



Immigrant Kids

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America meant "freedom" to the immigrants of the early 1900s—but a freedom very different from what they expected. Cities were crowded and jobs were scarce. Children had to work selling newspapers, delivering goods, and laboring sweatshops. In this touching book, Newberry Medalist Russell Freedman offers a rare glimpse of what it meant to be a young newcomer to America.

Immigrant Kids Details

Date : Published August 1st 1995 by Puffin Books (first published 1980)

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Author : Russell Freedman

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From Reader Review Immigrant Kids for online ebook

Moo says

Got this for Moo in a book order last year and she just read it and loved it!! She recommends it to everyone!

Souaad Asar says

Immigrant Kids by Russell Freedman this is very interesting book with a very true story about what it meant to be a young newcomer to America. Many Americans doesn't get how hard is it to be immigrant a hundred years ago. Their exposure to the significance of mass immigration to the growth of the United States is so limited that they have no real understanding of the critical role that it played in the development of the country. The author Uses images that explains the immigrant experience to the young person, describing their life aboard a crowded ship, passing through immigration at Ellis Island to most likely live in a crowded tenement in a large city. Their life was very hard, most adults worked for wages that were not even enough to support their family. Unfortunately the children have to work as soon as they were found an occupation. Very nice book all the young readers should read it. Maybe they will learn and appreciate whatever they have now.

Katherine says

Immigrant Kids by Russell Freedman is a social history that discusses the lives of children that came to America in the early 1900s. Freedman begins by describing the cramped nature of the immigrants' trek across the ocean, characterized by foul smells and hungry stomachs. He then moves on to discuss the events that occurred upon arrival, the results of which would often determine whether or not the family would be allowed to stay. The next section of the book, "At Home", talks about the living conditions of immigrants and the crowded, stifling atmosphere of the tenements. "At School" talks about children's education, what their schools were like, and what they studied. Since many children dropped out of school at a young age, practical job training is also discussed. "At Work" discusses the fact that even though they were children, many immigrant kids had to work just like adults from an early age. Newsies, bootblacks, and delivery boys are among some of the young workers that are featured. Finally, the section entitled "At Play" discusses the leisure activities of immigrant kids, including baseball, stickball, "potsy", and other forms of street entertainment. The book also includes a useful index at the end, to facilitate browsing or searching.

Freedman's writing is especially likely to engage young readers because he portrays immigrant life from the perspective of children of the time. By using children as his subject, he is able to encourage a child to think about what his life would have been like had he been growing up in that time period. Because the reader can see through the eyes of the subject, he becomes more engaged in the text. Freedman is also able to create an engaging reading experience by discussing how life was different then compared to now. For example, to describe life in the tenements, Freedman discusses the lack of something contemporary children take for granted – privacy.

"Five or six people might sleep in one crowded room. Children were commonly tucked three and four to a bed. Privacy was unknown, and a room of one's own was a luxury beyond reach" (25).

In addition, much of the appeal of *Immigrant Kids* comes from the inclusion of personal accounts. In the following example, Angelo Pellegrini describes the nerve-wracking experience of waiting for approval at Ellis Island after a long boat trip to America:

"Because of the rigorous physical examination that we had to submit to... there was this terrible anxiety that one of us might be rejected. And if one of us was, what would the rest of the family do? My sister was indeed momentarily rejected; she had been so ill and had cried so much that her eyes were absolutely bloodshot" (13).

By including quotes from people who were actually growing up and living the life that Freedman describes, the author is able to personalize the book with genuine feelings and emotions. Personal accounts also lend a flavor of authenticity and authority to the book, and make the reader have more confidence in its accuracy. In addition, the division of the material into topical subsections helps to break up the text into parts that can be easily digested, and provides a good organizational framework.

The book is visually appealing and includes vintage photographs. These photographs beautifully illustrate the concepts discussed in the book and complement the text. While Freedman does an excellent job discussing the cramped nature of the immigrant ships, the text does not have the same impact as a photograph of hundreds of tiny faces loaded onto one small dock, with no room to move (p. 6). In addition, the text is displayed in a large font and is printed on a high-quality paper. All in all, *Immigrant Kids* is a fascinating account of life in another time and appeals on both intellectual and visual levels.

Lorie says

Immigration from the eyes of children and how they had to deal with their changing lives. They explain what it was like coming to America and what life was like at home, work, school, and play. The photographs of New York City immigrants during the late 1800's and early 1900's provide the reader with real life visuals to help place yourself in their situation. Students could use a venn diagram or other graphic organizer to compare and contrast children from this time period and today.

Lea Ann says

Informational text about immigrant kids in the late 1800's. Wonderful photos to use as conversation starters in a classroom

Chuck says

grate book

Sandy Brehl says

Another powerful historic treatment by Freedman, one that should be examined and compared to current circumstances surrounding immigration.

Katie says

Just a short history book for kids that we read to go along with our mini-unit on immigration, but we really enjoyed all the first-hand accounts that were quoted and the great black and white photos so clearly illustrating the history we were reading.

Sharon says

Another title that I had to request via interlibrary loan. I am thankful that some libraries kept this title. When one is studying the immigration experience, this title is a must-read. The photos are remarkable and telling of the lives our ancestors led.

Jackie says

I've had this book a long time, great look into our past

Ebookwormy1 says

A wonderful resource for elementary or older students on the experiences of immigrant kids. The author has a lovely way of combining concise text with period photographs to give new insight into the time period. The author's decision to focus on the experiences of children makes it highly approachable for younger children and fires the imagination of older children. Empathetic children will need a guide to help them process the difficult aspects of the immigrant experience (war in home country, death of parent, anxiety of Ellis Island inspections, overcrowding, children working, children going hungry, etc.)

The only limitation is that it is primarily focused on New York City (though not entirely), yet since NYC was the historic entrance for most immigrants of the time, it is not altogether unfitting. If I had to pick one book on the topic, this would be it!

Roberta says

This book written for children about children was very interesting. From 1880-1920, 23 million people

immigrated from Europe to the US, many of them children. The book is divided into chapters: At Home, At School, At Work, At Play. Life for immigrant children was hard. Was it actually better than in the "old country"? I was spurred to read this because of my recent foray into genealogy. I have ancestors who came over from Ireland during this period, some of them children, some of them adults. While I have names and dates, this book gave me a little more insight into what life was really like for these immigrants and their children. It also helps explain why there are such discrepancies in the birth date records - mainly for work reasons. People lied about their ages so they could get employment.

Nicola Mansfield says

Reason for Reading: Read aloud to my son as part of his history curriculum.

Russell Freedman is an award winning author with an extensive backlist and I've always been confident when seeing his name on a book. This is an over-sized book, profusely illustrated with contemporary photographs. Sometimes the photograph will take up more page space than the text and many times a whole page is devoted to the photograph. The text concentrates on 1890s-1900s immigration, coming into Ellis Island and living in New York City. The children are the focus and each chapter takes a look at a specific aspect of their live work, play, school. The book is peppered here and there will actual quotes from people who were once the children this book speaks of.

The photographs are wonderful and the book can be enjoyed simply by looking through the pictures and reading the captions. It is the photos that make this book. Unfortunately, we were not very impressed with the text. It had no cohesiveness, told no one's story, just randomly gave out information, which was interesting per se, but neither of us had any connection with the author's style of imparting that information. Rather a disappointment from a book authored by Russell Freedman. I recommend getting this book out from the library and looking at the photographs as they are definitely worthwhile.

Ava Witonsky says

found this in a stack of my discarded books from childhood. the pictures & excerpts are so alive with the strife & strangeness of immigrant life. a humbling collection in light of our shared american ancestry & the plight of immigrant children today.

Mitzy Rodriguez says

An informational book that describes the physical difficulties that are endured among immigrants. The book talks about the children traveling from Europe to the States, and where they would be left when their parents were not available to care for them. The living conditions were very uncomfortable especially for those who were less fortunate, schools helped the youngsters become Americanized a lot faster, fourteen years old was the legal working age but many children under that age were found to be working because their living situation counted on working 10-12 hour shifts. Children will be children so when they found the time they would meet up and play street games or find anything they could do. There could be students that have traveled from a different area and this could allow them to discuss what the hardest part about leaving their old home was.

