

**UNIT:** The Importance of Health to the Admission of Immigrants  
 Grades 2 - 4 <sup>1</sup>

**Objective:** The journey to America was not always an easy journey for many immigrants. Some immigrants might have arrived to America suffering from some illness. What happened to those sick immigrants? By using primary sources, students will be able to identify the various public health factors in regard to immigration in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Students will be able to understand the medical process on Ellis Island and how the immigrants were treated when ill.

(NOTE: These activities may work best after you do some general work with students on immigration in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.)

**Introduction:** Background Information for Educators: *Immigration, Ellis Island, and Public Health*

OBJECTIVES, ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS ASSESSMENTS MATERIALS	NATIONAL STANDARDS	CONTENT VOCABULARY	LESSONS / ACTIVITIES EXAMPLES OF THE TYPE OF WORK STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO TO MEET THE NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES.	TECHNOLOGY INFUSION / WEB LINKS, BIBLIOGRAPHY
<p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <p>Students will be able:</p> <p>-to identify the various public health factors in regard to immigration in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century</p>	<p>I. Culture Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity, so that the learner can</p> <p>a. explore and describe similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures address similar human needs and concerns;</p>	<p>Bewildered            Button Hook            Chicken pox            Contagious            Dock            Ellis Island            Foreign            Great Hall            Hail Britannia            HMS Cameronia</p>	<p>1) Show students the map of Ellis Island by either projecting it or printing it out for them. Identify the buildings on the Island and their function, such as the Main Immigration building, dock, hospital buildings, etc. Ask the students: <i>Why do you think the hospital buildings would be separated from other buildings? Why would he</i></p>	<p>Ideas for using oral history in the classroom</p> <p>Other Ellis Island oral histories</p>

<sup>1</sup> This lesson is based on an original lesson plan created by teachers Dena Aho, Nina Corley, Sharon Ottenbreit, and Allison Rief who participated in the July/August 2006 National Endowment for the Humanities Landmarks in American History and Culture workshop, sponsored by *The Ellis Island Institute, a program of Save Ellis Island, Inc.* ([www.saveellisland.org](http://www.saveellisland.org))

<p>-to develop the skills for reading and analyzing primary sources -to understand the importance of primary sources when studying history -to understand the process of the medical inspection Ellis Island</p> <p><u>Essential Questions:</u></p> <p>Why was being healthy so important for immigrant children?</p> <p>Why was employment so important for immigrant families?</p> <p>What role did health and doctors play at Ellis Island?</p>	<p>b. give examples of how experiences may be interpreted differently by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference; c. describe ways in which language, stories, folktales, music, and artistic creations serve as expressions of culture and influence behavior of people living in a particular culture; d. compare ways in which people from different cultures think about and deal with their physical environment and social conditions;</p> <p>II, Time, Continuity, &amp; Change Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves in and over time, so that the learner can:</p> <p>a. demonstrate an understanding that different people may describe the same event or situation in diverse ways, citing reasons for the differences in views; b. demonstrate an ability to use correctly vocabulary</p>	<p>Hospital Immigration Inspection Labor Laddies/lad Manifest Migrated Naturalized Oral history Primary source Prisoner Public Health Service Quarantine Scotland Steerage Third Class</p>	<p><i>hospital wards be separated from each other?</i></p> <p>-You may want to talk about being sick with a cold, and what you do or your family does to make sure you don't give what you have to other people (use tissues, stay in your room, cover your mouth when you sneeze, etc.).</p> <p>2) Show the students photographs of immigrant children at Ellis Island. Have students "read" the photographs and explore what they can find out about immigrant children through the photographs. Ask the students: <i>What does "healthy" mean to you? Do the children look healthy? How can you tell?</i></p> <p>3) Define with students what a primary source is. Explain that photographs are a primary source, and that there are other primary sources related to immigration that together help tell a story, and that you will be exploring one story now.</p> <p>4) Show students Thomas Allan's ship manifest. After they locate his name on the manifest, ask the students questions such as <i>What do you see</i></p>	
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<p><u>Assessments:</u></p> <p>Creative writing/drawing rubric</p> <p><u>Materials:</u></p> <p>Story of Thomas Allan (based on actual oral history of Thomas Allan)</p> <p>Whole oral history of Thomas Allan</p> <p>Excerpt of Thomas Allan’s oral history</p> <p>Connections chart</p> <p>Map of Ellis Island</p> <p>Pictures of immigrants</p> <p>Ship manifest for Thomas Allan</p>	<p>associated with time such as past, present, future, and long ago; read and construct simple timelines; identify examples of change; and recognize examples of cause and effect relationships;</p> <p>c. compare and contrast different stories or accounts about past events, people, places, or situations, identifying how they contribute to our understanding of the past;</p> <p>d. identify and use various sources for reconstructing the past, such as documents, letters, diaries, maps, textbooks, photos, and others;</p> <p>e. demonstrate an understanding that people in different times and places view the world differently;</p>		<p><i>written near Thomas’ name? What new information can we learn about Thomas from this document? Write responses on chart paper or on the board.</i></p> <p>5) Ask students to imagine what they think happened to Thomas as he came from Scotland. They can write or draw his immigration story, using the information they have so far. Assess this activity with a writing or drawing rubric.</p> <p>6) Explain to students that Thomas Allan recorded his story for people to listen to, which is called an oral history. Depending on the level of your students, play the whole oral history of Thomas Allan and pause occasionally to ask comprehension questions (this is best done over the course of one class period) or read the story based on the oral history of Thomas Allan, stopping as indicated with discussion questions. You can play for the class the excerpt of Thomas Allan’s oral history so they can hear a bit of his story in his own voice. Ask the students: <i>What new information did they get about Thomas from the oral history? Why was it important for immigrants to be</i></p>	
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			<p><i>healthy when they came to America?</i> (for adults, to be able to get work to earn a living; for kids, to be able to work or go to school)</p> <p>7) Have students complete the connections chart as an assessment and lead them in a discussion of their charts. Ask the students: <i>What does Thomas' story tell us about what America was like in the early 1900s? What did America think were important qualities in immigrants?</i></p> <p>8) Extension Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Write a letter as Thomas, his father, his brother, one of the doctors or nurses, etc. Use information from the oral history in your letter.</li> <li>- What happened next to Thomas, after he was reunited with his father?</li> <li>- Record the story and place it in your listening center along with the text.</li> <li>- Have students write a book of Thomas' story, and illustrate it.</li> </ul>	
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Making Connections With Oral Histories

<u>Oral History and Yourself</u>	<u>Oral History and Other Texts</u>	<u>Oral History and the World</u>

Chalk Marks used by US Public Health Service Doctors on Ellis Island

<b>X</b>	<b>Suspected Mental Defect</b>
<b>Circled X</b>	<b>Definite signs of Mental Defect</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>Back</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>Conjunctivitis</b>
<b>CT</b>	<b>Trachoma</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>Eyes</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>Face</b>
<b>FT</b>	<b>Feet</b>
<b>G</b>	<b>Goiter</b>
<b>H</b>	<b>Heart</b>
<b>K</b>	<b>Hernia</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>Neck</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>Lameness</b>
<b>P</b>	<b>Physical and Lungs</b>
<b>PG</b>	<b>Pregnancy</b>
<b>SC</b>	<b>Scalp (Fungus)</b>
<b>S</b>	<b>Senility</b>

THOMAS ALLAN

Oral History Transcript

BIRTH DATE: SEPTEMBER 27, 1918

INTERVIEW DATE: JULY 16, 1984

RUNNING TIME: 13:57

INTERVIEWER: JEAN KOLVA

RECORDING ENGINEER: UNKNOWN

INTERVIEW LOCATION: ELLIS ISLAND, NY

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 5/1995

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: ALEXANDRA MARTINEZ, 6/1995

SCOTLAND, 1927 AGE 9 PASSAGE ON "THE CAMERONIA "

KOLVA: . . . 1984, and my name is Jean Kolva. I'm here at Ellis Island with Mr. Tom Allan. And Mr. Allan came to the United States in 1927, and he had an experience at Ellis Island, and we're going to be talking about that today. Mr. Allan, where and when were you born?

ALLAN: I was born in Tillicoultry, Scotland on September 27, 1918. And shortly thereafter, uh, or, well, I'm getting ahead of my story. My, I had a brother two years younger than I, and shortly after that we had another brother, and my mother and he died in childbirth, and my father, heartbroken, migrated to America where he had a brother that were already here. And he left us in care of our old nanny or grandmother, as they called them in those days, and three aunts. And he, uh, settled in Oxford, Nebraska, remarried, became a U.S. citizen, and sent for us. And at that time our ages were, I was nine, and my brother they called Wee Willie, he was seven, and they put a tag around our neck, and put us on the boat, and sent us over alone, and it was in January of 1927. Came over on the, uh, HMS Cameronia, which is the a Star Line ship. And it was the worst storm in the Atlantic they'd had in years, they said. In fact, it was so bad we had to go out of course and put into Halifax, Nova Scotia for emergency repairs. And I remember our trunk that came with us was all seasoaked with water. But the, it was an eventful journey in one major respect other than the storm, and that was my brother come down with the chicken pox, and we were quarantined on the ship. And I, to no avail, was trying to tell them that I already had chicken pox and there was no need for me to be quarantined, but being of young age, my argument didn't stand water. Because of that, we were sent to Ellis Island and quarantined. Because our father had become naturalized, I mean, if there had been no chicken pox, we would have come in New York City and met with him. I remember they took us off the ship and brought us in a small boat, and today it bring, brought back memories as slept as we came back in the Great Hall. And we were taken immediately to a, over to be a quarantine ward that you had here. In 1927 the heyday or the big influx of immigration was over, so as I remember, in a child's mind, there was a great number of people, there was nothing compared with previous years. I do remember vividly, and with our visit this morning it kind of got to me because the one ward we went through with the debris still there, waiting to be renovated. And my brother being ill, he was content to be in one bed. And there were, as I recall, looking at it, there were twelve beds down each side, and we were the only two in there. So I passed my time jumping from one bed to the other. And naturally I was a very angry young Scots lad. This is not the America that I was led to believe it was going to be, and here I was literally a prisoner. The biggest insult was a big nurse dumped me in a bathtub and gave me a bath. And I remember in Scottish schools you would get a lashing for being one minute late. But the worst punishment you could have was go sit

with the girls. And, of course, as I say, as we grew older, that changed a lot. But, anyway, they, uh, I remember one day, where they, as I say, there were only two of us in the ward. One was incapacitated, and I escaped from that ward, and I remember it created quite a hue and cry and it seemed like everybody in America was trying to chase me down, and how far I got I don't remember, but it was in one of the other buildings, and they got me cornered in a corner, and a big guard grabbed me, and he was carrying me over his shoulder, and I was screaming bloody murder, and I was screaming for the big cowboy movie heroes in those days that I had seen in Scotland in the movies were Hugh Gibson and Tom Hicks, and they always galloped to the rescue. But on this occasion I was very angry because Hugh Gibson and Tom Hicks never came, and I was unceremoniously dumped back in that ward. And, as I remember, we were here for, we had been in quarantine for two days on the ship, and I think we were in quarantine here another seven or eight days. And our father who was on the dock to meet us, because we were in quarantine, could not see us. So it was rather a dismal experience for two young lads. And I remember I was so angry at America I kept singing, "Hail Britannia, Britannia rules the waves." And I wanted to go back to bonnie Scotland. And, but then there was a great feeling when we were finally out of quarantine and our father met us. And I remember the Great Hall, and that must have been where we were reunited with him, and I left. And this is, well, I'm sixty-five now, so nine years old, that's about half a century ago, and to come back, to come back in the rain today kind of added to a touch of the melancholy, and it kind of gets to you. I think there's one thing about this place. You know, being infants, you don't remember your birth, but when you come back here you have a chance to remember your re-birth, in a new land and a new life, and I think it kind of chokes you up a little, and I know it did me today. And I thought it was rather unique that here we were the first group coming over this morning, and outside of two young lovely ladies from Minneapolis who were here because their grandfather had come from Sweden and they had remembered him talking about it. The only other group was a, what were there, a hundred children from a youth camp in upper New York that had come down, and that kind of made it coincidental that I was coming back with children again, as a child in my mind and an old man in reality, not so old man in reality. And I, there's a touch of sadness in seeing that the, you know, the deterioration of this place, and knowing the importance of this place in American history. I mean, there's, it emphasizes the great need for this restoration, and what a great museum to immigration this would be. Because let's face it, every American, unless he was a Sioux or a Blackfoot or an Indian, were immigrants in this great land of ours. And it's been a great experience. And, Jean, I want to thank you in all your help today in guiding me around. You were a lot kinder and you look a lot prettier than those four bearing guards who took me screaming and hollering back to that ward over fifty years ago.

KOLVA: ( she laughs ) Well, thank you very much. I'm glad to have met you, and hopefully the restoration will renew the Ellis Island back to compensate your first memories of the place. I'd just like to, if you'd like, to try to remember what happened here when you were a lad, and just go into a little bit of detail in terms of description of the buildings, or how did you know that it was an immigration guard who had captured you? Was he wearing a uniform, or, what, can you go into a little bit more detail about that?

ALLAN: Well, I, uh, when we arrived, I mean, we were just scared kids. And, you know, it's funny, everybody but you is a foreigner. I remember it seemed like everybody was talking a different language,



you know, the Town of Babble. And the guards, as I recall, they were wearing hats or some kind of uniform. They were probably the only un-bewildered people here, and so you knew, I mean, that they were guards, and they let you know they were guards. And we, incidentally, just as a little sideline, I am just returning back from a trip to my homeland, Bonnie Scotland, a vacation trip, and having as a youth come back in a big storm in the Atlantic, and this time we came back to America on the Concorde in three hours and twenty minutes. And, I mean, the dramatic comparison is beyond. And why there was a touch of bittersweet on this vacation. One of the last of my aunts, eighty years old, she was one of the three that took us down on the boat in Glasgow. And I remember kneeling, hugging us, with tears in her eyes, and saying, "Laddies, you're going to a wild country where there's nothing but painted savages and naked women." And naturally that was her impression from seeing cowboy and Indian movies in Scotland. And they said since there were going to be nothing but painted savages and naked women, we had to promise we wouldn't look. And I remember in Ellis Island that would be our first touch in America, we were the most wide-eyed and disappointed kids you ever saw. But the, you know, the exterior of the building is just as I remember. I mean, the red brick, the big, foreboding towers. I remember vividly the ferry slip there, although it's now in ruins. And the, I don't know, there's a sense of feeling, and it's coming back. But again there is that sadness that's, "Oh, let's do something about this," because it was so important in our history, let's repair this.

KOLVA: How was your hospital room decorated? Did that have any . . .

ALLAN: It wasn't decorated. There was plain white beds, and those tile, white tile floors. I don't remember any pictures or anything on it. As I recall, it was green walls. Would that be right? And, well, you can hardly tell now.

KOLVA: I know. ( she laughs ) All the plaster's falling off.

ALLAN: And, I mean, it was very stark. It probably had to be in those days. And, uh, I imagine that they were very kind to us. But being scared in a strange land, we were terrified.

KOLVA: Did your father come to visit you at all during your stay here at Ellis? Were you allowed visitors?

ALLAN: We were not. Because we were in quarantine, he could not see us, and this added to the, you know, being young, "Why? Why can't we see our father?" I remember just before we left the boat to be brought over here, it had to be a smaller boat, not a ferry, because we were in quarantine, him standing on the dock waving at us, but that's as close as he could come to us, or they would allow him to come to us. And we could not understand that at that time. So my first impressions of Ellis Island were indeed the Island of Tears, and not happy ones, but there's happiness today coming back and knowing this began a new life.

KOLVA: Well, that's wonderful. I can't think of anything else that I'd like to ask you, so I guess I'll just say thank you very much.

ALLAN: It's been a pleasure.

KOLVA: All right.

## Thomas Allan's Story

(based on the oral history given by Thomas Allan about his immigration to America and his stay at Ellis Island)

Hello! My name is Thomas Allan. I was born in Scotland in 1918. Last year in January of 1927 I immigrated to the United States. It was an exciting trip. My aunt took my brother and me down to catch the ship, the HMS Cameronia, in Glasgow, Scotland. The last thing she told us was, "Laddies, you are going to a wild country."

*Why do you think she said that?*

My brother is two years younger than I am so that meant I got to be in charge; after all I was already 9 years old. Our dad migrated to the United States after my mother and youngest brother died. Dad already had a job and had become naturalized.

*Why did Thomas' dad go first without them? (labor) Why was finding a job so important? What does 'naturalized' mean?*

We were excited about getting to go and be with our dad. He was going to be waiting for us in New York. Before we reached New York we ran into a storm and our ship had to stop off in Nova Scotia for repair. Then just two days before we were going to arrive in New York, my brother came down with chicken pox. They put us in quarantine on the ship. I kept telling them that I had already had chicken pox and that you could not get it again. I even tried to show them the scars I had, but they wouldn't listen to me, they kept saying I was just a kid.

*What does quarantine mean?*

Finally we got to New York...we landed and we could see our dad on the dock waving at us. We kept asking for him and they would not let us see him. Instead of letting us go to him they put us in a smaller boat, which took us to a contagious disease ward in the hospital on Ellis Island, where we had to stay, separated from other patients and immigrants.

*Why do you think they couldn't be with their dad? Why did they have to go to a special ward on Ellis Island?*

Everyone was speaking in foreign languages; it sounded like thunder. They took us to a room that was filled with hospital beds. There must have been 12 beds yet we were the only two in the room. The walls were green and white and the tiles were white, I was so bored, I finally started jumping from bed to bed. Then this lady came in and dumped me in a bathtub and I was not happy at all. How dare she just make me take a bath! I finally decided that I had to escape! I felt like a prisoner, I just wanted to find my dad. I was able to escape the ward, but it seemed like everyone in America was trying to chase me down. You could tell they were guards...they were the people who did not look bewildered. Finally they had me cornered, and this great be guard was carrying me out...I screamed at the top of my lungs for my big American Cowboy heroes to come and save me...I had watched them so often in the

American movies they showed in Scotland. But none of them showed up. That made me really angry; I started singing "Hail Britannia, Britannia rules the waves!" I wanted to go back to bonnie Scotland. The guards carried me back and dumped me on my bed. I did not like the United States. The nurses were nice, I guess, but I was ready to see my dad, and did not like being in the hospital.

*What influence did the movies have on Thomas? If you were Thomas, how would you feel at this point?*

Finally after about 7 days on Ellis Island in the hospitals they took my brother and I to the "Great Hall" and there our dad met us. It was such a relief to finally be out!