

Reader's Theater: The Immigrant by *ggorospe (2010)*

Reader 1: We lived through a famine in Russia and almost starved to death. Every day the Board of Health would come to our door and ask if we had any dead. My mother said she wanted to see a loaf of bread on the table and then she was ready to die. So you see, we lived through so much before we came here that Ellis Island was a blessing.

(Rose Beckman, Russian, age 10)

Chorus: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore, Send these the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door..." *(poet Emma Lazarus)*

Reader 2 : Thank God that we came to this beautiful country, because in our town we had no factories, no nothing. You had to live by what you raised. And if you had a bad year well, it was just too bad. *(Rosa Bolognese DaDamio, Italian immigrant, 1920}*

Reader 3: My family decided that I should come to America, where there would be more opportunities for me. World War I had just ended, and it was a bad time in Europe. *(Seymour Rechtzeit , Łódz, Poland, 1920)*

Reader 4: "We left Korea because we were too poor. We had nothing to eat. There was absolutely no way we could survive." *(Korean immigrant)*

Chorus: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..."

Reader 5: "And what's nicer yet is the fact that this is a free land. No one can give orders to anybody here, one is as good as another, no one takes off his hat to another as you have to do in Germany." *(a German writing to his brother, 1866)*

Reader 6: "...I had heard things about America - that it was a far-off country where everybody was rich and that Italians went there and made plenty of money..."
(an Italian immigrant, early 1900's)

Protest 1: "The scum of creation has been dumped on us. The most dangerous and corrupting hordes of the Old World have invaded us." *(Native-born politician Tom Watson)*

Reader 7: "I studied under American teachers [in the Philippines], learning American history and English, being inspired by those teachers and American ideals. It's no wonder that I have always wanted to come here." *(Filipino immigrant)*

Reader 8: "Would it be possible for an immigrant like me to become a part of the American dream?" *(Carlos Bulosan, Filipino immigrant)*

Protest 2: : "One guy stuck his foot out and kicked up my mother's skirt. He spit on my face, and asked my father, 'Why did we come to such a place? I want to go home to Korea.' "
(Korean landing in San Francisco, 1906)

Chorus: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..."

Reader 9: After the Russo-Japanese War, Japan was poor, and the government encouraged people to go abroad to make money. (*Sadama Inouye of Japan, 1906*)

Reader 10: Once a cousin...returned from...the "Gold Mountain," and told us strange tales of men becoming tremendously rich overnight by finding gold in river beds.
(*Huie Kin who left China for San Francisco in 1865*)

Protest 3: "I would consider with favor any suitable measures to discourage the Chinese from coming to our shores."
(*Pres. Rutherford Hayes, 1879*)

Reader 11: "They [the priests] said that they considered it a virtue to rob and kill the enemies of Christ. Freedom, freedom! Freedom I Wanted."
(*Elizabeth Hasasnovitz, a Jew*)

Reader 12: "My only hope was to cross the river to the United States. If I could find a job that paid enough money, my children could join me. I wanted them to have an education and a proper life...to be someone.
(*Rosa Maria Urbina, Mexico*)

Group 1: "So at last I was going to America! Really, really going at last!
The boundaries burst. The arch of heaven soared."
(*Mary Antin, The Promised Land, Houghton Mifflin, 1912*)

Group 2: "A million suns shone out for every star. The winds rushed in from outer space, roaring in my ears, 'America! America! "
(*Mary Antin, The Promised Land, Houghton Mifflin, 1912*)

Group 3: "Day of spacious dreams! I sailed for America, overblown with hope."
(Ichiyo, Japanese immigrant)

Chorus: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..."

Reader 13: "We traveled in steerage (the section of the ship where those who paid the cheapest fares were crowded under the decks) - dirty bundles - foul odors - seasick people - but I saw and heard nothing of the stinking dirtiness and ugliness around me. I seemed to float in showers of sunshine. Sight after sight of the new world were in my imagination. From everyone's lips flowed the golden legend of the golden country:

Group 4: "In America you can say what you feel - you can join your friends in open streets without fear."
(*Anzia Yeziarska, a 16 year old Jewish girl from Poland*)

Group 5: "In America there is a home for everyone. The land is your land..."
(*Anzia Yeziarska*)

Group 6: "Everyone is like everybody else in America. All people can do what they want with their lives in America."
(*Anzia Yeziarska*)

Group 7: "Plenty for all. Learning flows free like milk and honey."
(*Anzia Yeziarsk*)

Chorus: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..."

Woman 1: "I like tall men and blondes. I have read much about Americans making good husbands." (*Susan Thompson, 1907*)

Woman 2: "I want a man with dark hair. A city man? No, a farmer. A man who is making \$1000 a year will do. That isn't too much to ask in this country is it?" (*Agnes McGirr, 1907*)

Woman 3: "They tell me that there are no men in Pittsburgh but millionaires. I'm going out there..." (*Nellie O'Brien, 1907*)

Woman 4: "I sent my picture. Ah, marriage! Then I could get to America! That land of freedom with streets paved of gold!...So becoming a picture bride would be my answer and release." (*Korean picture bride*)

Chorus: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..."

Reader 14: "'Mountains!' I cried to my brother. 'Look at them! They're strange,' he said. 'Why don't they have snow on them?' He was craning his neck and standing on tiptoe to stare through the haze at the New York skyline." (*Edward Corsi, 10 year old boy from Italy in 1907*)

Reader 15: "Crossing the harbor on the ferry, I was first struck by the fact that American men did not wear beards. In contrast with my own countryman I thought they looked almost like women. I felt we were superior to them. I saw my first negro....."
(*Edward Corsi*)

Reader 16: "Carrying our baggage, we walked across lower Manhattan and then climbed the steps leading to one of these marvelous trains. On this train I saw a China man...It had been a day of breath-taking surprises. I decided that anything might be true in this strange country."
(*Edward Corsi*)

Protest 4: "We have too many immigrants. A million a year of the peasants of Europe is more than this country can safely undertake to look after."
(*Henry Fairchild, professor of sociology, 1912*)

Reader 17: "There was only one way to succeed in America, my friends continually told me, and that was by constant, tireless, indiscriminating trying. If you failed in one place, or in ten places, or in a hundred places, you must not give up."
(M.E. Ravage, from *An American in the Making*, 1917)

Chorus: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore, Send these the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door..."
(*poet Emma Lazarus*)

by ggorospe

The primary sources used in this Reader's Theater were excerpted from:

Appel, John. The New Immigration. New York: Pitman Publishing Co., 1971.

Cuban, Larry and Roden, Philip. The Promise of America, Vol. 1. Palo Alto, California: Scott Foresman and Co., 1975.

Hoobler, Dorothy and Thomas. The Family Album series. New York: Oxford Press.

Editors of Time-Life. The Fabulous Century. New York: Time-Life, 1969.

Garraty, John A. The Story of America. San Diego: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1991.

Jonas, Susan (ed.). Ellis Island. New York: Aperture Book, 1989.

Takaki, Ronald. Strangers from a Different Shore. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.