

## Handout 4: Emma Lazarus



Citation: Kurtz, W. (n.d.). Emma Lazarus [Photograph]. Retrieved from <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/99402695/>

Emma Lazarus, an American poet, is best known as a spokesperson for the Jewish people. Her faith in America as a safe place for all the suffering people of the world is expressed in her poem inscribed on the Statue of Liberty in New York, New York. Emma Lazarus was born in New York City on July 22, 1849. Her father was a wealthy sugar merchant. Emma and her sisters were educated by private tutors and spent their summers at the seashore in Rhode Island. Emma read many of the books in her father's library and quickly learned other languages, including Italian, French, and German. At the age of eleven she began writing poems.

Citation: Encyclopedia of World Biography. (2016). Emma Lazarus Biography. Retrieved from <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Ki-Lo/Lazarus-Emma.html>

### **The New Colossus**

Emma Lazarus, New York City, 1883

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

Citation: Lazarus, E. (1883). *The New Colossus*. Retrieved from <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~cap/liberty/lazaruspoem.html>

"The 'Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World' was a gift of friendship from the people of France to the people of the United States in 1886 and is a universal symbol of freedom and democracy." (National Park Service, 2012)

"Just as Lazarus' poem gave new meaning to the statue, the statue emitted a new ideal for the United States. Liberty did not only mean freedom from the aristocracy of Britain that led the American colonists to the Revolutionary War. Liberty also meant freedom to come to the United States and create a new life without religious and ethnic persecution. Through Lazarus' poem, the Statue of Liberty gained a new name: She would now become the 'Mother of Exiles,' torch in hand to lead her new children, the immigrants, to American success and happiness." (University of Virginia, n.d.)

Citations:  
National Park Service. (2012). *Experience America's Best Idea*. Retrieved from <https://www.nps.gov/getaways/stli/>

University of Virginia. (n.d.). Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus" (1883). Retrieved from <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~cap/liberty/lazarus.html>

Keeping the poem, the bio of Emma Lazarus, and your work in mind, think about the following questions:

Today, are we as a nation still prepared to take in "your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free"? Why or why not? Write your answer on the back of this page.