

Crossing boundaries



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The texts in this booklet are all about travelling to, or arriving in, a completely new place. They show how people react and adjust to being in a place where they feel strange or different in some way.

This is an extract from a guide book for visitors to New York. It gives information about an

Ellis Island Museum



- a unique museum about America's history
- free admission
- open 7 days a week
- suitable for families

Ellis

The History of Ellis Island

Ellis Island – its place in history

In the first half of the 20th century, many people who faced terrible poverty in Europe decided to leave their homes and travel to America in pursuit of the 'American Dream'. They had to come to Ellis Island first, to be registered at a special centre. Between the years of 1892 and 1954 around 12 million people came in search of opportunities in the New World.

First sight of the New World

When the great steamships sailed into New York harbour, the passengers clambered onto the decks to catch their first glimpse of America. The city skyline loomed over them like a great mountain range. Below them, the harbour teemed with activity whilst, across the river, stood the Statue of Liberty.



Approaching Ellis Island

The Ellis Island Registration Centre

When people first arrived on the island there was a great deal of confusion. Most families were hungry, exhausted and penniless; very few were able to speak any English.



New arrivals at the Ellis Island Centre

As they went into the Ellis Island Registration Centre, the newcomers had numbered tags pinned to their clothes. They had to wait for up to a day while officials frantically tried to process them. Men were sent to one area, women and children to another, for a series of medical checks. Those who were not healthy were weeded out from the others. The majority of the people, however, were processed in a matter of hours and then sent on their way to start their new lives.

The Centre had been designed to deal with 500,000 people a year, but double that number arrived each year in the early part of the 20th century – as many as 11,747 passed through on a single day in 1907. The Centre on Ellis Island closed in 1954. It was left empty and unused until the mid-1980s, when work began to set up a museum on the site. ■

unusual museum on a small island in New York harbour.

Island

Ellis Island

The Ellis Island Museum Today

The **Ellis Island Museum** was opened in 1990 to tell the extraordinary story of the people who had passed through the Ellis Island Centre.

As you walk through these buildings today, you can now enjoy a well-ordered museum, beautifully laid out. It is an ambitious project which brings the past back to life. There are displays of photographs and items the new arrivals would have brought with them such as baggage, clothing and passports. The exhibition tells you about those who arrived, who they were, where they came from and why they came. The registry room now contains only a few inspectors' desks and American flags. In the side hall, interview rooms re-create the checking process. Here, you can even listen to the recorded voices of some of the first people who came to the Centre. Voices of the past fill the rooms like ghosts, whispering memories that describe the life-changing events that occurred on Ellis Island.



Inside the museum

Over 100 million Americans can trace their ancestors back to someone whose name is in a record book on Ellis Island. For these Americans, especially, the museum provides a fascinating experience. For everyone, it is a powerful reminder that America today is a land made up of a wide range of nationalities and cultures. ■



Visiting the Museum

How to get there

Ferries go to both the **Statue of Liberty** and **Ellis Island** and leave from the pier in Battery Park in Manhattan every 20 minutes. Round-trip tickets are \$8 (senior citizens \$6, children \$3). It's best to leave early to avoid the queues.



Museum opening times

Daily 9.50 am – 5.00 pm
www.ellisland.com



This is an extract from the novel Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad, first published in 1899. The narrator is describing the experience of going up the River Congo in Africa, in a steamboat.

Heart of dark



Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. There was no joy in the brilliance of the sunshine. The long stretches of the river ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On silvery sandbanks, hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side.

The broadening waters flowed through a mob of wooded islands; you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert, till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off for ever from everything you had once known. There were moments when one's past came back to one, as it will sometimes; but it came in the shape of an unrestful and noisy dream, remembered with wonder in the midst of this strange world of plants, and water, and silence. And this stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace.



On we went into the silence, along empty stretches, round the still bends, between the high walls of our winding way, the heavy beat of the stern-wheel* echoing in hollow claps. Trees, trees, millions of trees, massive, immense, running up high; and at their foot, hugging the bank against the stream, crept the little steamboat, like a sluggish beetle crawling on the floor of a lofty building. It made you feel very small, very lost.

We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. It was very quiet there. At night, sometimes the roll of drums behind the curtain of trees would run up the river and remain, as if hovering in the air high over our heads, till the first break of day. Whether it meant war, peace, or prayer we could not tell. We were wanderers on prehistoric earth, on an earth that seemed like an unknown planet.

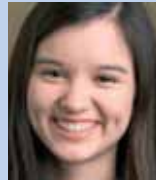
*Stern-wheel – the big wheel at the back of the boat which turns and pushes it through the water.

This text is a written record of a conversation between two teenage girls and their teacher. The teenagers are talking about their experiences of living in different countries.

The world is my home



Fatima was born in Morocco where she grew up speaking French and Arabic. She came to England when she was 14.



Maria's family is Spanish, but she was born in England. She has lived in England and spoken English all her life.

Fatima Well ... when I came here I couldn't speak a word of English. I was fourteen and my father said I had to go to school. I started in the lower school and it was a disaster ... I had to work like mad, every night and day and in three months I started to sort of have a decent conversation. And because of the teacher who was teaching English ... I admire the way she ... she was fantastic ... fantastic, and 'cos she could speak a bit of French, she didn't have much difficulty with me.

Teacher When do you use French, when Arabic and when English? What kinds of situation make you want to speak one rather than the other?

Fatima The thing is when I'm in England, somehow my mind turns into English ... I've got a sort of English mind, 'cos full-time schooling you speak English all the time, so you get home you speak English all the time. You speak to your mother, of course, in Arabic, but somehow you're English, you're thinking in English. English, English.

Teacher Maria, you've spoken English all your life but are there times when you're in a slight muddle over which is the best language to use?

Maria Yes, I think ... You're between two societies ... I think for me between Spanish society and English. You can't make up your mind which one is best. Do you know what I mean?

Teacher When you go to Spain for holidays, do you slip into speaking Spanish quite easily?

Maria For the first two weeks it's very hard to adapt to that society. Because I'm sort of shy and everyone seems very loud. And everything's so different. And then I get used to it for a few weeks. And just when I get used to being in Spain, I have to come back here and it's difficult.

Fatima It's really difficult, because you go home and you feel like a foreigner. Once you are out of your country, you're a foreigner in this world. You come to England and they look at you differently. You go to Morocco, you're a foreigner and everywhere you go you look like a foreigner.

Maria When I go to Spain they say, 'Oh look, the English girl'. Oooh, I get annoyed. And when I come here, 'Oh look, Spanish girl'. So I'm sort of in between. You know, before I went to Spanish classes here in England, I didn't know anything about Spain. I didn't even know what Spain looked like. I imagined such silly things, what the houses looked like and the people ... I thought they were sort of like Martians! ... I did, I did! But when I went to Spain I liked it a lot, so I thought ... I went to Spanish classes for three years and I've got to a very good level.

Fatima I love meeting people ... I've travelled a lot already. I like travelling and I think the more I learn languages and meet more people the more the world is becoming my home, if you see what I mean. I'm not particularly concerned about Morocco ... I don't exactly want to go back to Morocco and live there, although I'd like to live in another Arab country and see how it works ... and then go to another country and live, you know, in the world.



Different worlds? Markets in London and Marrakesh

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