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If Your Name Was Changed At Ellis Island



Synopsis

If your name were changed at Ellis Island--Would everyone in your family travel together?--How long would you stay at Ellis Island?--Would your name be changed?This book tells you what it was like if when Ellis Island was opened in 1892 as a center for immigrants coming to live in America.

Book Information

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Series: If You

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Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (17 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 7 - 10 years

Grade Level: 2 - 5

Customer Reviews

When my niece (from L.A.) first came to New York, she was seven years old. I took her to the rehabilitated Ellis Island, and she was (for a seven year old) fascinated to learn that her great grandparents along with millions of other immigrants had stepped across that pier and became Americans. For Christmas, I sent her this brilliant book."If Your Name Was Changed at Ellis Island" by Ellen Levine answered many of the questions that I could not. She sent me back a glowing thank you note, and told me her teacher loved her book report on this book. Eventually, I picked up the book for myself. Guess what? For many first-, second- or third-generation Americans this book answers a lot of questions from that nearly forgotten era, and of that generation of people who helped America as they helped themselves. This is a great testimony to Ms. Levine and illustrator Wayne Parmenter to their well-planned book.Rocco DormarunnoAuthor of The Five Points

The book is a good way for young children to learn about the immigration process of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. That being said, I absolutely MUST object to the author encouraging even more people to swallow the fable that employees at Ellis Island changed names of immigrants! It simply did not happen. Yes, I'm aware that every other family of Ellis Island immigrant descendants has their story about some arrogant clerk being unable to pronounce Wojciechowski and so the clerk informs the hapless immigrant that his new name was Smith or Miller or some other "American sounding" name. It's ridiculous on its face because there were interpreters of countless languages ready to translate for the new immigrants so that communication was simplified. Fiorello H. LaGuardia was once such interpreter. This was a federal installation and all the paperwork had to match up. The names the immigrants gave had to match up with the names on the ship's manifest. The manifests were made out in the port of origin before the ship ever set sail for America. If the immigrant wanted to change their name before they left home in order to fit in or hope for better treatment from their new neighbors, they could certainly give the name of their choice when asked. The name-change fable is an enduring one and it's rather insulting to those of us who know better, but it's even more insulting to the people who struggled to come to America and try to live life in a strange new place. Next I will attempt to wipe out the "my great-grandmother was a Cherokee princess" fairy tale. Wish me luck.

My family came through Ellis Island in the late 1890s so when my mother bought this book for me when I was a child it was very significant. As I got older I became very interested in genealogy and my ancestral history. In doing my research and discussing with other professional genealogists and historians I learned that having your name changed at Ellis Island was actually a myth. The historical truth is that there was NO WAY an immigrant could get through Ellis Island or any immigration services without proper papers. Those papers would have an immigrant's name on it. Ellis Island was run very tight, they had interpreters, inspectors, etc. If an immigrant changed their name it was usually by choice and AFTER they left Ellis Island and to fit in or Americanize. If you want to know more about the myth of names being changed at Ellis Island, just Google it. There is a lot of information out there. Unfortunately, this book was written before that research was done.

This is a very concise and informational book about immigration in the early 20th Century. I learned a lot from this book and suspect my students will too.

We are taking our 9 year old grandson to New York City for Christmas, and we wanted the trip to include some educational elements. Since we will visit Ellis Island, I purchased this book for him and we are both enjoying learning more about how the immigration process worked. This is a great book to teach this subject.

Ellis Island was the main immigration port for the United States from the 1890s to the 1910s. This children's book outlines the process for immigrants coming to America: where they left from, the journey, arriving at Ellis Island and following procedures, and what they did after they left the Island. The book structure follows a question and answer structure, answering good questions like what the immigrants brought with them, how their names may have been changed, and what happened if they didn't speak English. It also shows the perspective of the immigration agents, which was especially interesting to me- to process the amount of people they had coming in, they gave a "six-second medical exam" to determine for any contagious diseases and mental defects. The books also talks about some agents who would let people slip by with a kind smile and good wishes. The illustrations seem dated, and the book would really come to life with better renderings, but it's interesting to see the view of New York coming from across the Atlantic, and to see the Grand Hall where immigrants split up to go either into New York or for quarantine. The amount of information and text make this book more appropriate for an older child, but would be perfect as research for a project on immigration or family history. [...]

It's a great book I used YEARS ago when I was teaching 2nd grade. It hits home for me because my grandparents were all immigrants. I purchased this copy for my niece, whose 3rd grade class was studying the Pilgrims, as well as other groups of people who had many different reasons to come to America. My grandfather and his brother came through Ellis Island together and ended up with different last names. As far as I'm concerned, this story a classic.

My 8 year old daughter had to do a non-fiction booklet report. We were perusing the internet and came across Ellis Island as a possible subject to cover. Perfect layout for picking out specific details, broken down with easy to find bolded subjects and easy to read. Now she wants to visit the island!!

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