



Key Stage 3-5

YEARNING TO BREATHE FREE

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
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!"

by Emma Lazarus

The New Colossus is the poem you can find on a plaque at the Statue of Liberty (www.nps.gov/stli/index.htm) in New York City harbour, the first port of call for many immigrants to America. What message is 'this mighty woman' communicating, and to whom?

If you had to condense the message of the poem into three words, what would they be? What colour is this poem? If you had to act out this poem without any words, how would you do it? What gestures would you use? How would you arrange yourselves into groups or tableaux?

Do you have any relatives who emigrated to America in the past? If not America, then what about family members who came to the UK, or those who left? What are their stories? What might their first days in their new homes have been like?

If the Statue of Liberty is The New Colossus, who is the Old Colossus?

Start here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colossus_of_Rhodes. What message is Colossus communicating, and to whom? If you could commission a statue to stand outside your school gates, what sort of statue would you have? What poem on a plaque would you fix to it? Write that poem.

Imagine reading this poem to Donald Trump. How do you think he would react?



An activity by the Poetry School. The Poetry School is a national organisation running classes and projects to teach poetry.

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