U.S. for some reason, such as criminal activity. Applicants for asylum must submit fingerprints, and they are subject to a check of all appropriate records and information databases, including FBI, INS, and State Department databases.

In recent years, the concept of what constitutes a **social group** that may be targeted for persecution has evolved. For example, some women seeking asylum have based their claims on domestic violence.

In this case, the civil authorities of the country have been unwilling to intervene in life-threatening situations, leaving a woman totally at the mercy of her abuser unless she flees for her life. Sexual orientation has also served as the basis for successful asylum claims in some cases. In either case, it is not only direct persecution by the government that serves as the basis for an asylum claim, but also the unwillingness of the government to protect someone who is in serious danger.

Like refugees, asylees may apply for permanent resident status after one year. Unlike refugees, only 10,000 asylees each year are allowed to become permanent residents. Reform of the asylum system in 1995 resulted in a streamlined process that has resulted in more timely decisions. Since the reforms were instituted, more than 10,000 persons each year have been granted asylum. This fact, coupled with the annual adjustment of status limit, has created a backlog of applications for permanent residence. In March of 2001, there were more than 57,000 applications in the backlog. This means that someone granted asylum today will have to wait approximately *six* years before becoming a permanent resident (and then another five years before gaining eligibility for citizenship).

Individuals seeking to apply for asylum upon arriving at a U.S. airport or other port of entry are subject to an **expedited removal** system. If an asylum seeker arrives with false or no documents, he must establish a fear of persecution in an on-the-spot interview before an immigration officer, or face immediate deportation. An immigration judge may review a negative decision within seven days. Of the persons identified for expedited removal, only about 1% get beyond the on-the-spot interview and see an asylum officer. Of those, about 88% convince asylum officers that they have a credible fear of persecution and are given the chance to make their case to an Immigration Judge. This expedited removal system is responsible for the removal of approximately one half of all persons removed from the U.S.

#### **SOURCES:**

Presidential Determination No. 2002-04, *Memorandum for the Secretary of State*, November 21, 2001

U.S. Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey 1999* (Washington, DC: 1998).

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Center for Human Rights and International Justice, University of California, Hastings College of Law, *Report on the First Three Years of Implementation of Expedited Removal*, May 2000.

Reed Russell, Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld, LLP, *Memorandum to Members of the United States Senate Subcommittee on Immigration Regarding Elimination of the Cap on Adjustment of Status for Asylees Under Section 209(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act*, April 25, 2001.

#### **Ellis Island History**

Source: <http://www.ellisland.com/indexHistory.html>

Today's visitors to Ellis Island, although unencumbered by bundled possessions and the harrowing memory of a transatlantic journey, retrace the steps of twelve million immigrants who approached America's "front doors to freedom" in the early twentieth century. Ellis Island receives today's arriving ferry passengers as it did hundreds of thousands of new arrivals between 1897 and 1938. In place of the business-like machinery of immigration inspection, the restored Main Hall now houses the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, dedicated to commemorating the immigrants' stories of trepidation and triumph, courage and rejection, and the lasting image of the American dream.

During its peak years-1892 to 1924 Ellis Island received thousands of immigrants a day. Each was scrutinized for disease or disability as the long line of hopeful new arrivals made their way up the steep stairs to the great, echoing Registry Room. Over 100 million Americans can trace their ancestry in the United States to a man, woman, or child whose name passed from a steamship manifest sheet to an inspector's record book in the great Registry Room at Ellis Island.

With restrictions on immigration in the 1920s Ellis Island's population dwindled, and the station finally closed its doors in 1954. Its grand brick and limestone buildings gradually deteriorated in the fierce weather of New York Harbor. Concern about this vital part of America's immigrant history led to the inclusion of Ellis Island as part of Statue of Liberty National Monument in 1965. Private citizens mounted a campaign to preserve the Island, and one of the most ambitious restoration projects in American history returned Ellis Island's Main Building to its former grandeur in September, 1990.

## **The Immigrant Experience**

When the great steamships of the early 20th century sailed into New York Harbor, the faces of a thousand nations were on board. A broad, beaming, multicolored parade, these were the immigrants of the world: there were Russian Jews with fashioned beards, Irish farmers whose hands were weathered like the land they had left, Greeks in kilts and slippers, Italians with sharp moustaches, Cossacks with fierce swords, English in short knickers, and Arabs in long robes. The old world lay behind them. Ahead was a new life, huge and promising. Gone were the monarchies and kings, the systems of caste and peasantry, of famine and numbing poverty. But also left behind were friends and family, as well as tradition and customs generations old. As anchors slid into harbor silt, and whistles blew in rival chorus, this multitude clambered up from the steerage decks to fashion in their minds forever their first glimpse of America. The city skyline loomed over them like a great, blocky mountain range. Poet Walt Whitman described New York as the "City of the World (for all of races are here, all the lands of the earth make contributions here:) City of the sea! City of hurried and glittering tides! City whose gleeful tides continually rush and recede, whirling in and out with eddies and foam! City of wharves and stores-city of tall facades of marble and iron! Proud and passionate city-mettlesome, mad, extravagant, city!" Below, the harbor teemed with activity as tugboats churned river water and dockhands wrestled cargo at America's most populous port. Across the Hudson stood the mythic vision of America: salt-green and copper-clad, the Statue of Liberty offered a mute but powerful welcome. In the shadow of all the activity, on the New Jersey side of the river, were the red brick buildings of Ellis Island. The four towers of its largest building rose over 140 feet into the air, punctuating its already intimidating facade with ram-rod sternness. This was an official building, a place of rules and questions, of government and bureaucracy, where five thousand people a day were processed.

Men usually emigrated first, to find jobs and housing. Later they would send for their wives, children, and parents as part of the largest mass movement of people in world history. In all, close to 60 million people sought to find new opportunities during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Some merely crossed borders in Europe but many headed for countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Argentina, and Canada. The majority, however, headed to the United States where they heard promise of jobs, freedom, and a fortune to be made. In the hundred years previous to 1924, when the country's open-door abruptly shut, 34 million immigrants landed on America's soil. The earliest influx of new arrivals started in the mid 1840s when Europe felt the throes of a bitter famine. This First Wave of immigrants—primarily Northern Europeans from Ireland, England, Germany, and Scandinavia—fled starvation, feudal governments, and the social upheaval brought about by the Industrial Revolution. A Second Wave of immigrants streamed out of Southern and Eastern Europe from 1890-1924, accounting for the flood tide of new arrivals during America's peak immigration years. Along with fleeing the burden of high taxes, poverty, and overpopulation, these "new" immigrants were also victims of oppression and religious persecution. Jews living in Romania, Russia, and Poland were being driven from their homes by a series of pogroms, riots, and discriminatory laws enforced by the Czarist government. Similarly the Croats and the Serbs in Hungary, the Poles in Germany, and the Irish persecuted under English rule all saw America as a land of freedom, as well as opportunity.

## **Passage Across the Atlantic**

By the 1890s steam-powered ships had modernized the business of ocean-travel, replacing sailing vessels and cutting the time to make the Atlantic crossing from three months to two weeks. Large

shipping lines such as Cunard and White Star competed fiercely for the immigrants, who were seen as profitable, self-loading cargo. Huge floating villages, the steamships could accommodate as many as two thousand passengers in steerage, so called because it was located on the lower decks where the steering mechanism of the sailing ships had once been housed. These long narrow compartments were divided into separate dormitories for single men, single women, and families. Jammed with metal-framed berths three bunks high, the air in steerage became rank with the heavy odor of spoiled food, sea-sickness, and unwashed bodies. There was little privacy, and the lack of adequate toilet facilities made it difficult to keep clean. Sophia Kreitzberg, a Russian Jew who emigrated in 1908, recalled that "the atmosphere was so thick and dense with smoke and bodily odors that your head itched, and when you went to scratch your head . . . you got lice in your hands." Gradually conditions improved for immigrant passengers. By 1910 many ships had replaced steerage with four and six-berth Third Class cabins. These vessels served meals in dining rooms with long tables set with dishes and utensils. On many of the older ships, however, passengers still ate meals from a tin mess kit while sitting on deck or in the hot, cramped steerage dormitories. "We had a bucket with four or five compartments in it," remembers F. G. Gregot, who immigrated from Lithuania in 1914. "They'd put their food in them compartments. You put a lid on it. And put another compartment on top of that . . . until we finally got all that we was supposed to get." The Italian lines served pasta and wine, and many shipping lines provided kosher food for Jewish passengers, but not all ships catered to ethnic or religious tastes. Cases of malnutrition were not uncommon. Standard fare consisted of potatoes, soup, eggs, fish, stringy meat, prunes and whatever foods the immigrants carried from home." It was a noisy, picturesque, garlicky crowd on the steerage deck," recalled Louis Adamic, a Slovenian immigrant in 1913. "[There were] people of perhaps a dozen nationalities." By the time the steamships sailed into the Upper Bay, First and Second Class passengers had already been inspected and cleared to land by immigration officials who had come on board from the Quarantine Station at the Hudson River's mouth. Steerage passengers, however, were afforded no such privileges and their first steps on the mainland were brief. Disembarking on the Hudson River piers, they were summarily directed helter-skelter onto ferries which shuttled them to Ellis Island. Chartered by the steamship companies, these vessels were little better than open air barges, freezing in the winter, sweltering hot in the summer, and lacking toilet facilities and lifesaving equipment. Deaths caused by exposure to cold were not uncommon and one Public Health Service official estimated that of the children suffering from measles when they arrived, thirty percent subsequently died because of their trip across the harbor. Although the ferries were thought adequate for the short ride, busy days saw immigrants imprisoned on these vessels for hours while they waited their turn to land at Ellis Island. The harbor was often choked with steamships crammed with as many as twenty thousand passengers waiting to disembark and be ferried to Ellis Island. Sometimes new arrivals had to wait in steerage for days, prolonging the miserable journey, and making America's promise that much more elusive.

### **The Inspection Process**

When they landed, the immigrants had numbered tags pinned to their clothes which indicated the manifest page and line number on which their names appeared. These numbers were later used by immigration inspectors to cross-reference immigrants about their right to land. Anne Vida, a Hungarian immigrant in 1921, comically remembers the sight: "We had all sorts of tags on us .... We must have looked like marked-down merchandise at Gimbels basement store or something." Though relatively few immigrants who landed at Ellis Island were denied entry, the two percent that were excluded often equaled over a thousand people a month during peak immigration years. The Ellis Island processing station was meant to channel and filter the seemingly endless supply of human energy that came to fuel America's burgeoning economy, and everywhere on the island there was an air of purpose. Greeted with pointing fingers and unintelligible commands, the new arrivals formed a line which stretched from the Ellis Island dock into the Baggage Room of the Main Building, winding its way up to the second floor where the immigrants were met by a team of doctors and inspectors who would decide which way the Golden Door would swing. Jostling three abreast, the immigrants made their way up the steep flight of stairs and into the great hall of the Registry Room. Although many did not know it,

the inspection process had already begun. Scanning the moving line for signs of illness, Public Health Service doctors looked to see if anyone wheezed, coughed, shuffled, or limped as they climbed the steep ascent. Children were asked their name to make sure they weren't deaf or dumb, and those that looked over two-years-old were taken from their mothers' arms and made to walk. As the line moved forward, doctors had only a few seconds to examine each immigrant, checking for sixty symptoms, from anemia to varicose veins, which might indicate a wide variety of diseases, disabilities, and physical conditions. Of primary concern were cholera, favus (scalp and nail fungus), insanity, and mental impairments. In 1907, legislation further barred immigrants suffering from tuberculosis, epilepsy, and the physically disabled. The disease which resulted in the most exclusions, however, was trachoma, a highly contagious eye infection that could cause blindness and death. At the time, the disease was common in Southern and Eastern Europe, but relatively unknown in the U. S. (A Japanese immigrant later discovered the cure.) Physicians checked for trachoma by turning the eyelid inside out with their fingers, a hair-pin, or a button-hook to look for inflammations on the inner eyelid—a short but extremely painful experience. The "buttonhook men" were the most dreaded officials on Ellis Island. During line inspection, those immigrants who appeared sick or were suffering from a contagious disease were marked with blue chalk and detained for further medical examination. The sick were taken to Ellis Island Hospital for observation and care, and once recovered, could proceed with their legal inspection. Those with incurable or disabling ailments, however, were excluded and returned to their port of departure at the expense of the steamship line on which they arrived. In an attempt to discourage steamship companies from transporting ill, disabled, or impoverished passengers, an immigration law of 1903 imposed a hundred dollar fine for every excluded passenger. Medical inspectors developed a letter code to indicate further examination, and roughly every two out of ten immigrants received mystifying chalk marks. This alphabet of ailments ranged from Pg for pregnant to K for hernia and Ft for feet. Those suspected of having feeble minds were chalked with an X, and along with those marked for physical ailments, about nine out of every hundred immigrants were detained for mental examination and further questioning. Usually this consisted of standard intelligence tests in which immigrants were asked to solve simple arithmetic problems, count backwards from twenty, or complete a puzzle. In an attempt to deal with immigrants' cultural differences, Ellis Island's doctors developed their own tests which allowed them to base their decision on problem solving, behavior, attitude, and the immigrant's ability to acquire knowledge. Requiring immigrants to copy geometric shapes, for instance, was only useful for testing those who had some schooling and were used to holding a pencil. Favored were comparisons and mimicry tests which did not have to be explained by an interpreter, nor did an immigrant have to know how to read and write to solve them. After passing the line inspection immigrants were waved toward the main part of the Registry Room. There they entered a maze of open passage ways and metal railings which divided entire floor. As crowded as a country town on market day, the great hall was "a place of Babel" where all languages of the world seemed to cry out at once. At the far end of the Registry Hall the legal inspectors stood behind tall desks, assisted by interpreters fluent in major languages and any number of obscure dialects. Although the interrogation that immigrants were to face lasted only a matter of minutes, it took an average of five hours to pass through the inspection process at Ellis Island. Wearing starched collars and heavy serge jackets, the inspectors verified the twenty-nine bits of information already contained on the manifest sheet. Family names were recorded with care, especially if they were spelled Andrjulgawierjus, Grzyszczyszn, or Zoutsoghianopoulos. Firing questions at the immigrants, the inspector asked them their age, occupation, marital status, and destination in an attempt to determine their social, economic, and moral fitness. Influenced by American welfare agencies that claimed to be overwhelmed by requests for aid from impoverished immigrants, the exclusion of those "liable to become a public charge" became a cornerstone of immigration policy as early as 1882. The Alien Contract Labor Law of 1885 also excluded all immigrants who took a job in exchange for passage. Together these laws presented the immigrant with a delicate task of convincing the legal inspectors that they were strong, intelligent, and resourceful enough to find work easily, without admitting that a relative had a job waiting for them. In 1917 anti-immigration force succeeded in pressuring the government to impose a literacy test as a further means of restricting immigration. The law required all immigrants sixteen years or older to read a forty-word passage in their native language. Those from the Punjab district of Afghans, for instance, had to follow a series of printed commands, such as

picking up a pencil and handing it the immigration inspectors. Most immigrants, however, had to read biblical translations such as "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire" James 5:2,3), which was the requisite passage for Serbians. Working from 9am-7pm, seven days a week, each inspector questioned four hundred to five hundred immigrants a day. Those who failed to prove they were "clearly and beyond a doubt entitled to land" were detained for a hearing before the Board of Special Inquiry. As immigrants did not have a legal right to enter the U. S., there could be no lawyer present at this hearing, but friends and relatives could testify on an immigrant's behalf. The Board reviewed about seventy thousand cases a year, admitting five out of every six detainees. Those rejected could appeal the decision directly to the Secretary of Commerce and Labor in Washington, D. C. At this stage immigrants could hire a lawyer or offer a bond guaranteeing they would not become a public charity.

Along with medical detentions and immigrants facing a hearing from the Board, unescorted women and children were detained until their safety was assured through the arrival of a telegram, letter, or a prepaid ticket from a waiting relative. Furthermore, immigration officials refused to send single women into the streets alone, nor could they leave with a man not related to them. Fiancées, reunited with their intended husbands, often married on the spot. During peak immigration years, detentions at Ellis Island ran as high as twenty percent-thousands of immigrants a day. A detainee's stay could last days or even weeks, and accommodations were in constant shortage. From 1900-1908 dormitories consisted of two long, narrow rooms which ran along either side of the Registry Room mezzanine. Each room slept three hundred people in triple-tiered bunks (much like steerage) that could be raised, converting the rooms into daytime waiting areas. In 1906 Commissioner Robert Watchom seriously considered hiring barges to serve as extra detention space until an appropriation of \$400,000 from Congress allowed him to begin construction of the new Baggage and Dormitory Building. However, this facility was not completed until 1910. In 1907, Ellis Island's peak immigration year, 195,540 people were detained. After inspection, immigrants descended from the Registry down the "Stairs of Separation," so called because they marked the parting of the way for many family and friends with different destinations. Immigrants were directed toward the railroad ticket office and trains to points west, or to the island's hospital and detention rooms. Those immigrants bound for Manhattan met their relatives at the "kissing post," where many joyous and tearful reunions occurred. Katherine Beychok, a Russian Jewish immigrant in 1910, remembers, "I saw a man coming forward and he was so beautiful I didn't know he was my father .... Later on I realized why he looked so familiar to me. He looked exactly like I did .... But that's when I met him for the first time. And I fell in love with him and he with me." The crush of immigration constantly tested the limits of Ellis Island's facilities, and over the years a constant appeal for more funds could be heard from the Station's commissioners. Ellis Island's 125-bed hospital opened in March of 1902, and expanded in 1907 and again in 1910. Although these additions brought the hospital's capacity to 275, patients diagnosed with illness that warranted their detention and hospital care often numbered over five hundred at a time. Many times immigrants with infectious diseases such as measles and diphtheria had to be cared for at city hospitals in Manhattan and Brooklyn. This prompted the United States Public Health Service to build a 450-bed contagious disease ward at the Ellis Island Station-creating a third contiguous island-as well as a psychopathic ward and a morgue. "The Island is at once a maternity ward and an insane asylum," remarked one doctor. By 1911 more than fifteen buildings at Ellis Island were devoted to medical care. Forty doctors, proficient in dealing with illness ranging from slight injuries to rare tropical diseases, staffed its hospital. During its half-century of operation over 3,500 immigrants died at Ellis Island (including 1,400 children) and over 350 babies were born. There were also three suicides. While the 700 doctors, nurses, inspectors, interpreters, matrons, stenographers, and other staff employed during the station's peak years generally followed Commissioner William Williams' directive to treat immigrants with "kindness and consideration," the process of inspection and detention-and the frightening prospect of exclusion-remained overwhelming.

## **Closing the Open Door**

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, anti-immigration sentiment and isolationist hostilities were at their highest. Congress had just passed legislation, over the veto of President Woodrow Wilson, requiring immigrants to pass a literacy test, and barring virtually all immigration from Asia. The activities of the Ku Klux Klan, founded in 1915, would reach their greatest support by 1920, and their voice echoed that of restrictionists who denounced immigrants as racially inferior, drawing an alarming portrait of an impoverished, criminal, radical, and diseased invading horde. Violent strikes and a rash of bombings followed the outbreak of the war, prompting the Department of Justice to order the arrest of aliens suspected of communist or anarchist sympathies. As immigrants faced hostilities from all sides, Ellis Island's role quickly changed from a depot to that of a detention center. The Red Scare saw hundreds of aliens rounded up and detained at Ellis Island. In addition, over the next year 1,800 German merchant mariners, their ships seized at East Coast ports, were added to the Island's population. "I have become a jailer," Commissioner Frederic C. Howe wrote despondently in 1919 as the wave of anti-immigration hysteria swept the country. With Atlantic ports and shipping lanes closed to commercial traffic, immigration dropped significantly with the start of World War I. In 1915 Ellis Island admitted 178,000 people. By 1919 that number fell to 26,000. With the war's end thousands of refugees from Europe's war damaged areas sailed to the U.S., as did immigrants still holding tickets purchased in 1914. By 1920, immigration had risen again to a brisk 225,206 arrivals annually. In 1921 the numbers climbed back to prewar figures of 560,971. For six years the war had delayed the reunion of family and friends, and the postwar immigration crush caught Ellis Island with its resources badly depleted. Experienced staff had been laid off during wartime and the Registry Room, which had been used by the U. S. Army as a ward for wounded servicemen, badly needed repairs and cleaning. Unfortunately, peace overseas did not bring peace at home. World War I had crystallized anti-immigration sentiment. Nativists continued to criticize the nation's ability to assimilate the flood-tide of "human flotsam," and popular tunes such as Neel and Clark's 1923 song *O! Close the Gates* called for a halt to immigration "before this mob from Europe shall drag our Colors down." Restrictionists in Congress remained vigilant in their warnings about the "danger of the melting pot," and on May 19, 1921 succeeded in pressuring President Warren G. Harding into signing the first Quota Act. This law effectively ended America's open-door policy by setting monthly quotas, limiting admission of each nationality to three percent of its representation in the U.S. Census of 1910. Passengers considered excess quota were automatically excluded. Immigration was now more than ever a game of numbers. Steamships jockeyed for position at the mouth of New York Harbor to steam across at the stroke of midnight each month. The 1924 National Origins Act made further cuts by limiting immigration from any nation to two percent of its representation in the 1890 census. The bill's sponsors made no attempt to conceal its discriminatory intent directed at restricting "less desirable" immigration from southern and eastern Europe. Very quickly, the gateway to the promised land had all but slammed shut. The National Origins Act also allowed prospective immigrants to undergo inspection before they left their country of origin, making the trip to Ellis Island unnecessary. Shortly after the Act went into effect Ellis Island "looked like a deserted village," commented one official. In 1931 Labor Secretary William Doak declared that he would rid the economically depressed nation of "everyone who cannot prove he is a lawful resident here," and in 1932, for the first time ever, more aliens left the country than arrived. By 1937 the island's population had dwindled to about 160 deportees and 30 detained immigrants, mostly Chinese children whose parents, already living in the U.S., had to prove their citizenship. In the 1940s Ellis Island experienced a renewed flurry of activity. Japanese, German, and Italian citizens were detained on the island during World War II, and later the International Security Act bolstered the detainee population with suspected Communists and Fascists. When Ellis Island's administration moved to an office in Manhattan in 1943, the detained enemy aliens at the station numbered about one thousand. The Coast Guard had also taken up residence on the island, using the main Hospital complex for office and storage space, but by 1949 officials were already discussing closing the old immigration depot. Ellis Island was becoming too costly to run. In 1953 the island's Staff numbered roughly 250, to serve approximately 230 detained immigrants. A 1954 Justice Department ruling, which gave detained aliens parole until their cases could be heard by a ruling board, finally closed Ellis Island's doors on November 19. Its last resident, detainee Arne Peterson, a seaman who had overstayed his shore leave, was granted parole and ferried back to the mainland.

## The Story of the Triangle Fire

Source: <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/>

The fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company in New York City, which claimed the lives of 146 young immigrant workers, was one of the worst disasters since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. This incident has had great significance because it highlights the inhumane working conditions to which industrial workers can be subjected. The tragedy still dwells in the collective memory of the nation and of the international labor movement. The victims are still celebrated as martyrs at the hands of industrial greed.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Company was a typical Manhattan sweatshop, offering low wages, excessively long hours, and unsanitary and dangerous working conditions. Even though many workers toiled under one roof in the Asch building, the owners subcontracted much work to individuals who hired the hands and pocketed a portion of the profits. Subcontractors could pay the workers whatever rates they wanted, often extremely low. The owners supposedly never knew the rates paid to the workers, nor did they know exactly how many workers were employed at their factory at any given point. Such a system led to exploitation.

Even today, sweatshops have not disappeared in the United States. They keep attracting workers in desperate need of employment and illegal immigrants, who may want to avoid involvement with governmental agencies. Recent studies conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor found that 67% of Los Angeles garment factories and 63% of New York garment factories violate minimum wage and overtime laws. Ninety-eight percent of Los Angeles garment factories have workplace health and safety problems serious enough to lead to severe injuries or death.

The International Ladies' Garment Workers Union organized workers in the women's clothing trade. Many of the garment workers before 1911 were unorganized, partly because they were young immigrant women intimidated by the alien surroundings. In 1909, an incident at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory sparked a spontaneous walkout of its 400 employees. The Women's Trade Union League helped the young women workers picket and fend off thugs and police provocation.

With the cloakmakers' strike of 1910, a historic agreement was reached that established a grievance system in the garment industry. Unfortunately for the workers, though, many shops were still in the hands of unscrupulous owners, who disregarded basic workers' rights.

Near closing time on Saturday afternoon, March 25, 1911, a fire broke out on the top floors of the Asch Building in the Triangle Shirtwaist Company. Within minutes, the quiet spring afternoon erupted into madness. By the time the fire was over, 146 of the 500 employees had died. The survivors were left to relive those agonizing moments. The victims and their families, the people passing by who witnessed the desperate leaps from ninth floor windows, and the City of New York would never be the same.

Many of the Triangle factory workers were women, some as young as 15 years old. They were, for the most part, recent Italian and Jewish immigrants who had come to the United States to seek a better life. Instead, they faced grinding poverty and horrifying working conditions. As recent immigrants struggling with a new language and culture, the working poor were ready victims for the factory owners. For these workers, speaking out could end with the loss of desperately needed jobs, a prospect that forced them to endure personal indignities and severe exploitation. Some turned to labor unions to speak for them; many more struggled alone. The Triangle Factory was a non-union shop, although some of its workers had joined the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.

New York City, with its tenements and loft factories, had witnessed a growing concern for issues of health and safety in the early years of the 20th century. Groups such as the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) and the Womens' Trade Union League (WTUL) fought for better

working conditions and protective legislation. The Triangle Fire tragically illustrated that fire inspections and precautions were woefully inadequate at the time. Workers recounted their helpless efforts to open the ninth floor doors to the Washington Place stairs. They and many others afterwards believed they were deliberately locked—owners had frequently locked the exit doors in the past, claiming that workers stole materials. For all practical purposes, the ninth floor fire escape in the Asch Building led nowhere, and it bent under the weight of the workers trying to escape the inferno. Others waited at the windows for the rescue workers only to discover that the firefighters' ladders were several stories too short and the water from the hoses could not reach the top floors. Many chose to jump to their deaths rather than burn alive.

In the weeks that followed, the grieving city identified the dead, sorted out their belongings, and reeled in numbed grief at the atrocity that could have been averted with a few precautions. Protesting voices arose, bewildered and angry at the lack of concern and the greed that had made this possible. The people demanded restitution, justice, and action that would safeguard the vulnerable and the oppressed. Outraged cries calling for action to improve the unsafe conditions in workshops could be heard from every quarter, from the mainstream conservative to the progressive and union press.

Workers flocked to union quarters to offer testimonies, support mobilization, and demand that Triangle owners Max Blanck and Isaac Harris, be brought to trial. The role that strong unions could have in helping prevent such tragedies became clear. Workers organized in powerful unions would be more conscious of their rights and better able to obtain safe working conditions.

Shortly after the fire, the Executive Board of the Ladies' Waist and Dress Makers' Union, Local No. 25 of the ILGWU, to which some of the Triangle factory workers belonged, met to plan relief work for the survivors and the families of the victims. Soon several progressive organizations came forward to help with the relief effort. The Joint Relief Committee worked with the American Red Cross, which also collected funds from the general public. Estimates indicate that the Joint Relief Committee alone administered about \$30,000.

Local 25 of the ILGWU organized a rally against the unsafe working conditions that led to the disaster. Meanwhile the Women's Trade Union League led a campaign to investigate such conditions among Triangle workers, to collect testimonies, and to promote an investigation. Within a month of the fire the governor of New York State appointed the Factory Investigating Commission. For five years, this commission conducted a series of statewide hearings that resulted in the passage of important factory safety legislation.

Labor and management in the garment trades cooperated in the ongoing work of the Joint Board of Sanitary Control to set and maintain standards of sanitation in the workplace. This board, consisting of representatives from the clothing industry and from the union, was established a year prior to the Triangle Fire in the aftermath of the 1910 Cloakmakers' Strike. It conducted its own investigations and continued to inspect and monitor health and safety conditions. It set sanitary standards exceeding the legal requirements and, because the manufacturers' association and the union had jointly approved the standards, was able to enforce those standards in the shops that it monitored.

The ILGWU, in concert with others in the labor movement and progressive organizations, would continue a long and difficult battle to achieve the right of workers to safe, decent working conditions. The event, as it faded from immediate public outrage, was not forgotten nor was it isolated in the course of the history of American workers. It did point out the many serious problems facing factory workers and paved the way for attempts at remedies through protective legislation. In the years following the fire, a flurry of legislation perfected old laws or introduced new ones, which somewhat improved working conditions.

Eight months after the fire, a jury acquitted the factory owners of any wrong doing. The task of the jurors had been to determine whether the owners knew that the doors were locked at the time of the fire.

Customarily, the only way out for workers at quitting time was through an opening on the Green Street side, where all pocketbooks were inspected to prevent stealing. Worker after worker testified to their inability to open the doors to their only viable escape route — the stairs to the Washington Place exit, because the Green Street side stairs were completely engulfed by fire. More testimony supported this fact. Yet the defense attorney planted enough doubt in the jurors' minds to win a not-guilty verdict. Grieving families and much of the public felt that justice had not been done. Twenty-three individual civil suits were brought against the owners of the Asch building. On March 11, 1913, three years after the fire, Harris and Blanck settled. They paid 75 dollars per life lost.

### **Current Immigration Overview**

Source: <http://www.cis.org/topics/currentnumbers.html>

During the 1990s, an average of more than 1.3 million immigrants — legal and illegal — settled in the United States each year. Between January 2000 and March 2002, 3.3 million additional immigrants have arrived. In less than 50 years, the U.S. Census Bureau projects that immigration will cause the population of the United States to increase from its present 288 million to more than 400 million.

The foreign-born population of the United States is currently 33.1 million, equal to 11.5 percent of the U.S. population. Of this total, the Census Bureau estimates 8-9 million are illegal immigrants. Other estimates indicate a considerably higher number of illegal immigrants.

Approximately 1 million people receive permanent residency annually. In addition, the Census Bureau estimates a net increase of 500,000 illegal immigrants annually.

The present level of immigration is significantly higher than the average historical level of immigration. This flow may be attributed, in part, to the extraordinary broadening of U.S. immigration policy in 1965. Since 1970, more than 30 million legal and illegal immigrants have settled in the U.S., representing more than one-third of all people ever to come to America's shores.

At the peak of the Great Wave of immigration in 1910, the number of immigrants living in the U.S. was less than half of what it is today, though the percentage of the population was slightly higher. The annual arrival of 1.5 million legal and illegal immigrants, coupled with 750,000 annual births to immigrant women, is the determinate factor— or three-fourths— of all U.S. population growth

### **Current Immigration Statistics**

Source: <http://www.immigrationforum.org/pubs/articles/todaysnewcomers2001.htm>

- Most immigrants – about 75% – come to the U.S. legally.
- Most legal immigrants – about three quarters – come to join close family members.
- As of March 2000, 10.4% of the U.S. population was foreign-born. By comparison, from 1870 to 1920, the foreign-born population made up approximately 15% of the total population.
- In 1998, approximately 737,000 new immigrants and refugees arrived in the U.S. or were granted permanent residence. Of these, 604,000 entered as lawful permanent residents and another 133,000 came as refugees, asylum seekers, or others fleeing persecution.
- Many undocumented immigrants don't come to the U.S. by crossing a border illegally. In fact, four out of ten enter legally with student, tourist, business, or some other temporary visa and become "illegal" when they stay in the U.S. after their visa expires.
- One third of the foreign-born population in the U.S. in 2000 were naturalized citizens.

### Where do immigrants come from?

- In 1998, the "Top Ten" countries from which the U.S. received legal immigrants were:
  - Mexico (130,661)
  - China (41,034)
  - India (34,288)
  - Philippines (33,176)
  - Dominican Republic (20,267)
  - Vietnam (16,534)
  - Cuba (15,415)
  - Jamaica (14,819)
  - El Salvador (14,329)
  - Canada (14,295).

### Where do refugees come from?

- In 2000, the "Top Ten" places from which refugees fled and were resettled in the U.S. were:
  - Bosnia and Hercegovina
  - the Former Soviet Union
  - Somalia
  - Iran
  - Vietnam
  - Sudan
  - Cuba
  - Iraq
  - Croatia
  - Liberia.

#### SOURCES:

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U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1998* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000).

U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: October 1996*, (Washington, DC: January 1997).

U.S. Committee for Refugees, *Refugee Reports* (Washington, DC: December, 2000).

### Integration Activities

The following activities are designed and adaptable for students of all levels, in accordance with the Washington State standards for history and social studies. They aim to explore the issues of antisemitism, the oppression of women and immigration to the United States through a dynamic, hands-on approach.

*Writing:* write a story, a poem, a report, an article, a scene, a play, a song, a caption

*Art:* draw or paint a picture, create a collage, a sculpture, a comic strip, take a photograph, make a video

*Drama:* create a still image, a dance or movement activity, a series of images, an improvisation, a scene, a play

*Discussion:* partner or small group talk, oral report or presentation

Students may address the following questions and topics through any of the suggested mediums or a combination of them:

1. Supplement a specific scene in the script with work in another medium.
2. Supplement a specific image from the video with work in another medium.
3. Interview a character from the piece
4. Research historical documents to find a real person's description of an event from Bridget's story (i.e. life in Ireland; an immigrant's experience at Ellis Island or settling in the United States). Share what you learn.
5. Read and explore selections from other fictional or first person perspectives (see bibliography for suggestions).
6. Re-create a scene from the piece from another character's point of view (i.e. Bridget's experience in steerage; the Triangle Factory fire).
7. How are/were the experiences of immigrants from other countries similar or different from Bridget's perspective?
8. Research and compare the experience of Irish immigrants to another immigrant group during the same or another time period (for example: the Japanese or Chinese). How was it similar? How was it different?
9. Choose a part of Bridget's story that you would like to know more about and research it. Share what you learn.
10. Research another event in history and how it is related to this one.
11. Imagine you could get in touch with Bridget. What would you want to ask her? What would you want to tell her or show her about the future?
12. How did watching *The New American* make you feel?
13. If you were an immigrant, what special possession would you bring with you if you had to choose only one, and why?

**Supplemental drama activities:**

*Role-on-the-wall*: a character is represented in the form of an outline of a person, on which the group writes or draws information about that character: on the inside of the figure is written what the character thinks or feels about herself; on the outside, how she appears or how others perceive her. This activity can be repeated for multiple characters, including other fictional or real-life people. This activity can be used as a jumping point for further discussion and exploration of character choices, motivation, perceptions and prejudices.

*Still images/tableaux*: Image work can be used to explore any theme, idea or topic. It can be literal or symbolic, can depict actual events from the piece or imaginary ones, and can also focus on different points of view. Students may then select characters from the images to interview or scenes to bring to life or explore further in other ways.

*Voices in the Head*: students form two lines facing each other to make a path for Bridget as she leaves Ireland or Ellis Island. As Bridget passes through (played by the teacher, a student or series of

students), students creating the path offer her a piece of advice. Alternately, or in addition, they may speak as her family, friends, acquaintances or personal thoughts and feelings.

*Forum Theatre:*

- a. In partners or small groups, students share personal experiences of prejudice or discrimination.
- b. For each personal story, students work separately to create their image of the situation (images may be visual or dramatic). The images are then shown to the whole group to compare and discuss.
- c. Situations are selected and played as improvisations, in which other members of the group can freeze the scene at a crucial moment, take on the role of the main character and experiment with different ways the scene could have happened.