

EMMA'S POEM

GRADES 1-4

Written by Linda Glaser
Paintings by Claire A. Nivola

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Story Summary

Emma's Poem is the story of Emma Lazarus, the author of the poem "The New Colossus." This poem is about the Statue of Liberty. Emma lived in New York, and was part of a wealthy family. Her life changed when she visited Ward's Island in New York Harbor. There, she met very poor immigrants who journeyed to America from Europe in hope of a life of freedom. She was working to help the immigrants when she heard about a statue being constructed in France as a gift to the United States, and that it would stand in the New York Harbor. She was compelled to write this poem which has become an important part of our history.

Objectives

1. To develop research skills related to a specific topic.
2. To develop written language skills.
3. To develop an appreciation for poetic expression.

Before viewing the video

Ask the children if they have ever heard of the Statue of Liberty. Locate New York Harbor on a map. Review basic facts about the Statue of Liberty. Tell the children they will meet the author of this book, Linda Glaser, when they view the video. They will also see footage of the actual Statue of Liberty. This is about the woman who wrote a very famous poem about the statue. Her name is Emma Lazarus and this book is all about her and the reasons for writing this poem.

Questions to ask after viewing the video

1. By looking at the paintings in this video, how can you tell that this story took place a long time ago?
2. When Emma visited Ward's Island, what kind of people did she meet?
3. Why did these people make such a long trip to come to America?
4. What did Emma do to try and help these people?
5. Why was Emma asked to write a poem about the Statue of Liberty?
6. How was this statue sent to America?
7. How long did it take for Emma's poem to become a part of the Statue of Liberty?
8. Why did the poem that Emma wrote become so important to immigrants coming to America?

Activities

1. Have the children learn the most famous lines of the poem, starting with "Give me your tired, your poor...." Ask them to tell what these words mean to them.
2. Encourage research activities related to the Statue of Liberty. Visit the school library for books about immigration and the statue. For older children, give them a specific area to research, i.e., other poetry about the statue, construction of the statue, the statue today.
3. Have the children write about their favorite part of the statue and what it means to them (i.e., the crown, the torch, the face.)
4. Discuss the qualities of Emma Lazarus as an individual and the reasons for someone writing a book about her.