

TEACHER'S GUIDE
Document Based Activity
Part 1: Finding Home
MISSION US 4: "City of Immigrants"

The Immigrant Journey

A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR

What was the process of emigrating from Eastern Europe to the United States at the turn of the twentieth century? While Lena's journey to America is fictional, her experience is based on the actual process millions of immigrants went through at the beginning of the twentieth century. In this activity, students examine primary source documents exploring the different phases of the immigrant journey. A Yiddish advertisement for a ticket examines the ticket purchasing process. The experience of steerage is depicted in an account of a traveler in 1905. A ship manifest reveals the confusion and uncertainty related to the processing of immigrants at Ellis Island. Together, these three sources complement Lena's story and provide a historical framework for understanding the phases of the journey immigrants embarked upon prior to creating a new life in America. Background information and guiding questions are provided for each document.

Activity Components

- **Three Primary Sources**
 - **Document 1: Ticket Advertisement**

If he were a historical figure, Lena's brother Isaac might have purchased her ticket to New York from Sender Jarmulowsky's bank on the Lower East Side, which was near his tenement apartment on Orchard Street. In addition to New York City, S. Jarmulowsky and Co. also had offices in the German cities of Hamburg and Bremen. This newspaper advertisement encourages Jewish immigrants to buy steerage tickets at the cheapest prices, and includes text in both English and Yiddish. The Yiddish language, which is written in the Hebrew alphabet, was brought to America by Jewish immigrants.
 - **Document 2: Selections from a 1905 Account of Steerage**

Steerage refers to the lowest decks of a ship and was the cheapest ticket option available. Unlike first class passengers who enjoyed fresh air, plentiful food, and private cabins on the upper decks, travel in steerage class was typified by crowded conditions, poor food, inadequate ventilation, and limited toilet use. This account from a traveler in 1905 describes steerage, and highlights the discrepancy between the journey of a first class passenger and one in steerage.
 - **Document 3: Ship Manifest**

A ship's manifest is a document listing the passengers of a ship for use by officials. Manifests were used by legal inspectors at Ellis Island to cross-examine each immigrant during a legal inspection prior to the person being permitted to enter the United States. This manifest records members of the Confino family who sailed to New York on the SS Argentina from Patras, Greece and were processed at Ellis Island in 1911. The family's journey began in Kastoria, which was part of the Ottoman Empire until it became part of Greece in 1913, and ended with their move to 97 Orchard Street in New York City's Lower East Side. The ship manifest records the travels of Rachel, Victoria, David, Saul, and Isaac Confino, and affirms that the family did not all travel together as a unit. As was common with many Jewish immigrants, Abraham Confino, the patriarch of the family, arrived in New York earlier to prepare for the rest of the family. The nationality of the Confino family members is listed on the manifest as Turkish, Greek, and Castorian, while their race is listed as Hebrew.



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- *Guiding Questions: Prompts to guide student exploration of each document.*
- *Postcard Template: Template for a culminating writing assignment that helps students connect Lena's experience directly to the primary source documents in the activity.*

Steps to Complete:

The following procedure is recommended for this activity and can be adapted based on your curricular goals and timing constraints.

1. *Distribute primary source document(s) to students. You may choose to share as many or as few of the documents as you wish.*
2. *Have students work independently or in small groups to investigate the document(s) with the goal of learning as much as they can about the stage of the immigrant journey it represents.*
3. *Select the corresponding guiding questions to help your students investigate each primary source. You can give your students all of the guiding questions for each document, or choose a few for them to respond to.*
4. *Have students present their findings to the class or a fellow student and share what was learned about the stage of the immigrant journey they explored.*
5. *Ask students to use the information they uncovered from the primary source document(s) and their playing of Part 1 to write a postcard from Lena to a friend in Russia who is about to embark on the immigrant journey. The letter should include information and advice regarding all the stages of the journey, from purchasing a ticket, to travelling in steerage and being processed at Ellis Island. The Postcard Template can be used for this portion of the activity, or students can write/type the letter.*



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Guiding Questions

The Prologue and Part 1 of "The City of Immigrants" provide an introduction to the immigrant experience at the turn of the twentieth century, and introduce the main character of the game, Lena Brodsky, who is journeying to New York City from Minsk, Russia. Part 1 and the primary sources in this activity illustrate the different phases of the immigrant journey. You will be assigned one or several of these sources to review. As you review each source, use these questions to analyze it. Remember to look closely at the source and think deeply about what it tells you about immigrant life.

Document 1: Ticket Advertisement

- Look carefully at the advertisement. Notice the images, text, and languages used. What can you infer about what is advertised? Who do you think the advertisement is intended for? Why?
- The advertisement emphasizes the business qualities of "solid, secure, and honest." Why do you think these words were included? What words would help you to make a decision about where to buy a ticket for a long journey?
- Why might tickets from Europe to America be advertised in New York City? What does this tell us about who was purchasing the tickets?
- What questions does this document raise for you?
- In what ways can this document inform our understanding of Lena's journey to America?

Document 2: Selections from 1905 Account of Steerage

- Read the account. Whose perspective is presented and what experience is described?
- What are the pros and cons of traveling in steerage?
- Compare and contrast the experience of cabin passenger and a steerage passenger.
- What factors might motivate an immigrant to travel in steerage despite its terrible reputation?
- What questions does this document raise for you?
- In what ways can this document inform our understanding of Lena's journey to America?

Document 3: Ship Manifest

- Analyze the document. What type of information about immigrant passengers does it provide?
- How might the experience of traveling alone versus traveling with part of a family have impacted the experience of steerage?
- Consider how labels provide historians information about persons, but also present challenges. What labels would apply to your family if your travels were documented in a manifest? To what extent do geography and culture, two of the things noted on the manifest, define the family?
- What questions does this document raise for you?
- In what ways can this document inform our understanding of Lena's journey to America?



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The Immigrant Journey
Phases of the Journey: Ticket Purchase



The translation of the Yiddish text included in this advertisement reads:

Solid! Secure! Honest!

Boarding Passes for all crossings to and from Europe at the lowest prices. Schedules are available to localities in Russia, Poland, Germany, Austria Sweden, Romania, etc. in our office. Country orders are promptly taken care of.

Find out about all locations by visiting our offices:

S. Jarmulowsky

New York,
54 Canal Street

Hamburg,
52 Bei den Huetten

Bremen

S, Jarmulowsky and Co.,

27 an der Brake



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The Immigrant Journey
Phases of the Journey: Steerage

Source: Steiner, Edward A. *On the Trail of the Immigrant*, Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, 1906. Excerpt from Chapter III, "The Fellowship of the Steerage."

Selections from a 1905 Account of Steerage	Glossary Terms
<p>The day of embarkation finds an excited crowd with heavy packs and heavier hearts, climbing the gangplank. An uncivil crew directs the bewildered travelers to their quarters, which in the older ships are far too inadequate, and in the newer ships are, if anything, worse.</p>	<p><i>embarkation:</i> to go on board a ship <i>gangplank:</i> the wooden plank that makes a bridge from land to the ship <i>uncivil:</i> having bad manners <i>bewildered:</i> confused <i>quarters:</i> rooms on the ship <i>inadequate:</i> not good enough</p>
<p>Clean they are; but there is neither breathing space below nor deck room above, and the 900 passengers crowded into the hold of so elegant and roomy a steamer as the <i>Kaiser Wilhelm II</i>, of the North German Lloyd line, are positively packed like cattle, making a walk on deck when the weather is good, absolutely impossible, while to breathe clean air below in rough weather, when the hatches are down is an equal impossibility. The stench becomes unbearable, and many of the emigrants have to be driven down; for they prefer the bitterness and danger of the storm to the pestilential air below. The division between the sexes is not carefully looked after, and the young women who are quartered among the married passengers have neither the privacy to which they are entitled nor are they much more protected than if they were living promiscuously.</p>	<p><i>steamer:</i> large ship powered by steam engines <i>cattle:</i> farm animals like cows and bulls <i>hatches:</i> covering of an opening, like a curtain <i>stenches:</i> bad smells <i>unbearable:</i> too bad to live with <i>emigrants:</i> people who leave their country to move to another country <i>bitterness:</i> extreme cold <i>pestilential:</i> unhealthy, causing disease <i>sexes:</i> men and women <i>entitled:</i> to have a right to something <i>promiscuously:</i> not being very careful</p>
<p>The food, which is miserable, is dealt out of huge kettles into the dinner pails provided by the steamship company. When it is distributed, the stronger push and crowd, so that meals are anything but orderly procedures. On the whole, the steerage of the modern ship ought to be condemned as unfit for the transportation of human beings; and I do not hesitate to say that the German companies, and they provide best for their cabin passengers, are unjust if not dishonest.</p>	<p><i>miserable:</i> really bad <i>kettles:</i> pots for boiling water and soup <i>dinner pails:</i> dinner bowls <i>distributed:</i> handed out <i>crowd:</i> push into a small space <i>orderly:</i> well-behaved <i>ought:</i> should <i>condemned:</i> to declare something too bad to be used <i>cabin:</i> rooms on a ship for passengers that have first and second class tickets</p>



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<p>Two to four sleep in one cabin, which is well and comfortably furnished; while in the [steerage] from 200 to 400 sleep in one compartment on bunks, one above the other, with little light and no comforts. In the second cabin the food is excellent, is partaken of in a luxuriantly appointed dining-room, is well cooked and well served; while in the steerage the unsavory rations are not served, but doled out, with less courtesy than one would find in a charity soup kitchen.</p>	<p><i>compartment: small division</i> <i>bunks: beds on a ship</i> <i>comforts: comfortable things, comforter</i> <i>partaken of: eaten, consumed</i> <i>second cabin: section of the ship used by passengers with second class tickets</i> <i>luxuriantly: very luxurious, fancy</i> <i>appointed: chosen</i> <i>unsavory: not tasty</i> <i>rations: the amount of food every person is allowed to have every day</i> <i>doled out: given in small amounts</i></p>
<p>The steerage ought to be and could be abolished by law. It is true that the Italian and Polish peasant may not be accustomed to better things at home and might not be happier in better surroundings nor know how to use them; but it is a bad introduction to our life to treat him like an animal when he is coming to us. He ought to be made to feel immediately, that the standard of living in America is higher than it is abroad, and that life on the higher plane begins on board of ship. Every cabin passenger who has seen and smelled the steerage from afar, knows that it is often indecent and inhuman; and I, who have lived in it, know that it is both of these and cruel besides.</p>	<p><i>courtesy: good manners</i> <i>abolished by law: made illegal</i> <i>peasant: worker with little education or money</i> <i>accustomed to: used to</i> <i>surroundings: environment</i> <i>abroad: countries outside the US</i> <i>life on the higher plane: a better life</i> <i>afar: far away</i> <i>indecent: not decent, not proper</i> <i>inhuman: not good enough for human beings</i> <i>cruel: very mean</i></p>
<p>On the steamer <i>Noordam</i>, sailing from Rotterdam three years ago, a Russian boy in the last stages of consumption was brought upon the sunny deck out of the pestilential air of the steerage. I admit that to the first cabin passengers it must have been a repulsive sight -- this emaciated, dirty, dying child; but to order a sailor to drive him down-stairs, was a cruel act, which I resented. Not until after repeated complaints was the child taken to the hospital and properly nursed. On many ships, even drinking water is grudgingly given, and on the steamer <i>Staatendam</i>, four years ago, we had literally to steal water for the steerage from the second cabin, and that of course at night. On many journeys, particularly on the <i>Fürst Bismark</i>, of the Hamburg American line, five years ago, the bread was absolutely uneatable, and was thrown into the water by the irate emigrants.</p>	<p><i>consumption: tuberculosis, a dangerous lung disease</i> <i>first cabin: or first class, the nicest section of the ship, used by passengers with first class tickets</i> <i>repulsive: disgusting</i> <i>emaciated: extremely skinny, usually from starvation</i> <i>resented: was angry or upset about</i> <i>nursed: taken care of if sick, like a nurse</i> <i>grudgingly: doing or giving something when you don't want to</i> <i>irate: very angry</i></p>



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At last the passengers are stowed away, and into the excitement of the hour of departure there comes a silent heaviness, as if the surgeon's knife were about to cut the arteries of some vital organ. Homesickness, a disease scarcely known among the mobile Anglo-Saxons, is a real presence in the steerage; for there are the men and women who have been torn from the soil in which through many generations their lives were rooted.

stowed away: stored, put away
arteries: blood vessels from the heart
vital organ: organs you need to survive, like your heart and lungs
mobile: moves a lot
Anglo-Saxons: people from England
torn from the soil: removed from the land
generations: average length of time between birth of parents and children
rooted: has strong roots, have been for a long time



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The Immigrant Journey
Phases of the Journey: Processing of Ship Manifest at Ellis Island

44 Required by the regulations of the Secretary of Commerce and Labor of the United States, under Act of Congress approved F

S. S. ARGENTINA *Sailing from PATRAS*

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS

No. as entered on List	NAME IN FULL	Age	Sex	Married or Single	Culture or Description	Admission	Nationality	(Country of birth, (Place or People, Rank, Title, (Class or subject))	Capacity	Other Term	The name and signature of the steward
1	Bohony	30	M	Single		no	Polish	Poland	1		Bohony
2	Bohony	30	M	Single		no	Polish	Poland	1		Bohony
3	Bohony	30	M	Single		no	Polish	Poland	1		Bohony
4	Bohony	30	M	Single		no	Polish	Poland	1		Bohony
5	Bohony	30	M	Single		no	Polish	Poland	1		Bohony
6	Bohony	30	M	Single		no	Polish	Poland	1		Bohony
7	Bohony	30	M	Single		no	Polish	Poland	1		Bohony
8	Bohony	30	M	Single		no	Polish	Poland	1		Bohony
9	Bohony	30	M	Single		no	Polish	Poland	1		Bohony
10	Bohony	30	M	Single		no	Polish	Poland	1		Bohony
11	Bohony	30	M	Single		no	Polish	Poland	1		Bohony
12	Bohony	30	M	Single		no	Polish	Poland	1		Bohony
13	Bohony	30	M	Single		no	Polish	Poland	1		Bohony
14	Bohony	30	M	Single		no	Polish	Poland	1		Bohony



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Write a postcard from Lena to a friend who is about to embark on their immigrant journey. Include information and advice in your letter regarding all the stages of the immigrant journey, from purchasing a ticket, to traveling in steerage, to being processed at Ellis Island. Use information from the primary source documents and playing Part 1 of the game to complete your postcard.

