



Angel Island: Gateway to Gold Mountain

Russell Freedman

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Angel Island, off the coast of California, was the port of entry for Asian immigrants to the United States between 1892 and 1940. Following the passage of legislation requiring the screening of immigrants, "the other Ellis Island" processed around one million people from Japan, China, and Korea. Drawing from memoirs, diaries, letters, and the "wall poems" discovered at the facility long after it closed, the nonfiction master Russell Freedman describes the people who came, and why; the screening process; detention and deportation; changes in immigration policy; and the eventual renaissance of Angel Island as a historic site open to visitors. Includes archival photos, source notes, bibliography, and index.

Angel Island: Gateway to Gold Mountain Details

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Author : Russell Freedman

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From Reader Review Angel Island: Gateway to Gold Mountain for online ebook

LauraW says

While I think this book would make an extremely valuable contribution to a collection of immigration books, it is also very discomfiting. I must admit that I had to skim a lot of it, because it was a bit too painful for me to think about.

From a technical standpoint, this book is less about narrative than it is about presentation. The pictures and the poems tell a lot of the story. History is not my biggest interest and I usually prefer story. This book doesn't have quite as much story as I generally prefer.

I wonder if Australia will, in the future, have an analogous experience with their asylum seekers on Manus Island.

David says

Angel Island: Gateway to Gold Mountain by Russell Freedman gives history and background on this main west coast port of entry for Asian immigrants to the United States between 1892 and 1940. Drawing from memoirs, diaries, letters, and the "wall poems" discovered at the facility long after it closed, Freedman describes the people who came, and why, the screening process, detention and deportation, changes in immigration policy, and the eventual renaissance of Angel Island as a historic site.

Angel Island is a fascinating look at the racism and prejudice directed against Chinese immigrants especially on the west coast. I wish we'd learned more about Ranger Weiss, who pushed for this park to be created, but thank goodness for his foresight and enthusiasm. Freedman's succinct story features many immigrant voices, including primary source photos, quotes, and songs. Freedman brings up examples of stress points for Chinese immigrants, such as the doctors and nurses all wearing white, which is the traditional color of funeral garments, which probably frightened many Chinese. Freedman's back matter includes archival black and white photos, source notes, bibliography, and index.

This presentation may make readers ponder attitudes toward current immigrants to the United States. One may also wonder if, had the treatment of Chinese immigrants had been revealed to the American public at the time, whether Japanese immigrants would have been treated differently instead of being placed in relocation camps, and losing most of their possessions?

For ages ten and up, immigration, Chinese, Chinese Americans, racism, prejudice, poems, deportation, detention, diversity and fans of Russell Freedman.

The Reading Countess says

Superb. Russell Freedman never disappoints. Historic photographs help highlight the west's Ellis Island. As a history minor, I'm embarrassed to say that I've never heard of Angel Island. Freedman makes this bleak time in U.S. immigration compelling for readers young and old. The poetry shared on the pages isn't enough for

me, I am now in search of more that was preserved on the center's walls. My students will surely love reading this required text. Paired with VOICES FROM THE FIELD: CHILDREN OF MIGRANT FARMWORKERS TELL THEIR STORIES.

Lulu says

Angel Island by Russell Freedman is an extraordinary piece of literature. The book includes many poems from primary sources (including the poems from the Angel Island cell walls). I can assure that any person who reads this book will come back with more knowledge about Angel Island. Freedman dives into the history of Angel Island, and although this can be a hard topic to learn about, Freedman gives an excellent background on everything. I recommend this book to people who have no background knowledge on Angel Island. If you do have prior knowledge of Angel Island, I would go to the direct source: the translated poems found on the walls of Angel Island. In conclusion, Angel Island is a short book but packed with facts, with a big font and only 64 pages, you're sure to learn a lot with Freedman's powerful words.

Katie Lebkuecher says

1. Twin Text: Paper Son: Lee's Journey to America, Helen Foster James & Virginia Shin-Mui Loh, 2013
 2. The non-fiction text, Angel Island, describes the challenges facing Asian and other immigrants entering San Francisco through Angel Island Immigration between 1910 and 1940. It tells about the groups of people attempting to immigrate to the United States and how the US government made it difficult, if not impossible, for certain groups. Paper Son tells the story of how one boy, like many Chinese, pretended to be the son of an American Citizen in order to immigrate. People who did this were referred to as paper sons because they were only the sons of citizens on their immigration papers. The book describes how paper sons and daughters had to study information about their paper fathers down to minute details such as the number of windows in their house or where they place their rice bin.
 3. Freedman uses description and problem/solution. Throughout the book the reader is given a problem that immigrant faced on Angel Island and how many immigrants solved or got around those problems. He also describes the people that went through Angel Island and the conditions they faced while there. He describes the process they went through before being allowed into San Francisco, such as the physical exam and questioning. A KWL chart can be used as a strategy application in order to assess what students already know about immigration, San Francisco and Angel Island. The What You Would Like to Know portion gives students a purpose for reading, or listening to the reading. Finally, they would complete the What I Learned portion as they read, or listen to, the texts.
 4. (2013, November 1). Booklist. <http://www.booklistonline.com/Locomot...>
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BookSweetie says

Juvenile/young adult illustrated non-fiction immigration- related history of high quality: clear prose, very good book design, relevant photographs and illustrations, and meaningfully presented information.

Using information from various parts of the book itself, I have created the following questions and answers, with a focus on the Chinese immigrant experience.

Q. Where is Angel Island?

A. San Francisco Bay in California.

Q. When was the Angel Island Immigration Station opened?

A. 1910

Q. What is the connection between Angel Island and Ellis Island?

A. Both are places where people who wanted to enter America were screened. Ellis Island is located on the Atlantic coast of the US; Angel Island is on the Pacific Coast. Ellis Island served mostly Europeans who wanted to enter the US. Angel Island served mostly Asians. Ellis Island was more of a processing center--the screening was normally relatively quick. Angel Island was more like a detention center; immigrants could be detained for weeks or months before the yes or no entry decision occurred.

Q. When was the Angel Island Immigration station closed?

A. 1940

Q. How many people were processed at Angel Island between 1910 and 1940?

A. Over 1/2 million people from more than 80 countries.

Q. What happened in 1848 that influenced many Chinese men from poor fishing and rice-growing villages in the Pearl River Delta?

A. News of the California gold rush reached China. Many decided to travel across the Pacific to " Gold Mountain" (California).

Q. By 1853, how many Chinese were estimated to have arrived in the gold fields in just a few short years?

A. 25,000

Q. After the gold rush had faded, did the Chinese Immigration stop?

A. No. A new wave of Chinese immigrants came to work in the 1860s. Some helped build the Central Pacific Railroad; some built the hundreds of miles of earthen levees to make cropland around Sacramento, California.

Q. In 1873 the economy in the US collapsed. How did this impact the Chinese who had already immigrated?

A. Many Chinese agreed to work for lower pay leading to their being scapegoated and targeted for violence and increased discrimination. Mobs all over the West were attacking the Chinese who organized militias and other resistance. For example, vegetable sellers stopped selling vegetables.

Q. What made for an unfriendly, unwelcome environment for the Chinese immigrants even before the 1873 economic stresses?

A. In the gold rush days, a Foreign Miners' Tax was directed at the Chinese. Discriminatory laws and

practices arose resulting in the Chinese not being allowed to vote, marry whites, or testify in court. Also, there were restrictions about where the Chinese might live or work. Then in 1851 in Chinatown in Los Angeles a mob of 500 white men went on a rampage, lynching 17 immigrants.

Q. By 1880, about how many Chinese were in America?

A. More than 100,000.

Q. In 1882 the Congress for the first time passed a law excluding immigrants due to nationality/ race. What was the law called?

A. The Chinese Exclusion Act (of 1882). No new Chinese laborers were allowed to enter the country legally.

Q. What was the "Dog Tag Law" referring to?

A. The Geary Act of 1892. All persons of Chinese descent were required to carry a photo ID.

Q. Did the Chinese people comply?

A. At first, no. The Geary Act spurred the largest organized act of civil disobedience in US history. However, once the Supreme Court ruled that the act was Constitutional, the leaders relented.

Q. Before 1910 when the Angel Island Immigration station opened to hold people as officials worked to decide who could legally enter the US and who could not, what happened to new arrivals?

A. Officials sent the new ship arrivals to a poorly-constructed wooden detention shed on a wharf that was considered dangerous and a firetrap.

Q. How did some of the Chinese new arrivals detained on Angel Island express their frustration as they watched new arrivals of other nationalities (the Japanese, for instance) proceed right away while they were singled out for a slow decision-process with delays of weeks or months?

A. Some Chinese used the walls to write about their experiences and emotions. The writings were extensive, filling walls. Translations of these writings and poems have been made so today's visitors to the historic site at Angel Island can learn for themselves about this period of history directly from some of the folks who lived the history.

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Anna Huang says

I really liked this book. One of the things that I liked was that it was very informative. The history of Angel Island and the Asian immigrants that passed through it is very clear. This book has 64 pages of reading, so for me, it was the perfect length. It was a pretty quick read for me; it took me about 3-4 days to read. Also, I thoroughly enjoyed the photographs and drawings that were in the book because they helped deliver the story and the perspective of the immigrants. This book's text sizing is pretty big (about size 20),

but it helped me read the text faster and keep my place on each line. Overall, this book is very good for a brief but sufficient narrative of the history of Angel Island.

Ellie Arms says

Russell Freedman's book, *Angel Island*, is a 65-page long information and picture-packed book, filled with facts about immigration to the United States, and the joys and evident hardships experienced in Angel Island. *Angel Island* covers many topics, from the Chinese poetry written on the walls of the barracks to the interrogations which immigrants went through. From sickness to freedom, from ships to "angelic" islands, this book covers a wide variety of experiences, quotes, images, and information about immigration on the west coast in the early 20th century. The book has large margins, which allows sufficient space for margin notes and post-its. As a seventh grader, I found this book a very manageable read, with enough new vocabulary and concepts to stretch my brain, but not an excessive amount that I needed the dictionary every other sentence. Overall, *Angel Island* is an interesting read, a good length, and a very good book for someone who wants a quick view into the "Gateway to the Gold Mountain".

Richie Partington says

Richie's Picks: *ANGEL ISLAND: GATEWAY TO GOLD MOUNTAIN* by Russell Freedman, Clarion, October 2013, 96p., ISBN: 978-0-547-90378-1

"It is said that these Chinese are entitled while they remain to the safeguards of the Constitution and to the protection of the laws in regard to their rights of person and of property, but that they continue to be aliens, subject to the absolute power of Congress to forcibly remove them. In other words, the guaranties of 'life, liberty, and property' named in the Constitution, are theirs by sufferance, and not of right. Of what avail are such guaranties?..."

"In view of this enactment by the highest legislative body of the foremost Christian nation, may not the thoughtful Chinese disciple of Confucius fairly ask, 'Why do they send missionaries here?'"
-- from the 1893 dissenting opinion of U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice David Brewer in *Fong Yue Ting v. United States et al.* *Wong Quan v. United States et al.* *Lee Joe v. United States et al.*, in which the majority of the Court upheld the constitutionality of the Geary Act of 1892 (Retrieved from <http://supreme.justia.com/cases/feder...>)

The Geary Act, as explained here by Russell Freedman,

"required all persons of Chinese descent, including native-born citizens, to carry photo identification cards proving their lawful presence in the United States. At the time, no other group was required to hold such documents."

That the *Fong Yue Ting* decision was handed down just three years prior to the Court's infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, has me suspecting that the late nineteenth century was a pretty lousy time to be anything but a white Christian male if you found yourself in America.

And, yet, the willingness of the American Library Association's 1961 Newbery award committee to honor the Chinese stereotype-laden children's book, *A CRICKET IN TIMES SQUARE* (insuring the perpetuation of these stereotypes and prejudice through, yet, another generation thanks to all the teachers across the

country who then read the ALA-blessed CRICKET to their elementary students), tells me that widespread acceptance of American anti-Chinese sentiment was not a passing fad, but was -- and many might argue, still is -- deeply entrenched. (Somewhere along the way, in later editions, the most egregious language in CRICKET was edited out.)

Wait! I thought this was a book about Angel Island?

And that it is. I learned from Freedman's ANGEL ISLAND: GATEWAY TO GOLD MOUNTAIN that the infamous immigration station on Angel Island, more than anything, was an important tool in decades-long, government-sanctioned, xenophobic legislating against Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans trying to come home. That immigration station was built upon decades of prejudice:

"Politicians...were demanding that Chinese immigrants be excluded from the United States. The Chinese were undesirable aliens, they charged, willing to take on any type of work and to work for longer hours for less pay -- depriving whites of jobs. At a California Senate committee hearing in 1876, Chinese immigration was described as an 'unarmed invasion' that threatened the entire country. The rallying cry of the Workingmen's Party of California was 'The Chinese Must Go!'"

(Doesn't that sound an awful lot like certain contemporary politicians and media darlings ranting about Hispanic immigrants and Hispanic Americans?)

Here in California, ANGEL ISLAND: GATEWAY TO GOLD MOUNTAIN will be a welcome and important addition to the trade literature available to help teach California history. Freedman first walks readers through all of the atrocities perpetuated against the Chinese -- by mobs and through legislation -- beginning in the 1800s, so that when he proceeds to detail what Angel Island's Immigration Station was all about, we understand why the system there was set up as it was.

We teach California history in fourth grade. Consistent with that fourth grade audience, this book is -- in relation to Freedman's typical authorship -- a relatively shorter book with relatively larger text and plenty of photos. It will be readily accessible to that fourth grade audience and will also serve quite notably as a great introduction for older readers who, like me, will likely finish it wanting to know more about all sorts of interrelated issues and events that Freedman introduces.

It has now been five years since I rode the ferry from Tiburon over to Angel Island and wandered the trails around what is one heck of a beautiful place. Last time, it was the summer before the Immigration Station was opened as a museum. Now, understanding the significance of that facility, I'll be heading down there in the near future for another visit.

Richie Partington, MLIS

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Agatha says

Angel Island was (is) an island in San Francisco Bay near Alcatraz Island. From 1910-1940, it was used to process almost all Asian immigrants entering the US. This book outlined the history of Angel Island. Super-interesting.

One is apt to think of it as “the Ellis Island of the West” but, unlike Ellis Island, Angel Island was a detainment center for weeks or even months. Once an immigrant passed inspection, he or she was able to enter the mainland US, or, what the Chinese called “Gold Mountain.”

Interestingly, it was more than just Asians who entered the US through Angel Island. “More than half a million people from eighty countries arrived at Angel Island between 1910 and 1940.” There were many Russians (including Sergei Prokofiev, the composer of “Peter and the Wolf”!) or Russian Revolution refugees who traveled across Siberia down to Shanghai and then on to Japan, and then continued on to the US through Angel Island. (Prokofiev’s notes on the process are very curmudgeonly and funny!) as did many German Jews, in the lead-up to WWII. They escaped to Shanghai because it was one of the last places to accept Jewish refugees. Many stopped there but others waited months or year to get visas to allow them to travel to the US. Unfortunately in July 1941, the US State Department stopped issuing visas to refugees, because they feared the loophole would allow Nazi spies to enter the country.

Overall, a very interesting read! One can now tour Angel Island and see all Chinese poems refugees scrawled onto the walls, poems such as:

See the Europeans disembark,
Husband’s hand on the shoulder of his wife.
See the Japanese disembark
Beaming with pride.
Alas, innocent are we Chinese
Not allowed to land in America,
Imprisoned, but why?

Madeleine says

Angel Island: Gateway to Gold Mountain was a very informative and entertaining book for those interested in learning more about immigration in the 18-1900s. The text is engaging, and includes small anecdotes (and quotations) and is formatted in a way that is not overwhelming. Not only this, but the text and images work together to help the reader dive deeper into the topic, underneath all of the key facts. The images are striking and for visual learners, many of the pictures are a great visualization of the text. The chapters are a nicely placed break for readers who have quickly-fading stamina. Overall, this book does an excellent job of teaching the reader about many aspects of Angel Island, and the length is not very large at all for such a thorough book. I highly recommend this book.

Yana says

This book was a very fun and short non-fiction read. The book talks about many aspects of Angel Island like the conditions, how people got there, why people went there, the poems and writings on the walls, and more. In addition to the great text, Freedman finds a way to incorporate many images throughout the story. These images really helped me visualize what the text was saying. Another cool thing is that at the end of each chapter Freedman includes a poem which was written on the walls of Angel Island which was related to the chapter. I think this is a really nice and unique way for the chapter to end. As a 13-year-old who already knew some information about some of the concepts mentioned (like the Chinese exclusion laws), I found this book an easy read. Also, the vocabulary was not extremely hard for me and the book is only 61 pages. I

would recommend this book to ages 12-14. I think this book is a really good choice for you if you want a quick book which can give you information on Angel Island.

Marjorie Ingall says

I'm frantically reading for my annual Tablet best-Jewy-books Hanukah-gifting roundup. And waaah, I somehow missed this book last year! (I'd thought it pubbed in 2014 but it's 2013 so i can't use it BOO HOO.) But let me gush here. This is a photographic history of immigration (mostly Chinese, but also Japanese and Jewish and other groups) through "the Ellis Island of the West." I had NO CLUE. And I used to live in SF in the late '90s! I went hiking on Angel Island! I picnicked there! How did I have NO CLUE that immigrants even came THOUGH there?? Was I a dimwit??

Anyway, the book starts in 1970, with a newly minted Park Ranger patrolling after the island's been closed to the public, finding a falling-down wooden shack just FILLED with Chinese graffiti (and also a smidge of Japanese, Korean, Russian, Punjabi, Spanish, German and English). It turns out to be a detention center where dejected detainees wrote poems and stories all over the walls. The book is filled with snippets of these poems, some very beautiful and sad. The ranger (an immigrant himself, who came to America as a child with his Austrian Jewish parents fleeing the Holocaust) risks his job to save the shack when the park service wants to tear it down, and reaches out to a former professor of his at SF State who photographs every inch of the building and then starts taking Asian-American Studies faculty and students out on the ferry to look at the wall poems. The ranger, Alexander Weiss, notes that the students' parents and grandparents had come through Angel Island, "but they had no idea of this history because their parents would not talk about it." Soon the Asian-American community in CA launches a campaign to save the immigration station. Eventually it becomes a historic landmark, and a museum opens in 2009. In 2012, the US House of Representatives apologizes for its treatment of Chinese immigrants to CA.

I was FASCINATED by this book. I really knew nothing. HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE THAT I WAS SO CLUELESS. (I'll just keep asking this.) The pictures are very Ellis Island-y in their black-and-white sadness and harrowing quality...only with all Asian faces instead of white ones.

I think this is a really important book, and it's quite kid-readable for a history book with black and white photos. The cover is not enticing (DARK COVER WITH ONE OLD PHOTO ON IT = SPINACH) but if a kid has any interest in history at all I think he or she will be into it, and any elementary and middle-school classes that study immigration (maybe especially here in NYC, where we are so Ellis Island focused!) should know about it.

I realized I just promised to give fewer five-star reviews but I apparently lied.

Jenn Estep says

Looks like I'm in the minority with this one, but I found this pretty middling. The subject matter is interesting and not as well known as it should be, and the comments and reviews I'd heard have been so great. Thus, maybe my expectations were too high, but. I just found this treatment skimpy, scattered and not nearly as compelling as I would've liked.

Joyce Yattoni says

An informational book authored by Russell Friedman this book gives the reader insight into the lesser known Angel Island, the immigration port for the west. This port is very similar to the Eastern immigration hub and more widely known Ellis Island. The big contrast being, most white European immigrants were welcomed, Asians, on the other hand, had to to a lot of "jump hooping" to get here. An interesting read and there are some great "nuggets" of information. This would be great for our historical fiction unit.
