

## **Ellis Island**

*by Joseph Bruchac*

Beyond the red brick of Ellis Island  
where the two Slovak children  
who became my grandparents  
waited the long days of quarantine,  
after leaving the sickness,  
the old Empires of Europe,  
a Circle Line ship slips easily  
on its way to the island  
of the tall woman, green  
as dreams of forests and meadows  
waiting for those who'd worked  
a thousand years  
yet never owned their own.

Like millions of others,  
I too come to this island,  
nine decades the answerer  
of dreams.

Yet only part of my blood loves that memory.  
Another voice speaks  
of native lands  
within this nation.  
Lands invaded  
when the earth became owned.  
Lands of those who followed  
the changing Moon,  
knowledge of the seasons  
in their veins.

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## **Europe and America**

*by David Ignatow*

My father brought the emigrant bundle  
of desperation and worn threads,  
that in anxiety as he stumbles  
tumble out distractedly;  
while I am bedded upon soft green money  
that grows like grass.  
Thus, between my father

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who lives on a bed of anguish for his daily bread,  
and I who tear money at leisure by the roots,  
where I lie in sun or shade,  
a vast continent of breezes, storms to him,  
shadows, darkness to him, small lakes, rough channels  
to him, and hills, mountains to him, lie between us.

My father comes of a small hell  
where bread and man have been kneaded and baked together.  
You have heard the scream as the knife fell;  
while I have slept  
as guns pounded offshore.

*David Ignatow was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1914. His early jobs included working in a family butcher shop and a bindery. He is a journalist, editor, and poet, and a lecturer at Kentucky and Kansas universities.*

### **Coming to America**

#### **The Godfather, Part II**

Watch the clip from *The Godfather, Part II*. Discuss what is going on in the clip and its relevance to the American Dream.

#### **“Ellis Island”**

Read the poem “Ellis Island” silently. Volunteer to read the poem aloud to the class or listen while others read. Underline the dreams of the people as they are expressed in the poem. Discuss the underlined passages with the class. . Discuss what is going on in the clip and its relevance to the American Dream.

Brainstorm about the dreams, hopes, and backgrounds of your ancestors. Share your thoughts in a small group.

#### **Bio Sketch**

Before reading the poem “Europe and America” complete the Bio Sketch questions. Share your Bio Sketch with another student.

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following information regarding you.

- Place of birth
- Places lived
- Schools attended
- Significant adults or people in your life
- Favorite film and/or book
- Favorite place you have visited and/or dream place you would like to visit

- Goal you have before completing high school
- Goal you have after completing high school

**“Europe and America”**

Read the poem to yourself or listen while your teacher reads the poem aloud to the class. Complete the Student Page Denotation and Connotation in “Europe and America.”

Create a graphic organizer that compares and contrast the ideas and dreams of past and present generations.

**Coming to America**

**Denotation and Connotation in “Europe and America”**

Denotation refers to the dictionary definition of a word. Connotation involves the idea or meaning suggested by or associated with a word or thing. Connotation usually has a more powerful effect on the reader. It may be a visual image or an idea to ponder. Look at the examples listed. Then state the denotation and connotation of key phrases from the poem “Europe and America.” Discuss the effect that those particular words have on the reader. Choose some words or phrases of your own to analyze on your own paper.

Word or Phrase	Denotation	Connotation	Effect on the Reader
emigrant bundle of desperation	<b>emigrant:</b> A person who has left one country to settle in another <b>bundle:</b> A group of objects held together by tying or wrapping <b>desperation:</b> Recklessness arising from losing all hope	The father is associated with that which is negative, bringing all his hopelessness to the new world.	The words set up the reader to contrast the father’s experience with the son’s.
bedded on soft green money			
bed of anguish			
vast continent of breezes, storms to him			

**Sentence Synthesis**

Consider how the effect on the reader might change if you change any of the key phrases in "Europe and America."

Imagine that instead of "bedded on soft green money," the poet were to have written "surrounded by lots of dead presidents." How does that change affect the reader?

Now look again at the phrases you examined on your own paper. Exchange the key word(s) in those phrases with different word(s) that have a similar meaning but different connotation. Reflect on how the change might affect the reader's interpretation.

<b>Word or Phrase</b>	<b>New Word or Phrase</b>	<b>Effect on Reader</b>