



The **Statue of Liberty**

The Statue of Liberty is an American icon! Originally a gift from France, this famous statue is now a symbol of New York City and of America itself.

The Statue of Liberty was sculpted by French artist Frederic Bartholdi. Bartholdi was inspired to create her after hearing French politician, Edouard de Laboulaye, say that France should give the United States a present to celebrate its first 100 years as a country. Bartholdi wanted to make the sculpture depict Libertas, the Roman goddess of freedom to celebrate the ideal that America was founded upon. After visiting the U.S. many times, he decided to have the statue put on an island off of Manhattan called Bedloe's Island (now called Liberty Island). He chose Bedloe's Island because ships sailing into New York harbor sailed past the island, where the statue could welcome new visitors to the country.

Construction began on the statue in 1876. That same year, the arm and the torch were displayed at the Centennial Exposition, a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, to help stir up interest in the project. The statue itself was completed in 1884, but there was still more work to be done! As the project went on, more money was needed to help finish the statue's construction. Newspaper publisher Joseph Pulitzer used his newspaper to ask his readers to pitch in money, and a fundraising committee was formed. Local lawyer William Maxwell Evarts, who was the head of the committee, organized a charity auction to raise money. He asked writer Emma Lazarus to write a poem that could be sold in the auction. Inspired by work she had done with new immigrants, she wrote 'The New Colossus.' The poem is now on a plaque in the base of the pedestal.

On October 28, 1886, the statue was dedicated in an official ceremony. Since Ellis Island was located so close to the statue, it quickly became a symbol of freedom and hope. Over 12 million immigrants saw it as they entered America for the first time. To this day, Lady Liberty and her torch represent the freedom America offers to new citizens and long-time residents.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEAL?

An ideal is a concept or principle that someone values and respects. For instance, the ideals of a movie director might be creativity or good storytelling. The coach of a sports team might look for talent, hard work and cooperation in his players. When people began settling in the United States, they valued freedom – something they felt they didn't have back home.

The Statue of Liberty represents freedom, one of the most important ideals of the Founding Fathers. If you were to create a statue to represent the U.S. today, what ideal would you want it to convey and why?

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THINK ABOUT IT

The Statue of Liberty is positioned as if she is walking forward. Why do you think it was important for the sculptor to show her moving forward?

Lady Liberty's tablet says July 4th, 1776 in Roman numerals. What would you write on her tablet if you had the chance? Make it as inspiring, topical or silly as you like!

