

The New ‘New Colossus’

Do you know the name Emma Lazarus? She was a Jewish woman born in New York in 1849, she was a direct descendant of some of the earliest Jewish settlers in our country. Emma was a poet and in 1883 she wrote the poem *The New Colossus* to help raise funds for the construction for the pedestal, or base for the Statue of Liberty. The poem helps us to think about the experiences of immigrants, it helps us to remember how moving to a new country was a very difficult and scary process.

In this activity we are going to take a closer look at the poem and try writing our own version.



What You Need:

- Paper and pencil

What to do:

- Read over *The New Colossus*, we have included an image of the plaque inside the Statue of Liberty but you can also read it [here](#). Think about the words Emma chose to use, what words jump out to you? How do you think they would make a new immigrant feel?
- Now try writing your own version of the poem, what words do you think would be of comfort to new immigrants? Don't worry too much about making your poem rhyme, think more about the ideas and feelings you want to communicate.

Bonus Activity: Now try creating a poem for new immigrants today, how would it vary? What challenges do you think immigrants today might face?

THE NEW COLOSSUS.

NOT LIKE THE BRAZEN GIANT OF GREEK FAME,
WITH CONQUERING LIMBS ASTRIDE FROM LAND TO LAND;
HERE AT OUR SEA-WASHED, SUNSET GATES SHALL STAND
A MIGHTY WOMAN WITH A TORCH, WHOSE FLAME
IS THE IMPRISONED LIGHTNING, AND HER NAME
MOTHER OF EXILES, FROM HER BEACON-HAND
BLOWS WORLD-WIDE WELCOME; HER MILD EYES COMMAND
THE AIR-BRIDGED HANDS THAT TWIN CITIES FRAME.
"KEEP ANCIENT LANDS, YOUR STORIED POMPS!"

CRIES SHE

WITH SILENT LIPS. "GIVE ME YOUR TIRED, YOUR
POOR,

YOUR RUDDED MASSES YEARNING TO BREATHE FREE,
THE WRETCHED REFUSE OF YOUR YEEMING SHORE,
SEND THESE, THE HOMELESS, TEMPEST-TOST TO ME,
I LIFT MY LAMP BESIDE THE GOLDEN DOOR!"

THIS TABLET, WITH HER SONNET TO THE BARTHOLOMI STATUE
OF LIBERTY ENGRAVED UPON IT, IS PLACED UPON THESE WALLS
IN LOVING MEMORY OF

EMMA LAZARUS

BORN IN NEW YORK CITY, JULY 22^d 1849

DIED NOVEMBER 19th, 1887.

The New Colossus

By Emma Lazarus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

"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 to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

The New Colossus is a type of poem called a "sonnet," which has a very strict set of rules. Interested in trying to write your own sonnet?

[Here's a great resource to get you started!](#)