

Name:

Date:

US Immigration

Read the following short excerpts from people who remember their time immigrating into the USA, when you are done, answer the questions that are attached:

Interviewee: MORRIS ABRAHAM SCHNEIDER
Immigrated from Poland on May 3, 1910, Age 10.
Date of Interview: November 17, 1991
Interviewer: Paul E. Sigrist, Jr.
Ellis Island Collection: EI-116

Schneider:

When we got on the Rotterdam, we had a field day. One, I was never on ship before and it was absolutely, I was awed by it. It was overwhelming. All the people and boarding the ship, it was all a brand new experience. We left Rotterdam, we set sail and about a half hour after the ship started my sister got very sea sick. It took us fourteen days to cross the Atlantic and in the entire crossing, she was in steerage, and the only time she came up for a breath of fresh air was just about a half hour before we saw the Statue of Liberty. Now the experience of the ship, being young was an adventure in that particular situation, because we were on the lowest level of the ship. We couldn't go aboard. Some kids were more adventurous. My brother and I, we would sneak aboard, we were always chased. And we saw some people who traveled maybe in first or second class and we looked upon them as royalty, but we were confined primarily to steerage.

Steerage was one huge place. It was the lowest deck. The stench, it was the summer, in August, the humidity, the heat, having no air conditioning, having cooling facilities, it was very hot, compounded by the fact that there must have been anywhere from two to three hundred people in that huge cavernous area. The body smells, the body odors, the lack of sanitation, the lack of any kind of facilities, washing, there was no such thing as washing or bathing. The stench, the vermin, it was rat infested. But, being children, I guess, had its advantages, in this case because we always tried to get out of there. We tried to go, get out of the steerage, get out of the babble of voices, get out of the heat and the stench and get on the main deck. We all were permitted to stay there for a little while but we were constantly chased. But the crossing went for us, for me in particular, went very quickly.

- 1) What class do you suspect Schneider traveled in? How do you know? (give at least 3 examples!)
- 2) What surprised you the most about this experience? Why? (answer in 2-4 sentences!)

Interviewee: Emma and William Greiner

Immigrated from Italy (on German and French Quotas) at Age 11 and 12, December 30, 1913 and July 18, 1912

Date of Interview: March 3, 1991

Interviewer: Paul E. Sigrist, Jr.

Ellis Island Collection: EI-28

Greiner (What He Packed):

EMMA: Yes, yes. It was very disrupting, you know, to pack and break up your home.

Oh, we took, of course, our clothing and some pieces of like china that were very, very special. And maybe a blanket or two also that were real good wool, that we felt maybe we may not be able to get here in the United States.

WILLIAM: Of course, there was pressure to leave things there but they accommodated us kids. And I brought a lot of things that (he laughs) I now wonder why I was so attached, for instance, to greeting cards. They were very, very romantic in those days and they were through the years birthdays and so on. And a few toys. My tin soldiers. I don't remember whether I brought anything about my small railroad, um.

WILLIAM: Oh, yes, yes. And then I had, uh, what we called a "Magic Lantern." It was a... Projector.

Very, very primitive, (he laughs) compared to today's.

EMMA: And I was hoping he wouldn't bring those soldiers because when we played together at home, you see I was German and he was French, you know, and he would always decimate all my soldiers, kill them all off, so we had quite a different set in our lives...(she laughs.)

- 1) If you had to pack one bag to leave your home, what are some items you would include? (excluding clothing) answer in 3-4 sentences:

Interviewee: Gertrude (Gudrun) Hildebrandt Moller
Immigrated from Germany on June 15, 1920, Age 9.
Date of Interview: October 5, 1992
Interviewer: Janet Levine, Ph.D
Ellis Island Collection: EI-222

Moller (Name Change in School):

I was born Gudrun Hildebrandt and married Moller, Mr. Moller, who was from Denmark. He immigrated here many years later and we met in New York. However when I started school in Chicago, where I grew up, needless to say, first of all, I couldn't speak a word of English, and I was the only child in the school that couldn't speak English. And (she laughs) it wasn't too happy the first couple of years but my mama said "Take heart because some day you're going to be able to speak two languages and all the ones that were teasing you will speak only one". And it was true. She was always right. So, my teacher suggested, since none of the children could pronounce Gudrun, which is an old Germanic-Scandinavian name, and a very beautiful name (I hear), she gave me a list of girls' names to choose from. So that all the kids could converse, you know, know what to call me. So I picked the name starting with a g, as with my name, and it was Gertrude. I'm not very happy with it, but it has stuck with me all of these years.

- 1) Why did Moller change her first name?
- 2) What surprised you most about this primary source? (answer in 2-4 sentences):

Immigrated from Russia at age 6 on November 4, 1903

Date of Interview: August 29, 1991

Interviewer: Janet Levine, Ph.D.

Ellis Island Collection: EI-82

Levine:

Did your mother and father have the attitude that they wanted their children to become Americanized and they wanted them to hold on to the traditions of Jews in Russia?

Beller (Maintaining Cultural Identity):

My father would want us to go to synagogue on the high holy days; and I always went with him. The other boys, they strayed away from the religious part of it. But I always went with him on every high holiday and the like. I went to Hebrew school. I had the rabbi come to the house for awhile. Then I went to the Rabbi's place in order to learn until I was thirteen years old. And after that I didn't care about that. I wanted to be Americanized. I want to be an American, and I want to accept my opportunities and take the, make the most of them. Take advantage of everything that I could learn. And I did just that.

- 1) Why do you think Jews in Russia and Europe were trying to come to the United States?
- 2) Why do you think her brothers strayed away from the religion, specifically going to synagogues? (think about our past Unit with life in the cities and the work force).

Interviewee: KATHLEEN MAGENNIS LAMBERTI
Immigrated from Ireland at Age 22: NOVEMBER 6, 1898
Date of Interview: FEBRUARY 25, 1994
Ellis Island Collection: EI-439

SIGRIST: Tell me what that first night in America was like?

SIGRIST: So she fed you?

LAMBERTI: She fed, oh, yes, she fed us. (she laughs) And my Uncle Joe brought in, he brought in a pizza pie. And I, we looked at that and they said, "Now, this is pizza pie." And Mother said, "Oh, what is that?" This dreadful looking stuff. It was awful. Mother said, "Mmm." Didn't eat that. Well, we were very disappointed. When we got his back turned we put it out. We threw it out. But we didn't, we didn't know what it was. To eat tomatoes in a pie. That was dreadful. (she laughs) Then, but we did grow to love it.

- 1) Food was a common item that was quickly spread throughout the US as many different cultures started to flood to the United States, what are some examples of foreign food that you like best? What is its country of origin?
- 2) What other items might have been spread with the combination of so many different cultures? Do you know any examples?