

Program Name: Voices From Ellis Island

Artist: Pippa White

### Special Requirements:

Well-lit gym or auditorium that can be darkened for parts of the presentation; sound system with microphone jack.

### Special Points of Interest:

During WWI, Ellis Island served as a detention center for enemy aliens, a way station for Navy personnel, and a hospital for the Army.



### Performance Description

“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.’”

Based on interviews and memoirs, this one-person show tells the exciting stories of seven immigrants who made their way through Ellis Island, America’s “front door to freedom,” in the early part of the 20th Century. These fascinating stories are amusing, frightening, inspiring and true.

From across Upper New York Bay, Ellis Island lies in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty. Today its handsome buildings may be unfamiliar to some onlookers from shore; however, Ellis Island occupies

a permanent place in America’s history. More than half of the immigrants entering the United States between 1892 and 1924 passed through its gates. While mass examination of immigrants at Ellis Island ended in 1924, it continued to be used as a detention center for immigrants whose status in this country was questioned. In 1954, the island permanently closed as an active immigration station. In 1990, Ellis Island reopened as a museum with new exhibits, films, and visitor programs. The restoration took six years and cost \$160,000,000.

### Educational Objectives & Standards

#### Students will:

- Learn about an important chapter in American history
- Experience living history and its inherent drama
- Realize they, too, can research and perform a character from history

#### Standards addressed:

- History: understands patterns of immigrant life after 1870, including where people came from and where they settled.
- Behavioral Studies: knows how a culture’s rules reflect its values and beliefs.

## Artist Bio: Pippa White

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Pippa White continues her career as a living history 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 22 states including California, New York, Connecticut, Florida, and Alaska. She has performed at colleges, conferences, museums, libraries, festivals and performing arts centers. For six consecutive years she has

been featured at the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines in their Applause Program, the only artist with this distinction. Other venues include the University of Nebraska, Iowa State Center, 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, and several storytelling festivals.

### List of Resources:

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#### Books:

Coming to America  
By Betsy Maestro  
New York: Scholastic, 1995

Ellis Island: Gateway to America  
By Loretto Dennis Szucs  
Salt Lake City: Ancestry, 1986

The Immigrant Experience  
By David M. Reimers  
New York: Chelsea House, 1989

Immigrant Kids  
By Russel Freedman  
New York: Scholastic, 1980

#### Online Resources:

[www.historychannel.com/ellisland/index2.html](http://www.historychannel.com/ellisland/index2.html)

[www.ellisland.org](http://www.ellisland.org)

Contact KCYA for more information about this and other programs

816.531.4022  
KC YA.org

### Ellis Island Timeline

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| 1/1/1892: Opened as an immigration station.  | 1924: Mass immigration ends. Immigrants now inspected in country of origin.  |
| 6/14/1897: Buildings destroyed by fire; all persons safely evacuated.  | 1939-1946: Part of Ellis Island used as a coast guard station.               |
| 12/17/1900: Reopened on a larger scale.  | 1941-1954: Ellis Island again serves as a detention center for enemy aliens. |
| 1917-1919: Serves as a detention center for enemy aliens, a way station for Navy personnel, and a hospital for the army. | 11/29/1965: Ellis Island closed.   |
| 1919: Deportation center opens.  | 1990: Opens as a museum after 6 years, \$160,000,000 restoration.            |

### Post-Performance Activities

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1. Brainstorm with your class. What do students know about immigration? When did their ancestors come to the United States? Did those ancestors share memories, either orally or in print?
2. Use a map and mark where students' ancestors came from. Consider doing a family tree that stretches back to the Ellis Island era.
3. Research your family's immigration history, or your community's. Where were they from and why did they leave? Reasons could include political, economic or religious persecution. Are their reasons much different from why people emigrate today?