

## ***Ellis Island/ Angel Island***

# **Modesto City Schools Library Lesson Plan**

Developed by Dana Stemig, Library Media Teacher

Grade Level	Fourth Grade
Info Lit Standard/s	4.2 Restates facts and details in text to clarify and organize ideas for notetaking.
Library Objective/s	Students will read an article about Ellis Island or an article about Angel Island. A group of students will complete a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting the two.
State Standard/s	English/Language Arts- Compare and contrast information on the same topic after reading several passages
Time	One to two 30 minute time period
Lesson Title	Ellis Island/ Angel Island
Introduction	Show students on a map where Ellis Island and Angel Island are located. Explain that both of these islands were used as entry points for many people immigrating to America. Verify that students understand the idea of immigration.
Vocabulary	Immigration
Activity	Divide students into groups of 3-4 each. Have half of the groups read about Ellis Island and half read the article about Angel Island. Each group should be instructed to highlight important facts as they read the articles. When they are done reading, have the entire class complete a Venn Diagram detailing what is the same and what is different among the two groups. This could be accomplished by asking one group to state a fact about Ellis Island. Then ask the Angel Island groups whether this was also true about Angel Island. Discuss using the Venn Diagram and where to write facts based on whether they both share this fact or do not share the fact. Repeat as you rotate through the groups to allow all students to participate.
Closure	As students to summarize the similarities and differences between Ellis Island and Angel Island orally to their partner.
Resources	<i>"Coming to America"</i> Weekly Reader News - Edition 4, 4/7/2006, Vol. 87 Issue 22, p2-3. Can be downloaded from

[www.stanislauslibrary.org](http://www.stanislauslibrary.org).

Kids Discover, May2002, Vol. 12 Issue 5- Choose an appropriate article from this issue about Ellis Island. (Kit is available from Library Services.)

Venn Diagram on chart paper.

# Coming to America

The poems of Angel Island shine the light on Chinese immigration to the United States.

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途  
去  
美  
國

The Chinese writing system does not include an alphabet of letters. Instead words are represented by symbols.

Three Chinese phrases appear in this story. From left, they read: "Journey to America," "Gold Mountain," and "Poetry of Angel Island."

The year is 1934. Twelve-year-old Wong Kai Chong must leave everything he knows in China and travel to the United States to join his father. He lands in San Francisco, California, on a cold day and is held on Angel Island, a station for immigrants. An **immigrant** is a person who comes to a country to live.

On Angel Island, officials **interrogate**, or question, Kai. He knows his answers must match what his father said before him. If they don't, Kai will be sent back to China. His experience is detailed in the children's book *Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain*. Kai's story portrays the voyage of more than 175,000 Chinese immigrants to Angel Island from 1910 to 1940.

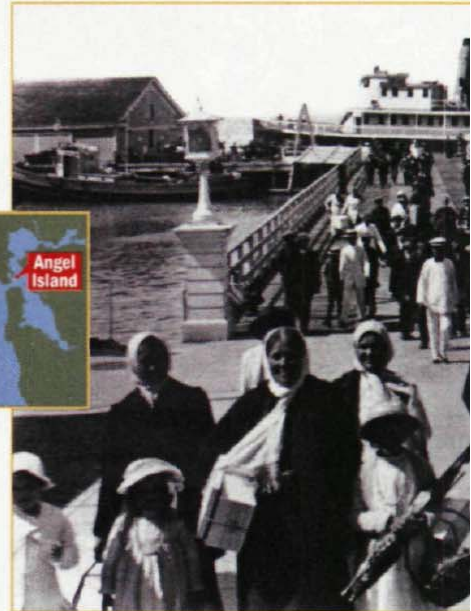
In December, President George W. Bush signed the Angel Island Immigration Station Restoration and Preservation Act. The law provides up to \$15 million to set up a museum and research center on the island to help tell stories like Kai's. The money will also be used to protect hundreds of poems carved in the wooden walls of the station that describe the difficult journey.

## On the Border

People from China didn't always have difficulty entering the United States. The earliest



**MAKEOVER** The Angel Island hospital will be restored within the next eight years.

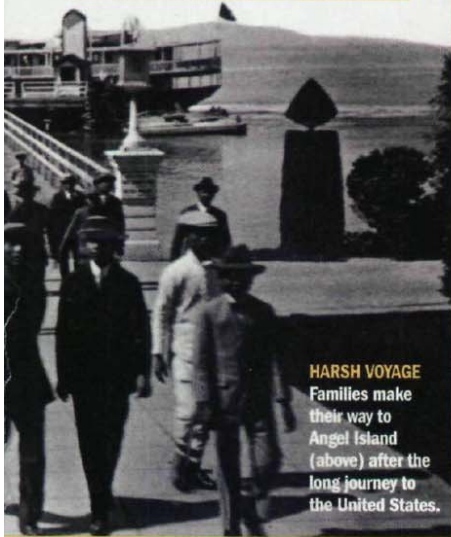


Chinese immigrants arrived during the California gold rush in the 1840s and 1850s. They nicknamed the United States *Gum Saan*, or "Gold Mountain," because many of them hoped to strike it rich.

But as the number of Chinese immigrants grew, Americans became less welcoming. In 1882, the U.S. government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. The law made it almost impossible for Chinese workers to enter the United States.

Chinese families were **detained**, or forcibly held, at Angel Island while immigration officials decided whether the newcomers should be allowed to enter the United States. The process was very different from that of Ellis Island—the New York port of entry for European immigrants.

On Ellis Island, more than 95 percent of travelers were processed quickly and allowed into the United States. On Angel Island, many Chinese immigrants were held for weeks, months, and sometimes even years. After being cruelly questioned by



**HARSH VOYAGE**  
Families make their way to Angel Island (above) after the long journey to the United States.

officials, more than 30 percent of immigrants were sent back to China.

### Poems of the Past

Angel Island's doors closed in 1940 when China and the United States became allies, or partners, during World War II (1939–1945). The island's main immigration station was scheduled to be destroyed in the 1970s until a park ranger found poetry carved in its walls. The poems described the frustration and sadness that many people felt during their stay at Angel Island. (See "Angel Island's Poets.")

Later this year, the poems will literally be brought to light. Angel Island's main buildings will reopen to the public, and the poems will be lit up for all to see.

"Angel Island shows a different, but equally important, side of immigration," Erika Gee, education expert at the Angel Island Immigration Foundation, told *Weekly Reader*. "We hope that Angel Island becomes a bookend to Ellis Island."

Historical images courtesy of California State Parks; Hospital, sidebar: AP/Wide World Photos; Calligraphy: Suk Kuen Lui for Weekly Reader; Map: Leigh Haeger for Weekly Reader



**SHINING LIGHT** Roy McNamee, an Angel Island official, shows the poems carved in the station's walls by immigrants.

April is National Poetry Month.

## Angel Island's Poets

More than 200 poems are on the walls of Angel Island. The following two poems were recently translated:

It's been a long time since I left my home village  
Who could know I'd end up imprisoned  
in a wooden building?  
I'm heartsick when I see my reflection,  
my handkerchief is soaked in tears  
I ask you, what crime did I commit  
to deserve this?

—Li Hai of Nancun, Taishan

Dwelling in the wooden building,  
I give vent to despair  
Searching for a living while perching  
on a mountain—it's hard to earn glory  
Letters do not arrive, my thoughts  
in vain  
In bitterness and sadness,  
I watch for my early release

—Unsigned

### Your Turn

What feelings do these poems capture?  
How do they tell the story of Angel Island's immigrants?

詩  
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天  
使  
島