



Now Presenting...

## Welcome to Ellis Island

*Tom and his older brother James have just arrived at the Ellis Island immigration center. They get separated, and Tom must go through his medical examination alone. Worse, he breaks out in a rash, and fears that he will be deported.*

6 parts

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### Setting the Stage

#### Background

Tell students that this play is set on Ellis Island, which was once an immigration center in the harbor of New York. The immigration center was opened in 1892. The first immigrant to walk through its doors was Annie Moore, a 15-year-old girl from Ireland. Many more immigrants followed, mostly from Europe. The flood of immigrants reached its peak in the early 1900s, but Ellis Island lost its importance as an entry point with the advent of air travel. It finally closed its doors in 1954, but reopened as a museum in 1968. Today it is one of New York City's most popular tourist attractions.

#### Staging

Consider using props to help identify the various characters, such as a legal pad and pen for the inspector, a stethoscope for the doctor, and a name tag for the volunteer.

#### Encore

If you and your students would like to learn more about the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, you may call the New York Park Service at (212) 363-3206 to request information about the museum's exhibits and educational programs.

### Vocabulary

**Introduce and discuss the following words before reading the script. Ask students to sort the words into two categories: words that might be found in a doctor's notebook, and words that might be found in the notebook of an immigration official. Then have students provide definitions for each of these words:**

**allergic:** having an allergy—or extreme sensitivity—to a particular substance

**citizen:** one who is a member of a nation because of birth or naturalization

**detain:** to keep in custody

**measles:** an infectious disease characterized by small red spots on the skin

**passport:** a government document carried by travelers on international voyages

**quarantine:** a place where people with infectious diseases are kept in isolation

**rash:** a temporary eruption of bumps on the skin



*Now Presenting...*

## **Welcome to Ellis Island**

*Tom has just arrived in New York City from Ireland. Before he can leave the immigration center, he must pass a medical examination. Everything goes according to plan until the very last minute.*

### **Characters**

Narrator..... \_\_\_\_\_

Tom..... \_\_\_\_\_

James ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer..... \_\_\_\_\_

Inspector ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor ..... \_\_\_\_\_



# Welcome to Ellis Island

## ..... Characters .....

Narrator  
Tom  
James

Volunteer  
Inspector  
Doctor

**Narrator:** In the spring of 1920, 13-year-old Tom O’Sullivan and his older brother James boarded an Irish steamship bound for New York City. After eight grueling days crammed into the hull of the ship, they catch sight of New York’s harbor.

**Tom:** Look, James. Is it all these days at sea, or do I really see a giant lady in the middle of the bay?

**James:** Your eyesight is just fine, Tom. That there is what they call the Statue of Liberty. She’s holding up a lamp to show the way. Look a little way farther. You see all those tall buildings just past her? Those are what they call “the mountains of New York.” Some of them are even ten stories high!

**Tom:** They say that New York is the land of dreams. I heard that candy drops from the sky and falls right into your mouth!

**James:** You shouldn’t believe everything you hear, Tom. In a matter of days we’ll see what’s true and what’s not.

**Tom:** Why so long? We’re here, aren’t we?

**James:** First we have to go to Ellis Island. It’s right over there by Lady Liberty. They’ll check our papers and give us a look-over, from top to bottom.

**Tom:** What for?

**James:** They want to make sure we’re fit and sound, I reckon. They can’t let a whole ship of madmen loose in New York, now can they? Just be patient. As soon as our business is settled, we can board the train for Boston.



**Tom:** I can hardly wait. Ma must be worried sick about us.

**James:** Everything will be fine, Tom. Just do as you're told and answer all their questions the best you can.

**Narrator:** The steamship docked at Ellis Island, and the passengers made their way into the main building. They were all so excited that they forgot how tired and hungry they were. Volunteers were there to welcome them and explain what they were supposed to do.

**Volunteer:** This way, please. Please make a line and have your passports ready.

**Tom:** Can I go in with my brother?

**Volunteer:** I'm afraid not. You have to go in one by one.

**Tom:** What if we get separated?

**Volunteer:** You can wait for each other at the dock in New York, I suppose. Here, have a piece of chocolate while you wait. And welcome to America!

**Tom:** Is it all right if I eat this, James?

**James:** All right by me. Consider yourself lucky. I guess I'm too old for a treat!

**Tom:** (*smacking his lips*) I've never tasted anything like it. It's bitter and sweet at the same time. It's strange, but I think I like it.

**Inspector:** Next!

**James:** It's my turn, Tom. Remember what the volunteer said. If you get lost, I'll be waiting for you at the dock.

**Narrator:** Tom finished eating the chocolate bar, and waited his turn. As he waited, he started to get nervous and his face began to itch. It seemed like forever, but he was finally called into the Registry Room.



**Inspector:** Good morning, son. What's your name?

**Tom:** Tom O'Sullivan.

**Inspector:** Can you tell me why a young boy like you wants to be a citizen of the United States?

**Tom:** I've come to live with my mother and father. They live in Boston.

**Inspector:** And how do you plan to get there?

**Tom:** By train, with my brother. He's waiting for me downstairs.

**Inspector:** Why do you keep scratching your face, Tom? Is something the matter?

**Tom:** Just nervous, I guess.

**Inspector:** My goodness! Your face is covered with little red spots.

**Tom:** It must be from all the scratching.

**Inspector:** Try not to scratch it so much. That'll only make it worse. Let's have a doctor take a look, shall we? (*shouting into the next room*) Doctor, can you please come in here?

**Doctor:** (*entering*) Good morning, Inspector. What seems to be the problem?

**Inspector:** Young Tom here has a case of the itches. Would you mind taking a look?

**Doctor:** Oh, dear. It appears to be quite serious. How long have you had this condition?

**Tom:** It started as soon as I came in here.

**Doctor:** I rather doubt that. Maybe you've just noticed it, but I'll wager you caught something at sea. I pray for your sake it's not the measles. We'd better put you in quarantine, just to be safe. For the time being, you'll have to stay in the dormitory.



**Tom:** For how long?

**Doctor:** I don't know, son. Until we have a chance to give you some tests.

**Narrator:** The doctor used a piece of chalk to write the letter "F" on Tom's jacket, to stand for "facial rash." Tom had to spend the night in a crowded dormitory filled with other immigrants who were being detained for various reasons. In the morning, the volunteer he met the day before came to visit him.

**Volunteer:** Tom, what in the world are you doing here? I thought by now you'd be on your way to Boston.

**Tom:** That's what I was hoping too. The doctor made me stay because I have a rash.

**Volunteer:** Where?

**Tom:** On my face. Can't you see it?

**Volunteer:** No, I can't. Here, have a piece of chocolate while I go fetch the doctor. Once he sees the rash has gone, I'm sure he'll let you go.

**Narrator:** The volunteer went to find the doctor. While he waited, Tom nibbled on the chocolate bar. The volunteer was back with the doctor in less than half an hour.

**Volunteer:** As you can see, Doctor, young Tom is—Tom! What happened to your face?

**Tom:** It started itching again as soon as I ate the chocolate bar.

**Doctor:** I think I see what's bothering our little immigrant. Tom doesn't have the measles. He's just allergic to chocolate!

**Tom:** What does that mean?

**Doctor:** It simply means you're sensitive to chocolate. When you eat it, your body reacts by developing a rash. Mystery solved!



**Tom:** So can I leave now?

**Doctor:** As long as you promise not to eat any chocolate!

**Narrator:** Tom gathered his luggage and his papers, and then a ferry took him to the dock in New York City. To his relief, James was waiting for him, just as he had said.

**Tom:** James, I thought I'd never see you again!

**James:** I waited for you all night long. I couldn't leave without you, now could I? Here, I got a little treat for you. I know how much you like chocolate.

**Tom:** You can have it, James! I'll just have a piece of bread.

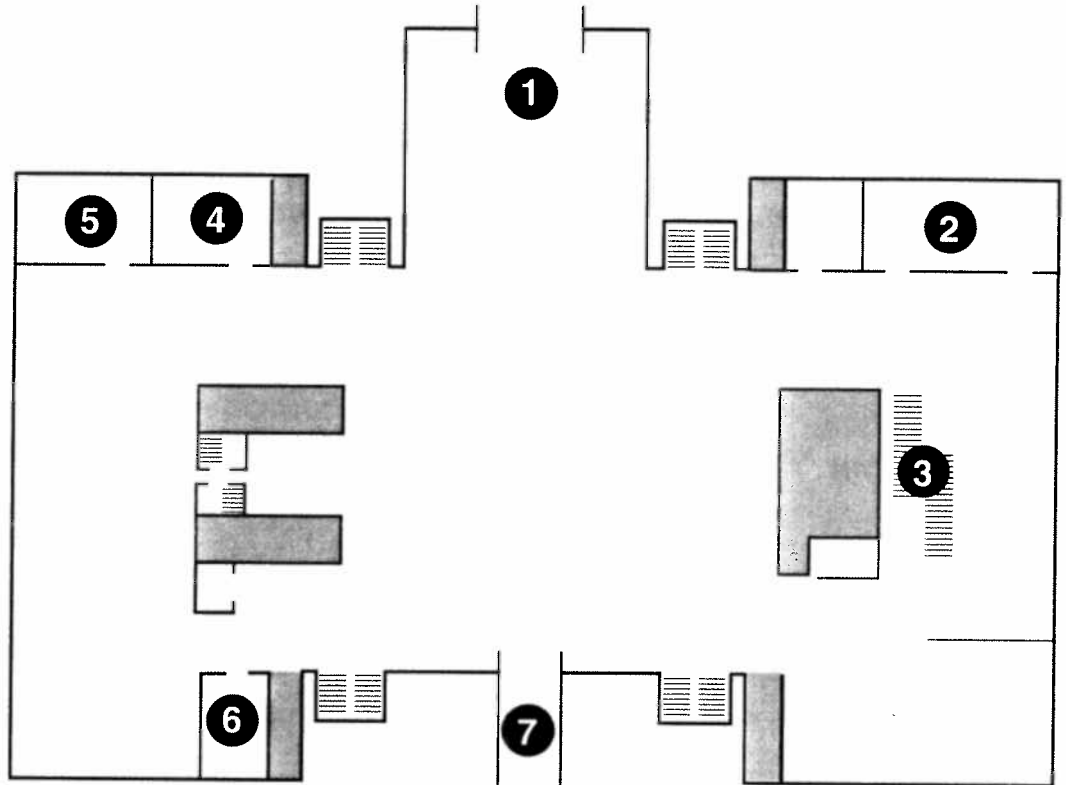
Name \_\_\_\_\_



## A Tour of Ellis Island

Each number on the map shows a place that immigrants had to stop on their way through Ellis Island. Write a short paragraph describing the process, based on the information shown on the map.

- 1 Entrance
- 2 Baggage Room
- 3 Stairway to the Great Hall
- 4 Medical Examination Room
- 5 Legal Inspection
- 6 Money Exchange
- 7 Exit



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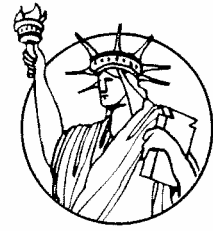
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Name \_\_\_\_\_



## Immigration to the United States 1820-1996

This table shows immigration statistics for the years 1820 through 1996. It presents the countries in alphabetical order.

Reorganize the countries in numeric order from highest to lowest. The first one has been done for you. When you are finished, total the figures and answer the questions.

Country of Last Residence	Number of Immigrants in U.S.
Austria	1,841,068
Canada	4,423,066
Germany	7,142,393
Hungary	1,673,579
Ireland	4,778,159
Italy	5,427,298
Mexico	5,542,625
Philippines	1,379,403
Soviet Union (former)	3,752,811
United Kingdom	5,225,701

Country of Last Residence	Number of Immigrants in U.S.
Germany	7,142,393
<b>Total for All Countries</b>	

- How many immigrants came to the United States from Europe during this time period?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How many immigrants came from the Americas?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What is the average number of immigrants per year?  
\_\_\_\_\_