

**LESSON 7:
INTERROGATION OF IMMIGRANT****Objective**

The purpose of this lesson is to give students an opportunity to experience what the immigrants went through and felt during their interrogations on Angel Island.

Grades

4-12

Time

One class period

Materials

Handouts

Standards

California History-Social Science Content Standards

Procedure

1. **Anticipatory Set:** Ask the class to help define interrogation. Lead a discussion on why people are interrogated. Ask them if they have ever been in a situation where they have been interrogated and to describe how it made them feel. Encourage students to give examples of people being interrogated and what it must have felt like for them.
2. **Instruction/Background Information:** Explain to students that many of the immigrants who traveled through Angel Island had to go through extensive interrogations in order to gain passage to the United States. They had to answer very difficult questions about minute details of their family, village, home, etc. In order to pass the interrogation, their answers had to match the answers of family members who were already living in the United States.

Because of the stringent immigration laws, many times people posed as relatives to legal immigrants who were not actual family members. These immigrants were referred to as “paper daughters,” “paper sons,” and “paper wives.” To try and guarantee passing of the interrogation, people bought coaching papers with information on details they may be asked about. If a person was not successful in the interrogation(s) s/he could be further detained and ultimately deported.

Guided Practice/Application (can be done in two periods)

Part One: Assign groups of students (four per group preferably) to read through a portion of a sample interview of an immigrant. In pairs have them read the parts of the interviewer and interviewee.

Part Two: Using the three different handouts as a basis, have students act in the role as the interrogator, the immigrant, and the immigrant's family member. Like many immigrants who had to assume a different identity in order to come to the United States, students will also assume the new identities based on the background information. Students should read through the information about their person. Then as best of their ability, they should role play what an interrogation was like for an immigrant and their family member. Students should pair up and work with a partner during the interviews. By working with a partner, students have more opportunities to discuss and reflect on the experiences of interrogator and interviewee.

The steps of the interrogation should be in this order:

- Interrogator interviews potential immigrant.
- Interrogator interviews immigrant's family member to corroborate immigrant's testimony
- Interrogator reviews interviews. Do the answers to the same questions match?

Note: In this scenario based on a real case file, the husband and wife have different accounts of where they lived. It is up to the inspector to determine to let this applicant in. In the actual case, **Ho Kwai** arrived from China as a wife of U.S. citizen arriving to join her husband on June 1910. She was denied entry and in her subsequent appeal she was also denied entry due to discrepancies in their living arrangements after they were married. Both the husband and wife insisted they were telling the truth. Later the decision was overturned and she was granted entry. This is a very typical experience for general problems and hassles. Ho Kwai's original file contains 20 pages of Board of Special Inquiry interrogations, lots of bureaucratic correspondence about a certificate of identity damaged in a fire, and a Hong Kong marriage certificate with husband and wife photos affixed.

Wrap Up: As a class discuss with the students how it must have felt to be an immigrant being interrogated. Ask whether the students felt the interrogations were fair and/or necessary, and discuss why or why not. Also, ask where they thought this kind of interrogation could prove or disprove one's identity. Why might there be discrepancies in the testimonies of two people. Reflect with the class on whether they feel those type of interrogations are necessary in today's time.

Case Study Reflection Questions

- Describe the experience your person had on Angel Island.
- Brainstorm the possible feelings your person must have experienced during his/her stay on the island.
- Brainstorm what the interrogator might have felt toward the immigrant.

Writing assignment: Have students write from the perspective of the interrogator or an immigrant reflecting on their plight:

- From the perspective of the "immigration inspector:" Write a brief report on your interview that you just completed with Ho Kwai. Do you believe her claim that she is

married to Tow Wing Soon? You should include a summary of you applicant's claim to enter the United States and your reason for awarding or denying her entry into the United States.

- From the perspective of Ho Kwai: What are your thoughts regarding the interrogation? Write a brief letter to your sister in China describing how you felt being interrogated and whether or not you think the inspector believed you. What do you think your chances are of entering the United States? What will do if you are admitted to the United States, and what will you do if you are deported back to China?

Vocabulary

alleged – doubtful, suspect, supposed

Coaching Papers - papers that give personal information about the person whose identity an individual has taken

corroborate – to make certain

interrogation - situation where a person is asked questions s/he is required to answer

Paper daughter/son - a person who is not an actual relative, but uses documents that claim s/he is a relative of an immigrant who has successfully already immigrated to the U.S.

Source: Vumport, Roberta Kugell and Smith, Marcella M. *The Chinese Experience in 19th Century America*. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois, 2000.

Document Source: National Archives & Records Administration, San Bruno

Prepared by Caryn Salmon with the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Name _____ Date _____

Sample Interrogation of an Angel Island Immigrant

Q: What is your name?

A: Ho Kwai

Q: Is your father living?

A: No

Q: Is your mother living?

A: No

Q: Have you any brothers or sisters?

A: A brother Ho You; working in a store in Shanghai.

Q: Where does he live?

A: No. 10 Tow Hing Fong St.

Q: Is that the same place you lived?

A: yes

Q: Who is your husband?

A: Tow wing Sing (Identified the husbands photos)

Q: Is he on the steamer with you?

A: Yes

Q: What is his occupation?

A: He did not tell me what he did.

Q: How did you get married?

A: American custom

Q: Not until you married him

A: That is right

Q: Where did you meet him on the day that you married him?

A: We went to the consulate together.

Q: What time of the day did you go?

A: About one o'clock.

Q: Was this in Hong Kong?

A: Yes

Q: When did you go to Hong Kong?

A: First month, 18th day

Q: What time of the day did you leave?

A: 9 a.m.

Q: Who went with you?

A: My husband.

Q: You were not married to him then, were you?

A: No

Q: Who went with you then?

A: My sister-in-law

Q: Was your husband whom you married afterwards in the party?

A: Yes.

Q: You said you never saw your husband till the day you married him?

A: I counted that day.

Q: You left home at 9 a.m.?

A: Yes

Q: How did you go to Canton from Hong Kong?

A: In a vehicle on wheels, run by a man.

Q: Did you go by any boat? A: Yes.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Name _____ Date _____

**Student Activity: Interrogation of an Angel Island Immigrant
Inspector for Immigrants****Your role**

As an inspector your role is to ask questions, and after careful review of the answers, determine whether the people have established their case. In this case, determine if this woman is indeed the wife of a man who is a United States citizen.

Sample Questions:

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- What is your occupation in the U.S?
- When did you marry your husband/wife?
- Who helped arrange your marriage?
- When did you get married?
- Where did you stay after you got married?

An Inspector Explains His Technique

“I was a lot more thorough than most inspectors. I gave them a pretty good examination that involved a lot of different angles. We started by getting the data on the applicant himself: his name, age, any other names, and physical description. Then we would ask him to describe his family: his father, his boyhood name, marriage name, and any other name he might have had, his age, and so forth. Then we would go down the line: how many brothers and sisters described in detail—names, age, sex, and so forth. Then we would have to go into the older generations: paternal grandparents; then how many uncles and aunts and they had to be described. Then the village: the district, how many houses it was composed of, how many houses it was composed of, how arranged, how many houses in each row, which way the village faced, what was the head and tail of the village. Then the next door neighbors. Then describe the house: how many rooms and describe them. What markets they went to. Find out about the father’s trip: when he came home, how long was he home, did he go to any special places, and describe the trip from his village to Hong Kong. In describing the home, we had to get the details of the main things in it and how the family slept, what bedroom each occupied. Sometime it would take three or four hours to examine each one.” - Immigration inspector (*Island*, p. 112)

STUDENT HANDOUT

Name _____ Date _____

**Student Activity: Interrogation of an Angel Island Immigrant
Chinese immigrant**

Your role

You have traveled with your “alleged husband” from China to the United States on the SS China of the China Mail Steamship line. You are hoping to enter the United States and know that you have to go through a process of questioning.

Your identity

Your name is Ho Kwai. You were born in China and are 5 feet tall, 39 years old. You arrived in the port of San Francisco on the SS China. You plan to work as a seamstress and live at the New China Hotel on Clay Street, San Francisco.

Your family background

You were married on February 28, 1920 at the Registrar-General office in Hong Kong. Your sister-in-law helped to arrange the marriage. Your wedding was witnessed by your husband’s friends Wong Jung and Hong Ah Sing. Your wedding ceremony was conducted in the tradition of a Western Christian ceremony rather than Chinese ceremony. After you were married in Hog Kong, you went back to Canton and lived together with your husband on 15 Say Kay Lee Street in Canton. For a few days, you cooked for your husband and he joined you for his meals and to sleep at night. Later in March you moved to Hong Kong and lived at 243 Des Voeux Road on the top of a three story building.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
IMMIGRATION SERVICE

APPLICATION AND RECEIPT FOR CERTIFICATE OF IDENTITY

Application taken by John P. Stone Date Apr. 18, 1924
San Francisco, Cal., _____, 1921

RECEIVED FROM COMMISSIONER OF IMMIGRATION, Port of San Francisco--

Certificate of Identity No. 3010 issued in the
Name Ho Kwai Age 35
Height: 5 feet, 7/8 inches. Occupation seamstress
with china
Place San Francisco Admitted as Wife of native
No. 0257602 S. S. China Date June 25, 1910
Physical marks Scar on left shoulder, pear hole of right hand also
Give first arrival and all subsequent trips:
First arrival June 25, 1910

Departed _____
Returned _____
Departed _____
Returned _____
Departed _____
Returned _____

Did you register? (If not, give reasons.) _____

Have you any other papers showing your right to be and remain in the United States? _____

Address where identification card should be sent c/o U.S. Immigration
Office, Los Angeles, Cal. Her
Ho Kwai
mark

ATTEST: _____ Applicant.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Name _____ Date _____

**Student Activity: Interrogation of an Angel Island Immigrant
Chinese immigrant's family member****Your role**

You are trying to bring your wife Ho Kwai to the United States. You are called to be a witness on her behalf. Your answers will need to match her answers to prove that you are husband and wife.

Your identity

Tow (Ho) Wing Soon also known as Tow Suey Sun. You are a cook who has worked in San Mateo and San Rafael but now live in Los Angeles. As a cook you typically made 15 dollars per month. You have had other jobs as a waiter and store clerk.

Your family background

Your father was a merchant the Quong Chung Store. You were married to your second wife in March. Your wife's sister-in-law Chun Shee, the wife of Ho You, her brother helped arrange the marriage. The ceremony was a Christian rather than Chinese ceremony. Your wedding was witnessed by your friends Wong Jung and Hong Ah Sing. Your first wife has passed away and you have a son from the first marriage. After getting married you lived with your wife in Hong Kong at 243 Des Voux Road, on the top floor of a four story building occupied by families.