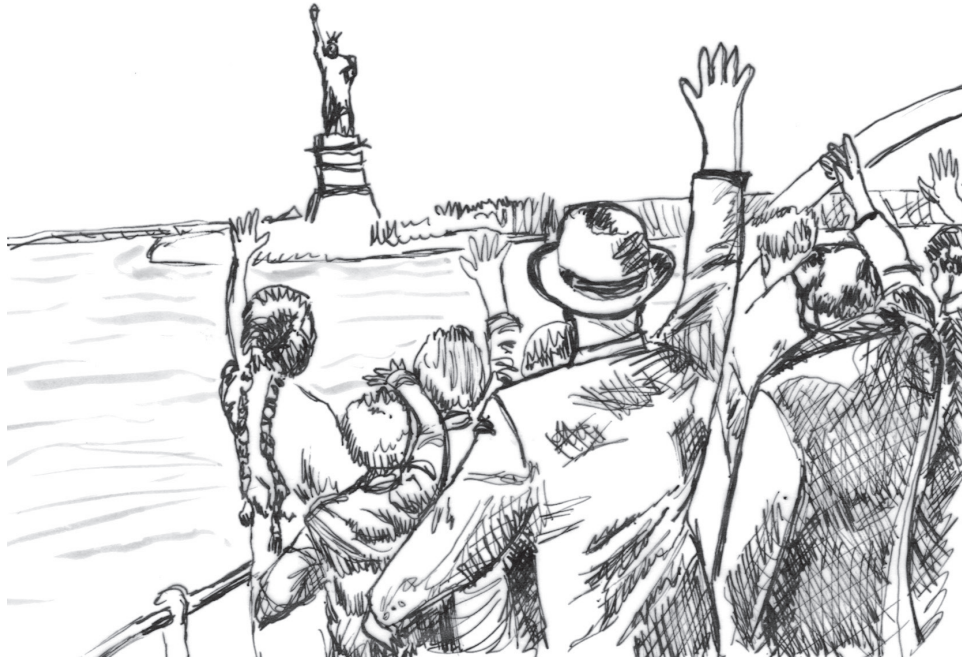


Ellis Island Coming to America

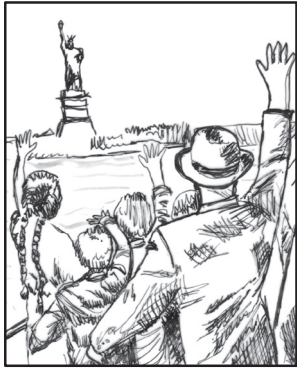


My family is from Russia. We are moving to America because we want freedom. We want a fresh start and the chance for better jobs.

We travel by ship to America. We travel in steerage with the other poor passengers. Steerage is on the lowest level of the ship. It is gross, dirty, and smells horrible. There are no windows, so it is dark. The rocking of the ship makes many people seasick.

Our voyage lasts for three weeks. We stay in steerage for the whole time because we are not allowed to leave. Many people get sick and a few even die.

Ellis Island



Finally, our ship slows down. We are allowed go outside to the main deck. We see the shores of America for the first time! We see the Statue of Liberty! It is a wonderful moment. It is what we've been waiting for! People begin to laugh, cry, hug, and cheer.

When the ship drops anchor, we board a small boat that takes us to Ellis Island. We are scared because what if they don't let us in? What if they turn us back? We have nothing left in Russia. We sold our home and everything just to pay for this trip!

When we get to Ellis Island we go into the Great Hall. It is 52 feet tall, very large, and crowded. We get in line and wait in line for hours.

Everyone gets a number that they pin to our shirts. Then we wait in line to see different doctors who check our hearts, eyes, lungs, arms, and legs. If you're sick, the doctors write a letter on your shirt using chalk. They write an L on Papa's shirt because he has an old leg injury that makes him limp.

Papa's injury means that we can't leave Ellis Island today. We must stay here overnight. All night long, we worry that they will find a reason send us back to Russia.

They give us food while we are there. We have never seen food like this before. They give us a fruit that is long and yellow. We have no idea what it is!

The next day Papa sees a different doctor. Thankfully, the doctor says Papa is OK and that we can move on.



Ellis Island

Next we go to a man who asks us lots of different questions. What is your name? Are you married? Where are you going? Do you have money? What will you do for work? Do you have family in America? Is anyone waiting for you?

I tell the man my name. It is Joseph Markovitch. He writes my name as Joe Markov. I am too afraid to correct him in case he gets mad and sends me back to Russia.

We've passed and are free to go! We get on a small boat that takes us to New York. I am now Joe Markov, an American!

