

**ACTIVITY**

# Supporting Question 1: The History of the Angel Island Immigration Station

## Overview

### About This Activity

"Students will define the term "borders" and think about borders that exist in their own lives. They will also review the history and significance of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the era of Chinese exclusion."

<b>Supporting Question</b>	How did the Angel Island Immigration Station both reflect and enforce borders within American society?
<b>Formative Task</b>	Students will hold a class discussion about how the Angel Island Immigration Station both reflects and enforces America's borders.
<b>Featured Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Handout:</b> Five Facts about Angel Island and Ellis Island, 1910–1940</li> <li>● <b>Video:</b> The Immigrants of Angel Island</li> <li>● <b>Reading:</b> Quotes from Historians Erika Lee and Judy Yung</li> <li>● <b>Handout:</b> Immigrants' Experience at Angel Island, 1910–1940</li> <li>● <b>Handout:</b> Immigrants' Experience at Ellis Island, 1892–1921r</li> </ul> Find these materials in this <a href="#">Google Folder</a> .

## Procedure

### Activity 1: Review the Historical Context of Angel Island

Begin by reviewing historical context with your students. Remind them that the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act created a problem for the US government. Prior to the era of Chinese exclusion, the United States had what historians call an "open door" policy, with few federal laws regulating immigration. As a result, there was no need to control who could enter the country and no immigration enforcement body to police the nation's borders. These institutions had to be created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to enforce the newly restrictive laws.

Share with students the **Five Facts about Angel Island and Ellis Island** handout. Explain that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the US government opened two immigration centers to process new arrivals to the country: Ellis Island and Angel Island. Ellis Island, founded in 1892, was built with the intention of policing the nation's East Coast border and was the primary

port of entry for immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. Angel Island, founded in 1910, was built with the intention of policing the nation's West Coast border and was the primary port of entry for immigrants from Asia in that era.

Next, ask students to examine the information in the **Five Facts about Angel Island and Ellis Island** handout and record their responses to the following questions:

1. What is one difference between the two immigration stations that you find surprising or troubling?
2. What questions do you have after reading these facts?

Have volunteers share their responses with the class. Then ask students to record in their journals questions that arose for them in response to the source. Have them share their questions with the class, and record these questions on the board to refer to throughout this two-day lesson.

### **Activity 2: Students Watch “The Immigrants of Angel Island”**

To provide more context about Angel Island and Ellis Island, share a brief clip from the **Time video [The Immigrants of Angel Island \(0:00–8:04\)](#)**. This video explores the personal stories of immigrants detained at the Angel Island Immigration Station. (Note: The video contains accounts of immigrant detention and suicide that might be disturbing for students. We suggest using the [Head, Heart, Conscience](#) strategy described below to help students process their feelings and reactions, but we also encourage you to view the clip in advance and make choices about how students will engage with the film in order to decide if it is appropriate for your students or if they could benefit from additional processing.)

Use the prompts below to have students privately reflect on the video in their journals. We recommend pausing at the following time stamps to give students time to record their thoughts: 3:58 and 4:20.

1. Head: What are one or two new pieces of information you learned from the video clip?
2. Heart: How are you feeling after watching this clip? Do any particular moments from the clip stand out to you?
3. Conscience: How can learning this history change the way we think about the world today?

Using the [Think, Pair, Share](#) strategy, ask students to share one of their responses with a partner.

Then pass out or project the reading **Quotes from Historians Erika Lee and Judy Yung**. Read the two quotes aloud to the class, and have students annotate the text using the following key:

- Write an exclamation mark (!) in the margin alongside information that surprises you.
- Write a question mark (?) in the margin alongside passages in which the author assumes you know or understand something that you don't.
- Write a “C” in the margin alongside information that challenges your thinking.

When students have finished reading and annotating, ask them to go back to the text and underline one word or phrase that resonates with them or that they would like to discuss with a classmate. Applying the [Think, Pair, Share](#) strategy, have students share with a partner the phrase they selected and discuss why it resonated with them. Students should also discuss with their

partner the questions they have about the text.

To give students a sense of how their classmates are responding to the material, ask volunteers to share the phrases they selected with the class, or, time permitting, have every student share in a format based on the [Wraparound](#) strategy. Then check for understanding by asking students the following questions:

1. According to historians Erika Lee and Judy Yung, what are the main differences between the Ellis Island Immigration Station and the Angel Island Immigration Station?
2. Why was the eastern border of the United States (e.g., the Ellis Island Immigration Station) enforced differently from the way the western border was enforced (e.g., the Angel Island Immigration Station)?

### **Activity 3: Comparing the Immigrant Experiences at Angel Island and Ellis Island**

Tell students that in the next activity, they will be comparing the immigrant experience at Angel Island with that at Ellis Island. Divide the class into pairs and give one partner a copy of **Immigrants' Experience at Angel Island, 1910–1940** and the other partner a copy of **Immigrants' Experience at Ellis Island, 1892–1921**. Have pairs read and annotate the source individually and then summarize the source for their partner.

Either individually or in small groups, ask students to use their class notes and readings to create a Venn diagram comparing Ellis Island and Angel Island. In the middle of the diagram, students should record similarities between the two immigration stations, while on either side they should record differences between them.

### **Formative Task**

#### **Class Discussion**

Lead a class discussion centered on the following questions. Be sure to have students take out their class notes, readings, and handouts (especially the Venn diagram they created) to refer to throughout the discussion.

1. How did an immigrant's experience at the Angel Island Immigration Station differ from the experience at the Ellis Island Immigration Station? What do you think explains the differences between them?
2. On what basis were decisions made about who should be allowed into the country and who should be kept out? How did those decisions reflect ideas about who could become an "American"?
3. How did the policies at the Angel Island Immigration Station reflect existing borders in the United States? How did these policies enforce new borders? (Encourage students to think not only about the geographic borders of the United States but also about the nation's social, political, and economic borders.)