



Poem As Sculptor

A one day lesson about Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus,” and the Statue of Liberty
Time requirement: 50 - 60 minutes

Lesson Overview:

In 1883, poet and literary critic Emma Lazarus wrote a poem that has become an unofficial motto of the United States. When she first wrote the poem it was read publicly at an auction to raise money for the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. After the fundraiser, it was almost lost to history. Emma died four years after writing the poem a generation later it was affixed to the Statue itself. Since that time the poem and the Statue have become an inseparable declaration, offering a vision of the Statue of Liberty as a “mother of exiles,” welcoming newcomers from around the world. In this lesson, students will learn how Emma Lazarus’ “The New Colossus” influenced the world’s perspective of the Statue of Liberty. They’ll learn how the two pieces work in tandem to make a statement about America, a nation of immigrants.

Essential Question:

- How does historical context shape the art created in a particular era?
- How can art help express and define a nation’s identity?

Materials:

- Powerpoint presentation, “Poem as Sculptor” (This presentation contains images of the Statue of Liberty and a timeline about its history, the text of “The New Colossus,” hyperlink to the Emma Lazarus video, and further prompts to use throughout the lesson.)
- The Statue of Liberty observation sheet (1 copy per student - OPTIONAL)
- “The New Colossus” (1 copy per student)
- Emma Lazarus identity chart (1 copy per student)
- FOR OPTIONAL HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT: Writing the *new New Colossus worksheet (1 for each student)*

Notes for the teacher:

Throughout this lesson plan, you’ll find prompts to display certain slides from the presentation during particular lesson steps. You’ll also find suggested times for each lesson step.

You may find it helpful to watch the Emma Lazarus video before teaching the lesson to gain background information about the Statue of Liberty, Emma Lazarus and “The New Colossus.” However, we recommend that you allow students to construct their knowledge about these topics throughout the lesson.

Lesson Steps

1. Activate student thinking (5 minutes):

- a. Distribute the Statue of Liberty observation sheet & Display Slide 2.
- b. Allow students 5 minutes to complete the “Do Now” activity.

Study the image of the Statue of Liberty. On your observation sheet, record at least 5 details you notice about the statue. Then write 1 - 3 sentences answering the question “What do you think is the message the statue sends to people arriving, and the world, about the United States of America?”

2. Students share responses to the “Do Now” activity (3 - 5 minutes).

Either have students share their observations and responses with the whole class or with a partner.

3. Teach the historical context of the Statue of Liberty (5 minutes).

- a. Display Slide 3: A Timeline of the Statue of Liberty.
- b. Have students read each point on the timeline.
- c. Ask: “Do any of the facts about the statue’s history change your opinion about the statue’s message? Why or why not?”

4. Define Important Terms in “The New Colossus” (5 minutes)

- a. Display Slide 4: “The New Colossus” Important Terms.
- b. Option A: Display one important term at a time using slide 4 of the presentation. Allow students to define the terms for their peers or simply read the definitions of the terms from the slide.

Option B: Distribute copies of “A New Colossus.” Read through the important definitions provided on the right side of the poem.

5. Read “The New Colossus” (5 minutes).

- a. Display Slide 5: “The New Colossus”.
- b. Invite students to read the poem silently as you read it aloud to the class.
- c. Allow students time to read the poem a second time to themselves.

6. Discuss “The New Colossus” (5-7 minutes) :

- a. Ask: What words, phrases or images from the stand out to you? Why?
OPTIONAL: Display slide 6. Identify Lazarus’ use of the following poetic devices:
 - Allusion -- Lazarus makes reference to the ancient Greek Colossus.
 - Personification -- The statue cries
 - Metaphor -- the “huddled masses” are equated with “wretched refuse”
- b. Ask: How does the poem make you feel?
- c. What is the message of this poem?

6. Watch the Emma Lazarus video (15 minutes).

- a. Display Slide 7: “A Poem in Context.”
- b. Distribute the “Emma Lazarus Identity Chart.”
- c. Explain: Just like students briefly learned about the historical context of the Statue of Liberty, now they will learn about the historical context of “The New Colossus.” In particular, they will watch a video that describes the author of the poem, Emma Lazarus, and the aspects of her world that led her to write the famous poem.
- d. Direct students to record facts about Emma Lazarus’ culture, political climate, economic climate, social climate as they watch the video.
Use the hyperlink on the slide to play the Emma Lazarus video for students

7. Discuss the video (5 - 7 minutes).

Lesson Steps

7. Discuss the video (5 - 7 minutes).

- a. Ask: What aspects of Emma Lazarus' life and times led her to write "The New Colossus"?
- b. Ask: Did learning more about the poet influence your interpretation of the poem? If so, how? If not, why?

8. Summary/ Final Analysis (5-7 minutes).

- a. Display Slide 8: Poem as Sculptor.
- b. Explain to students that they've learned that Emma Lazarus wrote her poem about The Statue of Liberty. Ask students to respond (either in writing or in discussion) to the following question: How does "The New Colossus" influence the way you view the Statue of Liberty? What message about the United States of America do the two pieces of artwork together send to the world?

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT:

- a. Display Slide 9.
- b. Distribute the "Writing the *New New Colossus*" worksheet).
- c. Explain: You are being asked to write a new "New Colossus." *Your poem will take the place of Emma Lazarus' poem on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. Your poem should, together with the Statue of Liberty, send a message to the world about America, a nation of immigrants. Your poem should be between 14 - 20 lines long and should include the use of at least 2 poetic devices.*
- d. **Visit our website for more information about how students can submit their original poems to our national poetry contest.**