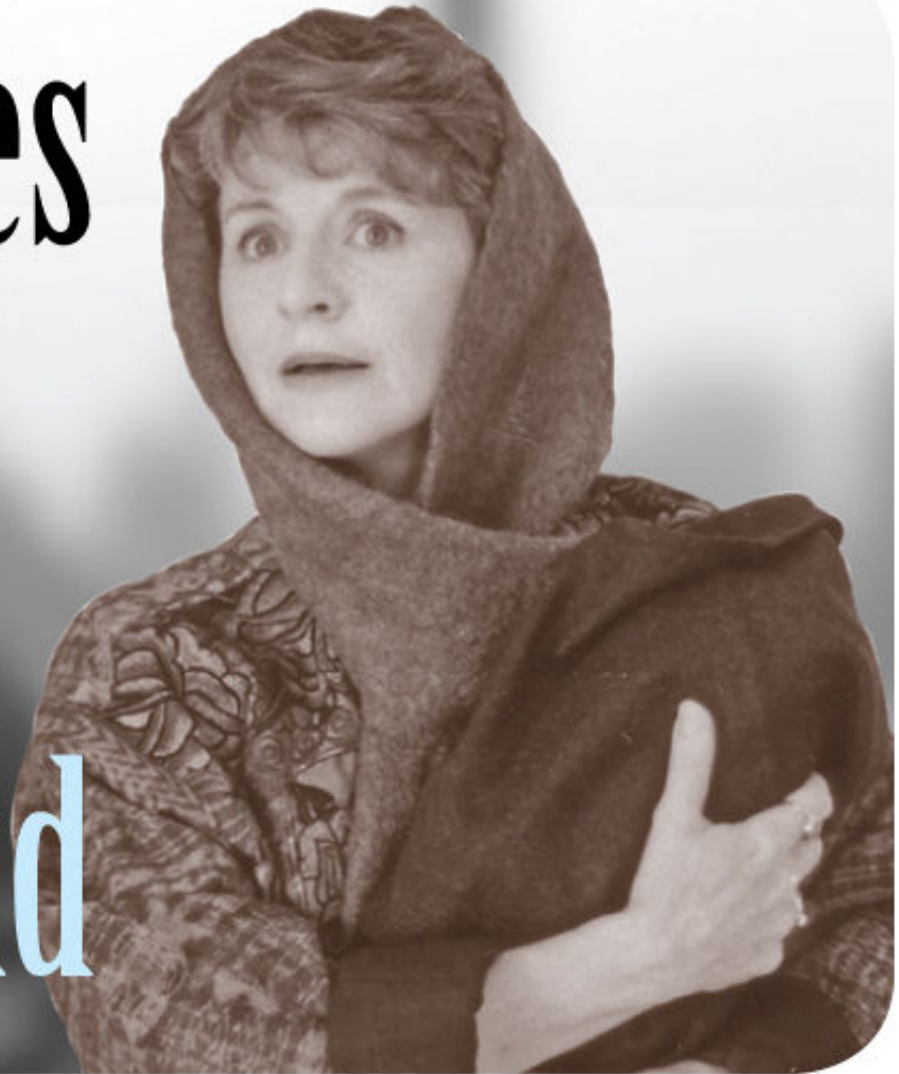


# Voices from Ellis Island



## STUDY GUIDE

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Fisher Theater  
Thursday and Friday, October 11-12, 2018

 **Fisher Theater**  
2018-2019 Youth Matinee Series

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY | [www.center.iastate.edu](http://www.center.iastate.edu) | 515.294.3347



## ABOUT THE ARTIST



### *Pippa White & One's Company*

Pippa White is in her fourteenth year as a solo performer. She calls her One's Company Productions "part theatre, part storytelling, part history." Audiences call them unique, captivating, and touching. She has toured to twenty-seven states, including California, New York, Connecticut, Texas, Florida, and Alaska. She has performed at colleges, conferences, museums, libraries, festivals, and performing arts centers.

Pipp White is a favorite of Iowa State Center audiences. Other venues include the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines, University of Nebraska, Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center, the University of Colorado Hospital, the Connecticut Hospital Association, SUNY Orange, the Joslyn Art Museum, San Diego State University School of Nursing, the Association for Career and Technical Education, Kansas City Young Audiences, and several storytelling festivals.

The Director of Special Projects at the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs calls her "the highest quality artist," and the Kansas Storytelling Festival said her performance was "one of the high points in our festival history."

Pippa has a BA in English from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She offers workshops and residencies and has been a teaching artist with the Arts Are Basic Program (associated with the College of Fine and Performing Arts at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln) and the Nebraska Arts Council for seventeen years.

In 2005, she was a recipient of a \$1,000 merit award from the Nebraska Arts Council, and in March, 2007, she received the Artist of the Year Award from the Lincoln-Lancaster Women's Commission.

Before doing solo work, she had an extensive background in theatre and television on the West Coast, including five years hosting a daily morning television show on ABC in San Francisco.

*" My great grandmother immigrated through Hudson Bay, Canada when she was 10 years old. I remember hearing her stories.*

*Then, in the early 1990's I visited the Ellis Island museum—really a fabulous museum. After the tour, I was standing in the gift shop and realized that there was something there for me. There were stories that I wanted to tell.*

*Using stories from immigrant interviews I created Voices from Ellis Island."*

- Pippa White, on writing *Voices From Ellis Island*.

# ABOUT ELLIS ISLAND



From 1892 to 1954, over twelve million immigrants entered the United States through the portal of Ellis Island, a small island in New York Harbor. Ellis Island is located in the upper bay just off the New Jersey coast, in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty.

## EARLY DAYS AS AN ISLAND

Ellis Island has had a varied history. Once a sandy island that barely rose above the high tide mark, it has served as a lynching site for pirates, a harbor fort, and ammunition and ordinance depot. Finally in 1890 President Benjamin Harrison designated Ellis Island as the first official Federal immigration station.

## IMMIGRATION REGULATION

Prior to 1890, individual states—rather than the Federal government—regulated immigration into the United States. Castle Garden in lower Manhattan served as the New York State immigration station from 1855 to 1890. These early immigrants came from nations such as England, Ireland, Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Throughout the 1800's ensuing political instability, restrictive religious laws, and deteriorating economic conditions in Europe began to fuel the largest mass human migration in the history of the world. It soon became appar-

ent that Castle Garden was ill-equipped and unprepared to handle the growing numbers of immigrants arriving each year.

## FEDERAL INTERVENTION AND ELLIS ISLAND

The Federal government intervened with the state-controlled immigration system and constructed a new Federally-operated immigration station on Ellis Island in 1892. The new structure on Ellis Island opened on January 1, 1892; Annie Moore, a 15 year-old Irish girl accompanied by her two brothers entered history and a new country when she became the very first immigrant to be processed at Ellis Island on January 2. Over the next 62 years, more than 12 million followed through this port of entry.

## WHEN THEY ARRIVED AT ELLIS ISLAND

First and second class passengers who arrived in New York Harbor were not required to undergo the inspection process at Ellis Island. These passengers underwent a brief inspection aboard ship and were free to pass through customs and enter America at the pier. The theory was that if a person could afford to purchase a first or second class ticket, they were less likely to become a financial drain with health or legal issues in America.

However the process was far different for "steerage" or third class passengers; they were transported from the pier by ferry to Ellis Island where they underwent a medical and legal inspection.

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### Many Ellis Island immigrants achieved great success in America. Some include:

- Composer **Irving Berlin** (Belarus)
- Chef **Ettore Boiardi** (Chef Boyardee) (Italy)
- Former San Francisco mayor **George Christopher** (Greece)
- Cosmetologist **Max Factor** (Poland)
- Comedian **Bob Hope** (England)
- Actor **Cary Grant** (England)
- Actor **Béla Lugosi** (Hungary)
- Dance studio legend **Arthur Murray** (Austria-Hungary)
- The **Trapp Family Singers** (Austria)
- Actor **Rudolph Valentino** (Italy)

## ABOUT ELLIS ISLAND, CONTINUED



If the immigrant's papers were in order and they were in reasonably good health, the Ellis Island inspection process would last approximately three to five hours. The inspections took place in the **Registry Room** (or Great Hall), where doctors would briefly scan every immigrant for obvious physical ailments. The legal inspectors at Ellis Island cross examined the immigrant during the legal inspection with the papers they completed when they left their home country.

Despite the island's reputation as an "Island of Tears", the vast majority of immigrants were treated courteously and respectfully, and were free to begin their new lives in America after only a few short hours on Ellis Island. Only two percent of the arriving immigrants were excluded from entry.

If a doctor diagnosed that an immigrant had a contagious disease that would endanger the public health or if a legal inspector thought an immigrant was likely to become a public charge or an illegal contract laborer, the immigrant was usually excluded.

### LATER YEARS OF ELLIS ISLAND AND TODAY

Ellis Island remained open for many years and served a multitude of purposes. During World War II enemy merchant seamen were detained in the baggage and dormitory building. The United States Coast Guard also trained about 60,000 servicemen there. In November of 1954 the last detainee, a Norwegian merchant seaman named Arne Peterssen was released, and Ellis Island officially closed.

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson declared Ellis Island part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument. Starting in 1984, Ellis Island underwent a major restoration, the largest historic restoration in U.S. history. The \$160 million dollar project was funded by donations made to The Statue of Liberty - Ellis Island Foundation, Inc. in partnership with the National Park Service. The Main Building was reopened to the public on September 10, 1990 as the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. Today, the museum receives almost 2 million visitors annually.

Source: adapted from [www.ellisland.org](http://www.ellisland.org)

Above: Immigrants being given a mental test at Ellis Island.

photo courtesy of the National Park Service, Statue of Liberty National Monument

*"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.*

*I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

-selection from *The Statue of Liberty* plaque.

The Statue of Liberty was dedicated on October 28, 1886, commemorating the centennial of the signing of the United States Declaration of Independence, given to the United States by the people of France to represent the friendship between the two countries established during the American Revolution.

Standing on Liberty Island, it welcomes visitors, immigrants, and returning Americans.

# ONE IMMIGRANT'S EXPERIENCE



"When I first arrived in this country, I was filled with so many hopes, dreams and fears. One of the greatest fears was of a place known as Ellis Island, but called by us the 'Island of Tears.'

In my village I had heard of this place to be inspected and sent home if you did not pass. 'Sent home to what? To where?' I worried. I tried to convince myself that America would never send me home once I had reached her doors.

I will never forget the joy I felt when I saw the tall buildings of New York and the Statue of Liberty after so many dark days on board that crowded ship. There was the symbol of all my dreams. Freedom to start out in a new life.

Then came Ellis Island.

When I landed the noise and commotion were unbelievable. There were so many languages being spoken. The shouting and pushing guards calling out the big numbers on the tags attached to our coats created more noise and confusion. Surely, I felt, the noise surrounding the Tower of Babel could not have been worse.

We were told 'Keep moving' and 'Hurry up' as my group was pushed along one of the dozens of metal railings that divided the room into several passageways. Immigrants walked along these passageways until they reached the first medical inspector who looked at face, hair, neck, and hands. Interpreters asked, 'What is your age?' 'What work do you do?'

I walked on to where a doctor inspected me for diseases. Again I move to another doctor, the "eye man" I had heard so many terrible rumors about. I passed inspection but the man in front was marked with an "E" in chalk on his coat and sent to another area. I had heard "E" meant deportation.

For a long time I sat on a bench in the main part of the great hall waiting for the final test. I talked anxiously with those around me and rehearsed the answers to questions I might be asked about jobs, money, and relatives. Some people said it was best to answer as fully as possible; others said it was best to say just 'Yes' or 'No.'

Finally I went before some tired, stern-looking official who checked my name against the ship's

Above: Immigrants in line at Ellis Island after being transported there by ferry or barge.

photo courtesy of the National Park Service, Statue of Liberty National Monument

passenger list and quickly fired questions at me: 'Can you read and write?' 'Do you have a job waiting for you?' 'Who paid your passage?' 'Have you ever been in prison?' 'How much money do you have?' 'Let me see it now?' On and on went the questions until I got more and more confused.

Suddenly I was handed a landing card. It was hard to believe the ordeal was over in an afternoon. My fears were unfounded; the statue in the harbor had not turned her back on me. America accepted me."

Source: Ellis Island Brochure, published by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Parks service, administered by the Superintendent, Statue of Liberty National Monument, Liberty Island, NY 10004

# HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF ELLIS ISLAND



## April 11, 1890

Designated as an immigration station by the US Federal Government

## January 1, 1892

Opened as an immigration station. Processed first immigrants on January 2.

## June 14, 1897

Buildings destroyed by fire. All persons safely evacuated but records of early immigrants lost.

## December 17, 1900

Reopened as an immigration station, on a larger and more majestic scale. New buildings were built to be "fireproof."

## 1917-1919

Served as a detention center for enemy aliens during WWI, a way-station for Navy personnel, and a hospital for the Army.

## 1919-1954

Served as a deportation center as well as an immigration station.

## 1924

Mass immigration ended. Most immigrants were inspected in countries of origin with the development of US Embassies abroad.

## 1936-1946

Part of Ellis Island was used as a Coast Guard Station.

## 1941-1954

Part of Ellis Island served as a detention center for enemy aliens during WWII.

Above: Immigrants aboard a ship heading for the Port of New York, circa 1892.

photo courtesy of the National Park Service, Statue of Liberty National Monument

## November 29, 1965

Ellis Island Closed

## May 11, 1965

Ellis Island was added to the Statue of Liberty National Monument by Presidential Proclamation

## 1976

Opened to the public for limited seasonal visitation

## 1984

Closed for \$160,000,000 renovation

## September 10, 1990

Reopened with extensive new museum exhibits and facilities.



Eight orphan children arrive from Russia in May 1908 on the SS Caronia.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



Above: Immigrant children, Ellis Island, New York. Vintage print. Photo by Brown Brothers, ca. 1908

## PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION

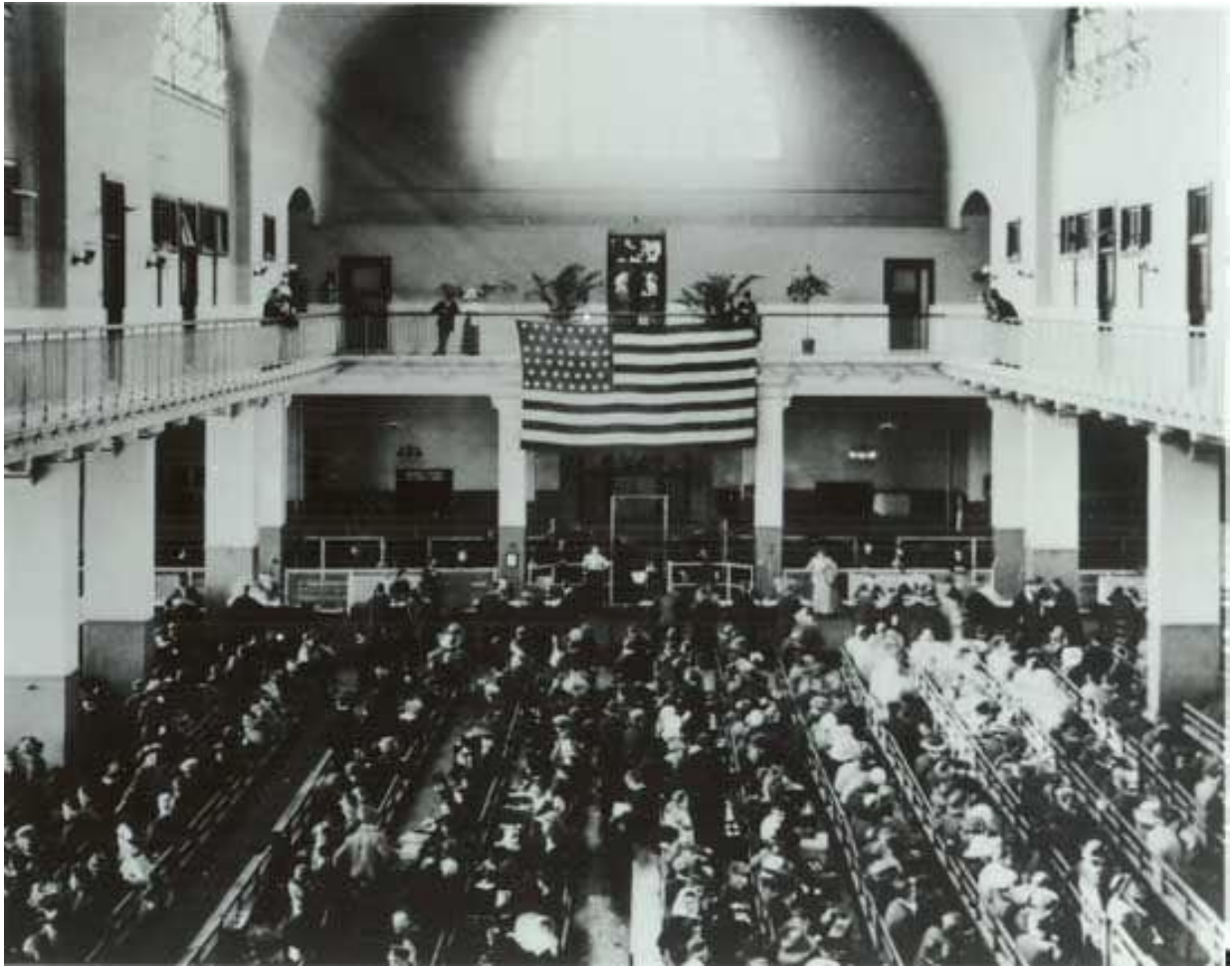
1. Brainstorm. What do students know about immigration? Did their ancestors immigrate to the United States? When? Do they know any stories or memories of their ancestors?
2. Review ONE IMMIGRANTS STORY. Were all the check-ups and tests necessary? Why were they performed?
3. Why was Ellis Island call the Island of Tears? Tears of sadness or tears of joy?
4. Many immigrants referred to Ellis Island as “The Front Door to Freedom,” “The Gateway to America,” “Island of Hope.” Why did it have those nick-names? What does that tell you about the immigrants? About their past? About the United States?
6. Most children came to the United States with their families, but some came alone to meet up with other family members already here. How would a young person feel at Ellis Island? Do you think they knew how to speak English? How much “culture shock” do you think they experienced?
6. Do you know anyone personally that immigrated to the United States? What have they shared about their experience?

## POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

1. Describe the experience of one of the stories told in the performance. How would have you reacted in that situation?
2. How does immigration today compared to the era of immigration at Ellis Island? How is it different, how is it the same?

## ACTIVITIES

1. Write a journal that a young immigrant might have written. Include information from the country of origin and the new country.
2. Talk to your grandparents or great grandparents. Write down any stories they can share about your family immigrating to the United States. Share with the class.
3. You can only bring one small suitcase with your belongings. What would you include and why? Pack everything that you would bring with you in your backpack and share with your class.
4. Interview an immigrant. Write it into a story. Create it into a play.
5. Use a world map and mark where student’s ancestors came from.



Inside the Great Hall at Ellis Island, where immigrants are waiting to be processed. The 46-star American flag dates this photo between 1907-1912. *Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.*

This study guide was written and prepared for the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines and is used by permission.

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This study guide was compiled, written, and edited by: Emily Gruis, Deb Kellogg, Eric Olmscheid, Lucy Suvalsky, and Pippa White



# THEATER ETIQUETTE

We are delighted to have you as our guest and want your experience to be an enjoyable one. Attending a live performance is very different from watching television or going to the movies. You are not simply watching what is happening on the stage; you play an active role. The artists have worked very hard to prepare this performance for you, so please remember the golden rule:

***Treat others the way you would like to be treated.***

**Here are a few guidelines to help you—and your fellow audience members—enjoy the performance:**

## Be Prepared

- Arrive early. Please plan to arrive at the theater at least 15 minutes before curtain time. Be generous in your estimation of travel and parking time.
- Plan ahead to meet anyone in your group who travels separately. Once inside the theater, 'saving seats' for friends will only prove frustrating to all involved.
- Remember to turn off all beepers, cell phones, and watch alarms before entering the theater (And then double check!) and leave all laser pointers, cameras, etc. at home.

## Be Courteous

- Walk, don't run, when entering or leaving the theater. The term "break a leg" means good luck to the performers not the audience!
- Do not take food or drink into the theater, and please – NO GUM!
- Please take children out of the theater if they become restless and disrupt other's ability to listen.
- Actors love to hear applause—it shows how much you enjoyed the performance. If you like something, applaud— if not, don't. It's rude to boo or whistle.

## Be Aware

- It's ok to talk *quietly* with those sitting next to you before the performance; however, when the lights dim, it's time to be quiet and direct your attention to the stage.
- Practice the International Sign of "Quiet Please!" by **silently** raising your finger to your lips to politely remind a neighbor or friend. You communicate your wish for quiet without adding to the distraction. Excessive noise or motion can disturb not only other audience members, but the performers as well.
- Take everything you brought with you when you leave. Once the cast has taken their bows and the house lights come up, check under your seat for any items (coats, backpacks, etc) you might have placed there.

## Be Open

- A good audience member is open to new sights and sounds. Enjoy!



# GETTING TO AMES

Stephens Auditorium is part of the Iowa State Center located at the corner of University Boulevard (formerly Elwood Drive) and Lincoln Way in Ames, Iowa. Plentiful parking is available on all sides of the building. Please follow traffic directors' instructions if you are asked to park in a specific location. Handicapped-accessible and limited-mobility parking is available on the west side of the auditorium.

