

Discovering Angel Island: The Story Behind the Poems

Lesson Unit 2

GRADES

4th, 5th & 6th

OVERVIEW

The students will be able to preview and understand vocabulary terms used in the early twentieth-century regarding immigration. They will be able to develop a better understanding of the experience that the detainees on the Angel Island Immigration Station had to face.

Students will also be able to take notes and participate in a class discussion regarding the video they will be watching in class entitled, *Discovering Angel Island: The Story Behind the Poems*. The video will explain the beautiful calligraphy which told the stories of many immigrants who passed through the Island.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to explain at least two emotions that the immigrants experienced during their stay on Angel Island.
- Students will be able to explain two challenges that the detainees faced while they were detained on Angel Island.
- Students will be able to learn new vocabulary words in context related to immigration. They will be able to use at least three words correctly in a sentence as part of a class discussion.
- Students will be able to show understanding of the immigration experience through a written response in a journal entry in which they are to try and imagine the experience from their own perspective as a young child.

TIME

Each lesson is approximately 20 minutes long.

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MATERIALS

- Access to <http://www.kqed.org> to stream video *Discovering Angel Island: The Story Behind the Poems*, or obtain a VHS or DVD copy of the Video
- Angel Island Vocabulary Sheet (attached)
- Background Information Sheet (attached)
- Student Video Worksheet (attached)
- Student Video Worksheet Answer Key (attached)
- Angel Island Writing Activity (attached)
- KWL chart example (attached)

STANDARDS

California State Academic Standards

Fourth Grade

Language Arts: Reading 1.1, 1.2, 2.2-2.4; Writing 1.1-1.3, 1.5-1.7, 1.10, 2.1-2.4; Language Conventions 1.1-1.7; Listening & Speaking 1.1, 1.2, 1.10

History/Social Studies: 4.3, 4.4

Fifth Grade

Language Arts: Reading 1.1, 1.5, 2.3, 2.4; Writing 1.1, 1.2, 2.4; Language Conventions 1.1-1.5; Listening & Speaking 1.1, 1.8

Sixth Grade

Language Arts: Reading 1.1, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.4; Writing 1.1-1.3, 1.6, 2.1, 2.4; Language Conventions 1.1-1.5

LESSON ONE: Vocabulary Preview & Background Information (Pre-Viewing Activity)

1. Distribute the “Angel Island Vocabulary Sheet” to discuss in class. Explain each term to the students in words with definitions that are age appropriate or have them look up the words in a dictionary. (See “Background Information” sheet for vocabulary words in context)
2. To prepare students for the video *Discovering Angel Island: The Story Behind the Poems*, discuss important points found on the “Background Information” sheet.

LESSON TWO: Video Worksheet (Pre-Viewing Activity)

1. Distribute the “Student Video Worksheet” to each student before showing the video. Preview the questions before starting the video so students can listen closely for important information and know what to expect. (Hint: You may want to inform the students that the video is only fifteen minutes long so they must pay close attention.)

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2. Students are to complete the worksheet as they watch the video.

LESSON THREE: Video Discussion (Post-Viewing Activity)

1. After viewing the video, have students work together in small groups (2-4 people) and share information or compare answers from their completed worksheets for about five minutes.
2. Next, gather all the groups together and review the questions as a class or facilitate a discussion among students for about fifteen minutes. Share background information found in the “Student Video Worksheet Answer Key” with the students as the worksheet is reviewed in class.

LESSON FOUR: Angel Island Writing Activity

1. Read the “Teacher Lead-In” to the class found on the “Angel Island Writing Activity” document.
2. Have students respond to the writing prompt included on the “Angel Island Writing Activity” sheet. The optional extension writing activity may be used with older students.

LESSON FIVE: Optional Supplemental Activity (KWL)

(KWL Chart may be incorporated with other Angel Island lessons)

1. Pre-Viewing Activity: Start a KWL (know, want to know/learn, what students have learned) chart. Take a big piece of chart paper (or copy the “KWL chart example” onto a transparency sheet if you choose to use a classroom projector) and divide it in three sections. Label each section as follows: “What we know about Angel Island (K),” “What we want to learn about Angel Island (W),” and “What we have learned about Angel Island (L).” Ask students what they know about Angel Island and add their information in the “K” column. Next, ask students what that would like to learn more about and add it to the “W” column. (see “KWL chart example” for help) Set the chart aside until after viewing the video.
2. Post-Viewing Activity: Complete the “L” column with information that the students have learned after viewing the video. Be sure to compare the “K” column and the “L” column and point out how much more the students know at the end of the lesson than the beginning.

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Discovering Angel Island: The Story Behind the Poems

Lesson Unit 2 Angel Island Vocabulary Sheet

Name_____ Date_____

Look these words up in a dictionary to find the meaning. Write the meaning in your own words.

Barracks

Calligraphy

[Chinese] Characters

Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882

Deport

Detain

Detainee

Discriminate

Immigrate

Interrogate

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Discovering Angel Island: The Story Behind the Poems

Lesson Unit 2 Student Video Worksheet

Name _____

Date _____

1. When was the Angel Island Immigration Station in use? _____

2. Where is Angel Island located? _____

3. Who discovered the poems? _____

4. What countries were the immigrants arriving from? _____

5. What year did Dale Ching, a former detainee, immigrate to the United States? _____

6. How long was he detained at the Immigration Station? _____

7. How old was he when he came to the United States? _____

8. What attracted people to immigrate to the United States? _____

9. What year did the United States adopt the Chinese Exclusion Act? _____

10. What was the Chinese Exclusion Act? _____

11. What feelings did the immigrants have during the interrogation process? _____

12. How was the Immigration Station saved from being torn down? _____

13. How did the government cover up the writing? _____

14. What is the importance of the poems to the immigrants? _____

15. Why is it important to preserve the history of the poems? _____

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Discovering Angel Island: The Story Behind the Poems

Lesson Unit 2 Student Video Worksheet (ANSWER KEY)

1. When was the Angel Island Immigration Station in use?
(1910-1940)
2. Where is Angel Island located?
(Near San Francisco) Background Information: If immigrants were traveling west from China, they would reach San Francisco (the West Coast) first. Immigrants traveling east from Europe would travel through Ellis Island located on the East Coast of the United States.
3. Who discovered the poems?
(Alexander Weiss, a state park ranger discovered it in 1970; he discovered the poetry before the building was scheduled to be demolished)
4. What countries were the immigrants arriving from?
(China, Japan, Russia, India, Central and South America)
5. What year did Dale Ching, a former detainee, immigrate to the United States?
(1937)
6. How long was he detained at the Immigration Station?
(3 $\frac{1}{2}$ months) Background Information: The longest recorded stay on Angel Island was two years.
7. How old was he when he came to the United States?
(16 years old)
8. What attracted people to immigrate to the United States?
(Gold Rush, 1848-1849) Background Information: China was experiencing a great famine (food shortage) and people wanted to gain a better education with more opportunities in the United States than they would receive if they stayed in China. Many immigrants were also seeking freedom since there were many wars going on in China as well.
9. What year did the United States adopt the Chinese Exclusion Act?
(1882)
10. What was the Chinese Exclusion Act?
(A law which aimed to prevent Chinese Laborers from entering the United States; it was the first law that discriminated against a group of people based on ethnicity) Background information: In the 1870's, there was a depression in the United States and Chinese

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Lesson Unit 2 Student Video Worksheet (ANSWER KEY), cont.

Laborers became scapegoats for high unemployment and low wages; definition of scapegoat: A person or group of people unfairly blamed for problems experienced by another individual, group or society

11. What feelings did the immigrants have during the interrogation process?
(Nervous, scared) Background information: Interrogation process was a time in which the detainee needed to answer a bunch of questions to prove their status. There were six people present: two interrogators, the detainee, a translator, a guard and a typist to record the conversations that took place. "Paper Sons" and "Paper Daughters" (people pretending to be relatives of citizens living in the United States) would pay \$100 per year of age to receive a coaching book to ensure correct responses during the interrogation process. Often times, families or villages would contribute their entire life savings to send someone to the United States. If the immigrant failed the interrogation process and was denied entry, it was shameful to return to their country, so they were under tremendous pressure to enter the country or "land of opportunity" as most immigrants understood the United States to be.

12. How was the Immigration Station saved from being torn down?
(Alexander Weiss brought others with him to study and photograph the writings on the wall; people lobbied and wrote letters; a bill was then passed to save the building)

13. How did the government cover up the writing?
(Paint and putty; Chinese calligraphy was considered graffiti) Background Information: As restoration efforts are being made, people have discovered that immigrants may have brushed writings on the wall before they carved it; some writings were in ink and painted over, while others were carved and filled with putty. Now that the walls are being preserved and restored, more poems are being discovered!

14. What is the importance of the poems to the immigrants?
(Shared the feelings of the detainees; form of expression and wanted their stories to be told) Background Information: Many detainees that survived the Angel Island experience don't want to bring back old memories by recalling what happened; many have passed away with their stories untold. The poems help share the history of the different accounts of the detainees so that they can be remembered and their struggles can be shared.

15. Why is it important to preserve the history of the poems?
(Learn from history; don't repeat mistakes as a nation; young people should know both sides of history, both right and wrong to avoid racism)

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Lesson Unit 2
Student Handout

Background Information

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the first law passed in the United States that discriminated against a specific group of people. It strictly limited the number of Chinese that could immigrate to the United States, or enter the country. From 1910-1940, immigrants wishing to come to the United States were detained on Angel Island, which served as an immigration station. Detainees were forced to sleep in barracks, which were large rooms that were often cramped and uncomfortable because of the number of people forced to sleep in a room. Immigrants slept in bunk beds; there were three bunk beds to a pole so they could fit more people to a room (*see attached picture of poles from the barracks*). In the video *Discovering Angel Island: The Story Behind the Poems*, you will see what is left of the poles where the bunk beds used to be.

The detainees would wait in the barracks until it was their turn to be interrogated. They seldom left the barracks, with few exceptions such as mealtime and exercise. The waiting process could last from several weeks to as long as two years. The interrogation process was a grueling process in which an immigrant was asked several questions to try and prove their status. If the detainees answered a question wrong or implied that they were not who they claimed to be, the immigrant would have to be deported and return to their country of origin.

Poetry Background

Chinese poetry is found on the walls of the Angel Island Immigration Station barracks where the men resided. The poetry is written in calligraphy (fancy/artistic writing with Chinese characters (symbols representing words or ideas) and were composed by male immigrants. It was discovered that immigrants initially brushed their poems on the walls with ink, only to have them painted over by the government because it was considered graffiti. When the immigrants began to carve poems in the walls with knives and other sharp objects, the government had the carvings filled with wood putty to fix the defaced property. Over the years, the wood putty began to shrink at a different rate from the wood which allowed Alexander Weiss, a California State Park Ranger (whom you will see in the video), to discover many of the hidden poems before the building was scheduled to be torn down. The video will also show the restoration and preservation efforts from individuals and supporting groups to ensure the Immigration Station's future existence.

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Lesson Unit 2
Student Handout



Photographed by: J. Louie

Remaining poles of where the bunk beds used to be in the sleeping quarters used by the detainees, which are also shown in the video. There were six beds stacked to a pole, three on each side.

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Lesson Unit 2 Angel Island Writing Activity

Teacher Lead-In:

From the mid-1800's to World War II, China was faced with terrible famines, crushing poverty, and political turmoil. The changes in transportation technology made it possible for more and more people around the world to afford traveling across the Pacific Ocean in search of a better future.

Writing Prompt:

Imagine that you are traveling to a new country by yourself. Your family has spent their entire life savings to try and send you to a better place. You have traveled on an overcrowded boat for about three weeks with many others sharing similar hopes and dreams. You are not allowed to bring many items with you, one suitcase at the most. What would you bring? In detail, explain why those items are important to you. Remember to use descriptive words.

Optional Extension:

It has taken 2 months for your journey to your new country. You finally see your long-awaited destination and realize that you cannot enter right away. You are detained for several weeks, possibly months, or more than a year in the barracks on Angel Island-- though each day that passes, you do not know how much longer you will be there. You have come to this new country with all the hopes and dreams of the family you left behind back home. You might even be forced to return all the way home. All the time, money and energy you have spent might be wasted. Using descriptive words, write about some feelings that you may be experiencing and include supporting details. Write about what you would do with all the time waiting to find out what is going to happen to you. Would you write a song, a poem, or a letter to someone?

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Discovering Angel Island: The Story Behind the Poems

Lesson Unit 2
KWL Worksheet

K

What we know about Angel Island

W

What we want to learn about
Angel Island

L

What we have learned about
Angel Island