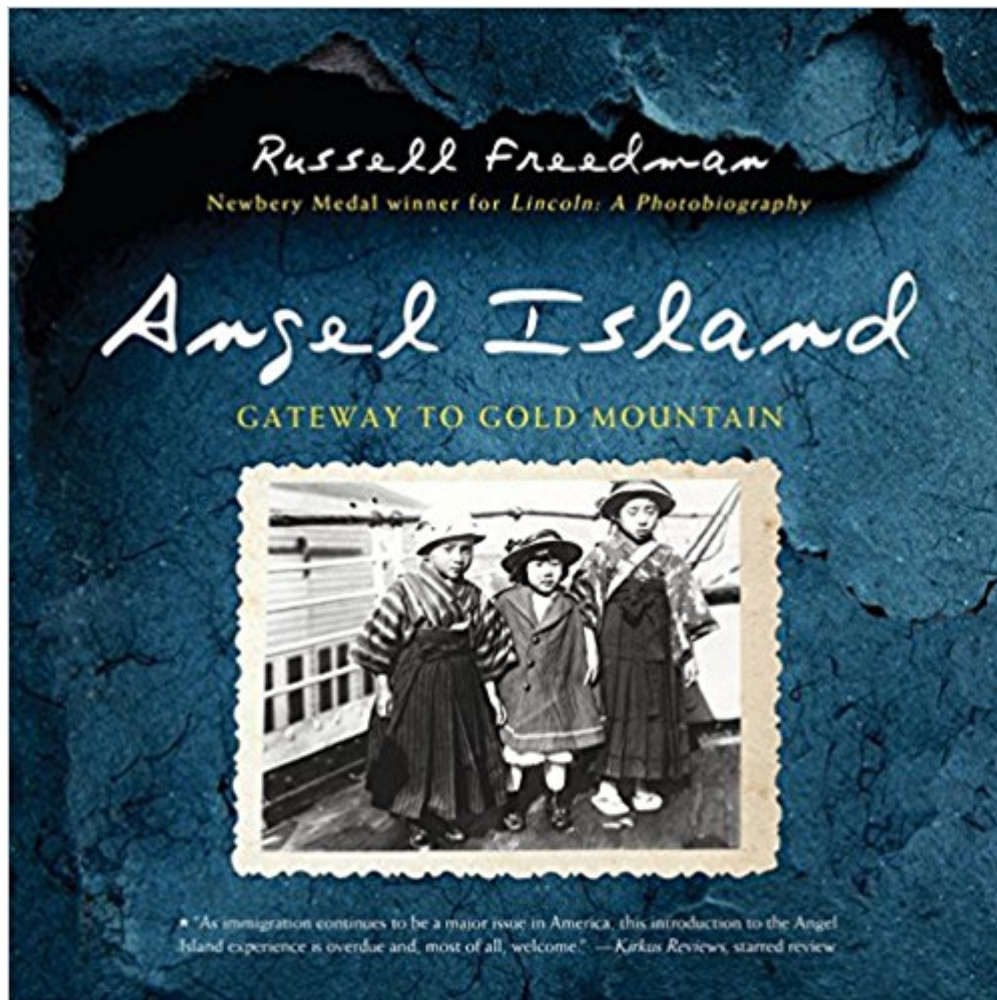




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Angel Island: Gateway To Gold Mountain



Synopsis

Angel Island, off the coast of California, was the port of entry for Asian immigrants to the United States between 1892 and 1940. Following the passage of legislation requiring the screening of immigrants, "the other Ellis Island" processed around one million people from Japan, China, and Korea. Drawing from memoirs, diaries, letters, and the "wall poems" discovered at the facility long after it closed, the nonfiction master Russell Freedman describes the people who came, and why; the screening process; detention and deportation; changes in immigration policy; and the eventual renaissance of Angel Island as a historic site open to visitors. Includes archival photos, source notes, bibliography, and index.

Book Information

Paperback: 96 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (October 4, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0544810899

ISBN-13: 978-0544810891

Product Dimensions: 9.5 x 0.2 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 26 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #237,396 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #34 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Emigrants & Immigrants #40 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Asia #120 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Exploration & Discovery

Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

Customer Reviews

Gr 5-8—For the 30 years it was in operation, from 1910-1940, Angel Island Immigration Station served as the first step for hundreds of thousands of people seeking a new home and a new life in the United States. It was a bleak, unwelcoming introduction to the new land, and for many immigrants, primarily those from China, it was also a detention center. Many Chinese were held there for weeks or months at a time while they endured lengthy interviews and invasive medical exams in order to prove that they could enter the U.S. Freedman's inimitable style and approach to nonfiction writing shines in this accessible, thoughtful history of Angel Island and its legacy in the

American immigration narrative. Detailed descriptions of the island, the actual building, the events that took place there, and the people who passed through its doors are sprinkled with the emotional poems, quotes, and other writings that were discovered covering the walls of the areas where the detainees were housed. These words provide not only a unique perspective of the immigrants, but also a context for what was happening in the broader world, specifically the racist, xenophobic attitudes encountered by many new arrivals. Complemented by photographs, artwork, and primary sources, Freedman's writing offers up a strong, engaging introduction to the subject of a more diverse immigrant population and the obstacles that were put in its way. Equally evocative and informative, this is an excellent choice for middle school libraries. --Jody Kopple, Shady Hill School, Cambridge, MA (c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review Called the "Ellis Island of the West," Angel Island, located in San Francisco Bay, was once the busiest immigration station on the West Coast. For generations of Asian immigrants, it was the first stop upon landing in America. As Freedman points out in this history of the island and Asian immigration up to 1940, it was the last stop as well for those who were denied entry, and many were forced to live in detention barracks for days or weeks, awaiting entrance interviews that would decide their fate. The detainees' feelings of hope, frustration, anger, and, in some cases, despair are preserved in the carved or painted rows of poems they left on the walls of their barracks. While many nationalities—Japanese, Korean, Russian, and others—passed through Angel Island, the Chinese were subjected to special scrutiny, and for some, there was no hope of immigration, thanks to the harshly discriminatory Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Freedman chronicles all of this in his carefully researched and clearly written history, which is lavishly illustrated with black-and-white photographs and drawings. Appended are a selected bibliography and notes identifying the sources of all quoted material. Now a National Historic Landmark, Angel Island is a place where we can learn from the past, as is Freedman's important book. Grades 4-7. --Michael Cart --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a fascinating book. A pictorial and written history of the many different nationalities coming to America from the Pacific for entrance into the United States through Angel Island, the Ellis Island of the West Coast. Although these immigrants were from many countries, the early majority were from

China. New immigrants were housed in separate barracks for men and women, with families being split. They were housed in barracks with barred windows and behind barbed wire enclosures. They were often stripped and went through thorough medical examinations and were either sent to the holding barracks or deported, if they could not pass the examination. Immigrants often spent weeks or months before being interrogated for a decision to be made, to either be allowed to enter the United States or be deported. Congress had passed laws to restrict Chinese, Japanese, and Asian immigrants from entering the United States. These immigrants were subjected to harsh discrimination and treatment by many Caucasian citizens due to competition for jobs. This book gives many translations of poems and sayings by these immigrants carved on the barracks walls during their interment. It also gives the history of how members of the Asian American community formed the Angel Island Immigration Historical Advisory Committee and lobbied the California legislature for funds to restore the site. Angel Island is now an historical site that anyone can visit, to tour the Detention Barracks Museum and see the beautiful preserved poems that are etched into every barracks wall. This is such an important detailed look into the almost forgotten history of the early entry of immigrants to the United States by means of the Pacific Ocean, with special emphasis of the Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and persecuted Jewish Immigrants to America, known by the Chinese as Gold Mountain.

Wonderful book. Lots of pictures. I have Asian friends and never heard of Angel Island. I will have to ask them about it. Very educational for all ages.

It was a great book of historic happenings; I never thought I could enjoy history book like I did "Angel Island."

For the Chinese and most Asians, coming to the United States was not easy nor was it welcoming. The Chinese first began coming in large numbers during the Gold Rush of 1949. Some Chinese men became rich and came back to China. Most who came by 1850 on, did not get rich and found other ways to make money, including laundries, restaurants, and selling miners goods such as shovels, pick axes and rope. Chinese also took on work in the intercontinental railroad where they were often abused, starved and underpaid. As more Chinese and Japanese, etc. came the US decided to limit their numbers through an immigration office. The office ended up on an island named Angel. Angel Island was the place where people coming from Asia came to the US. They could be of any ethnicity or nationality, but there were laws excluding the Chinese and European

immigrants could easily pass through immigration to San Francisco. When the detention barracks and hospital were due to be destroyed in 1970 after a long period of disuse, a state park ranger who found the walls of the buildings covered with graffiti in Chinese and other languages, risked his job by taking photos and providing them to the Chinese American community. They complained to the state and agitated so that California kept the buildings and restored them into a museum. Russell Freeman, as he has in his other works, has written a valuable book about immigration into the United States and the people who passed through this island in order to get to America.

Angel Island: Gateway to Gold Mountain is an engaging, easy to read history of the immigration station (rediscovered in 1970 by Alexander Weiss) that was once referred to as "the Ellis Island of the west coast." It contains valuable insight into the hardships Asian immigrants had to endure upon attempting to enter the United States (beginning at the time of California's Gold Rush). Chinese immigrants were particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of an appallingly unequal immigration system that eventually drove some to committing acts of suicide. I especially appreciate that there are distinctions made between the Chinese, Japanese and Korean immigration experiences. Other groups were mentioned, but it is clear that discrimination existed in varying degrees across the board. Once you start reading this book, you won't want to put it down until it's finished. I feel more akin to the immigrants as each story reveals a layer of exposed pain. I will never see "Uncle Sam" the same way (on page 10, a copy of a political cartoon from the 1880's shows him kicking Chinese launderers in the backside, off a cliff). My family is richer for having this newfound knowledge. We appreciate people more when we are able to understand what they have overcome just to be here.

A lot of books for children in this age range attempt to tell a historical story without pictures because the reading skills are present to sustain greater reading. However, I think pictures or illustrations at a regular are necessary to help a child appreciate the history they are reading. As an adult, I found this book very interesting because I never really knew about Angel Island. I have read books that featured Asian immigrants coming into the country, but they never seem to focus on the entry process as much as volumes featuring East Coast arrivals. The books that I read never painted the story as bleak as it really was for many Chinese immigrants, and I think that is travesty. I'm glad this book is available to add new depth to children's libraries with a history section and would recommend it. Children in the recommend age range will have no trouble with the copy. Everything is explained well and in easy-to-understand terms. The pictures help further that understanding and will help ensure that Angel Island is remembered by more members of the present generation.

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