

# Golden Door

Pamela DeAngelo Foss



Crialesse, Emanuele. *Nouvomondo*. 118 min. film, Distribuzione, 2006.  
Crialesse, Emanuele. *Golden Door*. 118 min. DVD, Miramax Films, 2007.  
PG-13, brief graphic nudity

## Summary of Film

Director Emanuele Crialesse depicts the valor of immigrants in a physically and psychologically arduous journey from the Old World life to the New World dream. Crialesse artfully and vividly juxtaposes immigrant dreams with harsh realities. The first third of the film depicts the Mancuso family's life in Old World Sicily. Salvatore Mancuso, a determined young Italian widower, leads his family, sons, Angelo and Pietro (mute), and superstitious mother, in chasing his dream of an America that offers oversized produce and money grown on trees. The second third of the film depicts the difficulties faced on the family's journey. In addition to the unpleasantness of the boat ride, the film gives ample attention to the difficulties women immigrants faced, many of whom were pledged to American men, which validated their entry into America. The Mancuso family meets an English woman, Lucy, who uses the family for protection from scheming men as well as to secure her entry. The final third of the film depicts the invasive health and intelligence screenings at Ellis Island. The film focuses on the arduous journey of the immigrant as it ends before the immigrants are released from Ellis Island.

## **Break Down of Film**

### **PART ONE**

0:00-13:00 Old World Life

Sorcery, traditions, and life in Sicily

13:30-20:00 Preparation for the New World

Clothing, family, leaving, meeting

20:00 – 25:40 The Dream Begins

“We have to arrive in America looking like Kings.”

Visions of oversized produce

Mother unwilling to leave, ancestors and spirits angry and disapprove of the move

Frustration with Old World superstitions

26:00 – 31:00 Saying Goodbye

Flashback- one brother has already left for America

Send off

### **PART TWO**

32:00 – 39:30 Launch

Fish, remedies, health inspection, women must be married or pledge to marry, no single women

Luce tries to pass with Mancuso, but is hustled because she is single.

40:00 – The Boat

57:00 – 58:30 The Land of Milk and Honey

Wading in a river of milk

58:30 - 106:40

Gossip about Luce,

Violent boat ride, tossing of the dead

107:00 Preparation for New World

### **PART THREE**

112:00 Arrival at Ellis Island

117:00 Men physically examined (nudity)

120:00 Women physically examined

121:55 – 126:00 Intelligence exams

127:00 First time shower for Fortunata (nudity)

128:00 Pietro examined

129:30 – 140:00 Immigrant women meet their betrothed

148:00 Fortunata sent home

151:00 Baptism in a River of Milk

### Strategies for *Golden Door* in the classroom:

#### Provide Background to film and Purpose of assignment.

Between 1880 and 1930, 4.5 million Italian immigrants arrived at Ellis Island.

#### Italian Immigration

<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/immig/italian.html>

[http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/italian\\_immigration.cfm](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/italian_immigration.cfm)

#### Public Health Services at Ellis Island

<http://lhncbc.nlm.nih.gov/apdb/phsHistory/EllisIsland/Index.html>

<http://www.forgottenellisland.com/>

Forgotten Ellis Island is the companion website to the 2008 book and film about the hospital and medical screening process on Ellis Island.

-Objective: As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Consider 19<sup>th</sup> Century European immigration to the United States from an immigrant perspective.
- Examine the challenges facing 19<sup>th</sup> Century European immigrants to the United States.
- Analyze a historical feature film about 19<sup>th</sup> Century immigration.

### Introduce Characters



From left to right:

Don Luigi (Vincent Schiavelli) Arranges marriages for female immigrants.

Lucy Reed (Charlotte Gainsbourg) English, speaks Italian, faces the obstacle of traveling alone.

Pietro Mancuso – Salvatore’s son, mute.

Fortunata (Aurora Quattrocchi) Represents the older generation, rejects American “standards.”

Rita – Young Italian immigrant under Salvatore’s watch, pledged to marry an American.

Angelo Mancuso – Salvatore’s son.

Salvatore Mancuso (Vincenzo Amato) – Chases dream of America and immigrates with family.

### Strategies

#### Level One: Understanding

Providing Context/Time and Space: What does the director do to recreate the immigration story of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian family? Consider language, mannerisms, customs, dress, scenery, technology.

Themes: Dream v. Reality, Issues Facing Women, Ellis Island: Portal or Filter

Generic Questions: List 5 things you learned, 5 things you already knew, 5 things you want to know more about.

Specific Questions: What kind of tests do the immigrants endure? What do the tests evaluate? Which tests are valid? Invalid? Why?

When examined, what does Salvatore try to prove to the Americans? What does Luce try to prove?

**Level Two: Analyzing**

Hollywood vs. History: what was and was not real “T” chart

Compare with Documentary (Consider *Forgotten Ellis Island*)

Barkan, Elliott Rober, and Michael Lemay *U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Laws and Issues: A Documented history*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999.

Compare/Juxtapose with Primary Sources: Utilize ellisland.org to compare photographs, stories, and ships’ manifests

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR IMMIGRATION SERVICE		RECORD OF ALIENS HELD FOR SPECIAL EXAMINATION								
S. S.		Dante Alighieri (Continued)		arrived		December 8, 1917		1917		
SEX	IMM. NO.	NAME	MANIFEST		CAUSE OF DETENTION	DETENTION	ACTIONS OF THE			
			GROUP NO.	NO. PASSENGER			DEF.	EXAM.	REL.	
F	27	Arabi, Carmela	211	9	1	Un. to read	3:40	Shoe		
F	28	Spadolà, Gerarda	206	29	1	LFO-E.D.-Med.C.	3:35	Stesel Kscatre		
M	29	Iuongo, Francesco	2	27	1	LFO-Cert	3:40	Bauer Fitchell	17	10/13/28
M	30	Salzarulo, Gerardo	204	10	1	LFO-Cert	3:40	Scarinci Fiennery		
F	31	Pontamatta, Gasarina	202	29	1	LFO-Cert	3:40	Smith Andrews	17	10/12/28
F	32	Vasirca, Agata	209	18	1	Un. to read	4:00	Trout Conno		
M	33	Milazzo, Camillo	210	1	1	Under 16-unacc	3:45	Scarlett Brown	17	10/16/28
F	34	Castagnon, Rosa	210	24	26	LFO	3:30		17	10/13/28

**Level Three: Evaluating**

Evaluate the director’s portrayal of the immigrants’ dream and journey. Was he fair? Did immigrants really think money grew on trees in America? What was “The Immigrant Dream”?

Why does the director end the film at Ellis Island?

Read the following piece of Emma Lazarus’ sonnet, *The New Colossus*. Does the director’s portrayal of Ellis Island affirm or oppose the sentiments captured in the sonnet? Was Ellis Island a portal or a filter?

Emma Lazarus, *The New Colossus*, “Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she With silent lips. “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-tost me, I lift my lamp beside the Golden Door.”