



Shared Inquiry™ Lesson Plan for “The New Colossus” by Emma Lazarus

(recommended for grades 6–12)

What Is Shared Inquiry?

This lesson plan helps students explore the poem “The New Colossus” over two class periods, using a method of learning called Shared Inquiry.

In Shared Inquiry, readers help one another understand a complex text by sharing their questions and ideas about it. Sustained interaction with the text through several readings and collaborative discussions helps students develop their own interpretations of the poem. Then, optionally, students can apply their understanding of the poem to contemporary issues.

Session One (30–45 minutes total)

Prereading Activity (10 minutes)

Student Learning Objective: To activate and build background knowledge and personal connections related to a text

1. Tell students they will be exploring a poem that was written in 1883 to help raise funds for the Statue of Liberty. The poem was engraved on a bronze plaque that was mounted on the statue’s pedestal twenty years later. Students may be interested to know that the comma after “Keep” was accidentally left out on the plaque.
2. Engage students in a short conversation about **one** of the questions below to help them begin thinking about the concept of liberty. Ask follow-up questions (see box on page 2) to help students explain, support, and connect their ideas.
 - The Declaration of Independence states: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” *Why do you think “liberty” would be considered such a basic right?*
 - The word “liberty” is a noun, which is a person, place, thing, or idea. *Which of these four categories best describes liberty for you? Why?*

Overview

- **What Is Shared Inquiry?**
- **Session One**
 - » Prereading activity
 - » First reading
 - » Sharing questions
- **Session Two**
 - » Rereading activity
 - » Shared Inquiry discussion (poem)
- **Extensions** (*optional*)
 - » Shared Inquiry discussion (contemporary issue)
 - » Argumentative writing



First Reading (3–5 minutes)

Student Learning Objective: To listen to the text read aloud and to note places that prompt confusion, curiosity, and other reactions

1. Provide each student with a copy of the poem.
Have students follow along as you read the text aloud or play a recorded version such as this one:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=JCfZgm8Xuis
2. Have students listen to the poem again. This time, ask students to write a question mark beside words they don't know or wherever they have a question (such as places where they're confused or curious about something).

Sharing Questions (15–30 minutes)

Student Learning Objective: To ask and prioritize questions about a text

1. Ask students to share their questions. Tell them that all questions are welcome.
2. Record questions (without attempting to answer them) so that everyone can see them. Note each student's name after their question.
3. Help students work together to answer basic comprehension questions, one at a time, especially those about vocabulary.
4. Let students know that they will revisit any factual questions that require resources beyond a dictionary to answer, as well as any open-ended questions that may have more than one answer, in the next session.

Follow-Up Questions

Throughout all Shared Inquiry activities, guide students' thinking by asking questions. Respond to students with follow-up questions, such as those below, to help them explain, support, and connect their ideas.

- *What do you mean when you say that?*
- *Would you tell us more about your idea?*
- *What part of the poem makes you think that?*
- *Where do you see that in the poem?*
- *Do you agree with what [student] said?*
- *Can you add to [student's] idea?*

Session Two (35–40 minutes total)

Rereading Activities (15–20 minutes)

To help students move beyond basic comprehension of a text, have students revisit the text using one of the following activities.

Option 1: Close Reading with Note-Taking Prompts

Student Learning Objective: To compare and explain notes made during rereading in order to explore different responses to the text

1. Have students reread the poem, marking words they think have a **positive** connotation with a **P** and words that have a **negative** connotation with an **N**. Post this open-ended prompt so all can see it as they reread:
 - P = Positive connotation
 - N = Negative connotation



2. Have students take turns sharing with the class examples of what they have marked and why (“I marked ‘brazen giant’ with an *N* because . . .”).
3. Each time a student shares that they marked a word a certain way, ask if anyone marked it differently. Ask follow-up questions to help students explain their reasoning.

Option 2: Researching Questions Using Informational Texts

Student Learning Objective: To read and apply information from outside resources to answer questions about the text

1. From the list of students’ questions from Session 1, have pairs or small groups of students select one or two questions that require research or supplemental reading.
2. Have students use reliable resources or reference materials to find answers to the questions. The list below offers some suggestions.
3. Ask students to reread the poem, noting any new reactions or questions they have based on the information they found.

List of Suggested Sources

Colossus of Rhodes

www.ancient-origins.net/ancient-places-europe/colossus-rhodes-ancient-greek-mega-statue-003249

Statue of Liberty

<http://www.history.com/topics/statue-of-liberty>

http://www.al.com/living/index.ssf/2016/07/happy_birthday_emma_lazarus_gi.html#1

Emma Lazarus

<https://www.nps.gov/stli/learn/historyculture/emma-lazarus.htm>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/46550#about>

U.S. Immigration

<http://www.history.com/topics/u-s-immigration-before-1965>

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/Annual-Number-of-US-Legal-Permanent-Residents>

Shared Inquiry Discussion (20-30 minutes)

Student Learning Objective: To develop a sound interpretation of a text by generating ideas, supporting those ideas with evidence, and responding to others

For the discussion, students will need their copy of the text and the Shared Inquiry Discussion page provided in this lesson.

As the leader, you will open the discussion with a question that has more than one reasonable answer that can be supported with evidence from the text. This opening **focus question** is



comprehensive enough to sustain a deep exploration of the poem, and you will want to return to it from time to time so that students consider it from many angles.

1. Have students arrange their seats or desks in a circle, and sit with them in the circle.
2. Pose the focus question (in box, right) and have students write it on their Shared Inquiry Discussion page.
3. Give students time to write an initial answer and a piece of evidence. Encourage them to look back at the poem for evidence. Make sure everyone has written something before you begin the discussion.
4. Begin the discussion by asking the focus question. Invite a volunteer or call on a student to share the first idea. Ask follow-up questions (see box on page 2) to help students explain, support, and connect their ideas.
5. Introduce related questions (see box) to deepen the discussion, to direct attention to other parts of the text, or to encourage students to consider other aspects of the focus question.
6. As the discussion winds down, have students complete the Shared Inquiry Discussion page by writing the answer they have arrived at after sifting through and weighing all the ideas and evidence they heard.
7. After all students have written their final answers, you may wish to have students share them. Ask students to tell the group how their answer changed or grew as a result of the discussion.

Focus question: According to the poem, why does America’s symbol of liberty offer a “world-wide welcome”?

Related questions:

- Why does the poem open by saying the statue is “Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame”?
- Why is the new colossus called “Mother of Exiles”?
- Why does she cry, with silent lips, “Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!”?
- Why does she want “the wretched refuse of your teeming shore”?
- Why does the poem end with “I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”?

Extensions (optional)

After listening to their peers’ ideas and developing their own interpretation of the poem, students are prepared to apply those ideas to a related contemporary issue or write an argumentative essay.

Option 1: Discussion of a Contemporary Issue (15–20 minutes)

1. Use the basic directions for a Shared Inquiry Discussion above.
2. The focus question on page 5 asks students to make a judgment and allows them to draw on their own experiences and values. For this reason, expect the support for their answer to rely less on textual evidence and more on personal opinion.

Ask follow-up questions such as these to probe students’ thinking: *What makes you think so? Do you agree or disagree with the ideas in the poem? With other students?*



Option 2: Argumentative Writing (20–30 minutes)

Students can extend their thinking about the text or the contemporary issue by writing about either focus question after discussing it. Writing in response to a discussion focus question enables students to use the work of discussion to inform their essays.

1. Have students use their Shared Inquiry Discussion page as the basis of a rough draft. Encourage them to include:
 - Ideas and evidence they heard in discussion that strengthen and support their answer
 - Counterarguments they heard in discussion that they should respond to

You may wish to have students work with a partner during this step.

2. Using your own writing process, have students write an essay answering one of the focus questions. They will need to state a claim and explain their reasoning. When writing in response to the focus question about the text, students should use mainly textual evidence to support their argument. When writing about the contemporary issue focus question, students should use both textual evidence and personal values and experiences to support their ideas.

Focus question: Do the words on the Statue of Liberty still represent America today?

Related questions:

- Why are liberty and freedom considered core American values?
- What changes have occurred since the poem was written that most affect your thinking?
- Do you think America is more or less united today than it was when the statue was erected?

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Shared Inquiry Discussion

Name: _____

Text: _____

Focus question: _____

Your answer before the discussion: _____

How did the discussion affect your answer? Did it change your mind? Provide additional support for your answer? Make you aware of additional issues? _____

Your answer after the discussion: _____

What in the text helped you decide on this answer? _____



The New Colossus

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