

## Immigration

### Ellis Island: The Hunt for Alois Hanousek

No one in my family knew much about Alois Hanousek, my great-grandfather. We knew that he immigrated to the United States in the 1890s. We also knew he came from or near a town in the Czech Republic called Kutna Hora. My family once went to Kutna Hora in search of information. We came home empty-handed.

So far, we had very little information to go on. Both of my grandparents on that side of the family have passed away. My father, who is an only child, never knew his grandfather. My sister Rebekah and I were determined to fill in the blank space on our family tree. So, we set out to Ellis Island in New York City. Most immigrants arrived there from 1892 to 1954. We hoped they would have the records we needed to learn more about our family history.

To get there, we took a ferry from Battery Park on the southern tip of Manhattan. The ferry sailed past the impressive Statue of Liberty. I imagined how my great-grandfather must have felt when he first saw the **majestic**<sup>1</sup> lady with the golden torch. Minutes later, we arrived at Ellis Island. I walked in the doors and you could feel the history. The museum had photographs of immigrants everywhere. Some looked **weary**<sup>2</sup> from their long voyage. Others looked excited. Still others looked sad. As we walked around the building, you could see all the things people brought with them. There was colorful clothing from every part of the world. There were also religious items and family treasures, such as musical instruments. I imagined that these things made it easier to be a stranger in a strange, new land.

Millions of immigrants were **processed**<sup>3</sup> at Ellis Island. They were given medical exams and reading tests. They were asked **countless**<sup>4</sup> personal questions, including: “Who paid for your voyage?” “How much money do you have in your **possession**<sup>5</sup>?” “Do you have more than one wife?” Not everyone got in. Those who were too unhealthy were sent back. Some families were split up, and had to say goodbye to each other in tears.

Eventually, my sister and I arrived at the research center. We sat down at a computer and began searching the records of ship after ship looking for our great-grandfather. At first, we found nothing. Then, my sister had an idea. She began doing searches on names like Yanousek, Lanousek, and Canousek. That is when I saw it! My great-grandfather’s name. It was written as “Canousek”. It

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<sup>1</sup> **majestic** – having great dignity; grand; noble

<sup>2</sup> **weary** – very tired or exhausted

<sup>3</sup> **processed** – handled by a series of actions that produce a result

<sup>4</sup> **countless** – too many to count

<sup>5</sup> **possession** – something you own



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What did the author hope to find at Ellis Island?
  - a. photographs
  - b. Czech passports
  - c. immigration records
  - d. the Statue of Liberty
  
2. How did the author feel when she entered Ellis Island?
  - a. tired
  - b. like a school-girl
  - c. annoyed
  - d. like she was walking into the past
  
3. Why does the author most likely mention that she wondered how her great-grandfather felt when he saw the Statue of Liberty?
  - a. to show how well her father had described her great-grandfather
  - b. to explain that she is unsure of what the Statue of Liberty used to mean to people
  - c. to describe how confusing it can be to search for immigration information
  - d. to convey that she wants to understand his immigration experience
  
4. Read the following sentences: “My family once went to Kutna Hora in search of information. We came home empty-handed.”

The word **empty-handed** means

  - a. not getting what they wanted
  - b. with other people helping
  - c. tired from doing work with the hands
  - d. having no more work to do
  
5. This passage is mostly about
  - a. one man’s journey from the Czech Republic to Ellis Island.
  - b. people going to Ellis Island to find information about a relative.
  - c. different islands in the United States and what they’re used for.
  - d. immigration laws in different countries around the world.

6. When did most immigrants arrive at Ellis Island?

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7. Why does the author include a list of questions immigrants had to answer in the passage?

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8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Though it was difficult to find information about Alois Hanousek, \_\_\_\_\_ they found some.

- a. before
- b. including
- c. as
- d. after much searching

9. Read the following sentence.

**Immigrants arrived at Ellis Island to start a new life in America.**

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

- 1. Who? immigrants
- 2. What did immigrants do? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Where? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Vocabulary Word:** majestic: very beautiful, dignified, and impressive.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

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