

Lady Liberty: A Biography
by Doreen Rappaport
illustrated by Matt Tavares
ISBN: 978-0-7636-2530-6
Grades 3-7, Ages 8-12

ABOUT THE BOOK

Lady Liberty: A Biography tells the story of the creation of the Statue of Liberty from its initial conception by Édouard de Laboulaye in 1865 to its unveiling in New York Harbor in 1886.

Told through historically accurate, poetic vignettes by Doreen Rappaport and illustrated with Matt Tavares's magnificent images, this is a powerfully moving, authentic portrait of our national symbol and of the many people involved in making the dream of its construction a reality.

This book is a valuable resource for teachers, parents, librarians, students, and people everywhere who care about the story of this American icon, a story that is in turn made up of smaller stories, of the people from diverse walks of life who helped build her. We hope this guide will help you share the compelling tale of Lady Liberty's creation.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Vocabulary

Before students begin reading, distribute this list of words or write them on the board. Read each word to the class, one at a time, and ask for a volunteer to tell what the word means. Then have a student look up the word in the dictionary and read its definition aloud.

liberty	coppersmith
dictator	architectural engineer
sculptor	publisher

Understanding the Tasks at Hand

Ask for volunteers to name all the jobs they can think of that are needed to create buildings or public structures. Start a chart listing those jobs, and distribute copies of the chart to the class. Have students add to the chart as they read, listing the job titles of people who contributed to the Statue of Liberty.

Responsive Writing

Ask students to write in a journal as they read, noting their thoughts about the book and discussing the ideas it presents. To get them started, have them respond in writing to these pre-reading prompts:

1. What is your first impression of the book, based on the title and cover?
2. What do you already know about the Statue of Liberty?
3. What you think you might learn from the book?

Comprehension Questions

After students have finished reading, have them answer these questions about the book, either in writing or aloud in class:

1. Why did Édouard de Laboulaye want to give America a gift?
2. Where is the Statue of Liberty located? Why was this location selected?
3. Why do you think some people mocked the statue?
4. Why do you think soldiers who fought in the Civil War gave so much money to fund the Statue of Liberty?
5. Why do you think Joseph Pulitzer called some rich people “croakers” and “laggards”?
6. Describe the process used by the builders to create the Statue of Liberty. How was the final construction like a puzzle?
7. What were the obstacles overcome by those working to create this statue and build it in America?
8. How many years of planning and work did it take to make the Statue of Liberty a reality?

Discussion Questions

You may choose to read these discussion questions aloud in class or to distribute them to students for written responses

1. The American Revolution is said to have inspired the French Revolution, and many French soldiers fought and died for American liberty as well. The long-standing belief in freedom that connects France with America is symbolized by the Statue of Liberty, a gift from one country that fought for freedom to another that did the same.

In the book, structural engineer Gustave Eiffel says that Lady Liberty inspires him and quotes a famous slogan of the French Revolution, saying that “*liberté, égalité, and fraternité* are in the air.”

liberté (lee-bair-TAY): liberty

égalité (ay-GAH-lee-TAY): equality

fraternité (frah-TAIR-nee-TAY): brotherhood

Why does Eiffel use those words in reference to the Statue of Liberty? How are the ideas of liberty, equality and brotherhood important in *Lady Liberty*?

2. How does the Statue of Liberty serve as a symbol for America and the world?
3. What does *liberty* mean to you in your daily life?
4. On page 9, what words offer clues to the meaning of the word *colossal*?
5. What does the word *makeshift* mean when used to describe the workers’ tents (page 18)? What does this word tell us about the conditions for workers on Bedloe’s Island?
6. Writers and illustrators use different tools— words or art — to tell a tale. Look at each illustration in *Lady Liberty* and discuss the way it helps readers understand something important about that part of the story.
7. The author allows each person to tell his or her story as if it is happening right now. Do you think this is a successful storytelling technique? Why do you think the author told the story this way? How does this narrative method differ from other books that focus on historical events?
8. When you saw the foldout of the Statue of Liberty for the first time, what did you feel? Describe how you might have felt if you had been there in person to see the statue unveiled. What do the other illustrations of the Statue of Liberty make you feel?
9. Choose the illustration that you think best shows the main idea of the book and explain why you selected it.

ACTIVITIES

1. Have each student imagine himself or herself as a statue of liberty. Ask students to draw pictures of what they might wear or hold and to label what those things represent to them.
2. Invite students to write about what they might have done to support the creation and installation of the Statue of Liberty. To get them started, offer a partial list of jobs they could have performed.
3. Have students pick their favorite person in the book and write a letter to that person explaining how they feel about him or her. Work with students to develop criteria for their letters.
4. Turn the book into a Readers' Theater script to perform. Choose characters from the book and edit their sections to create parts. Add the role of a narrator or narrators to help the audience understand the transitions between characters.
5. Have students create a chart listing the monuments they know of. First ask them to name the location of each monument and what it commemorates. Then have them learn more about selected monuments and record their findings on the chart.
Name of monument
Where is this monument?
What does this monument commemorate?
What else we learned about this monument
Invite them to choose the monument that has the most meaning to them and write a poem or story about it.
6. Break the class into small groups and ask each group to conceptualize a statue or other type of monument they would like to create for their local community. Have each group decide what their monument would represent, why it would be important, how they would design it, what it would be made of, where it might be located, and how they could best promote it. Consider sending the proposed monument ideas to the city council or local newspaper.
7. Invite students to create an oral history project by interviewing immigrants in their area. A list of questions might include:

When did you first come to the United States? How did you get here? Whom did you come with? How long have you been here? Did you come to America to seek liberty? Did you find it? What was the best thing about arriving in the U.S.? What sorts of challenges did you face? What did you miss most about the country you left? Have you been able to go back to visit? What is your favorite of the foods you first ate in the U.S.?

Students may want to gather interviews into a book and include photos of the people they interviewed.

8. Study the poem "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus (1883) using the activities and questions below.

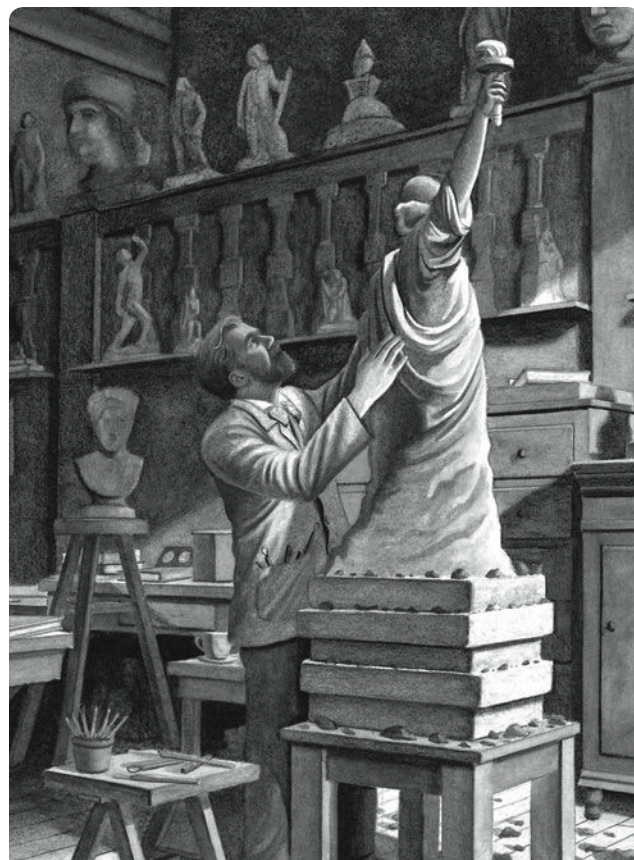
Ask students to list any unfamiliar words, look up their meaning, and talk about their use in the poem.

Note that in the Emma Lazarus piece in *Lady Liberty* (page 17), Jews are described as "persecuted." Ask students what this word means, based on its context in the sentence. Then ask how the concept of persecution is reflected in "The New Colossus."

Ask how the word *yearning* relates to the way immigrants felt about the Statue of Liberty and coming to America.

Explain that the poem is a sonnet, and discuss the rules and rhymes of that type of poem.

Ask students to compare the Colossus of Rhodes to the Statue of Liberty. Explain that the Colossus, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was a giant statue of the Greek god Helios, placed at the entrance to a harbor. Note that it was the largest statue of the time, with its legs placed on either side of the entrance to the harbor, as if guarding the land, and was reported to have held a flame.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions and activities are designed to help move students beyond the book by inspiring them to research concepts or people introduced in it.

1. Remind students that Gustave Eiffel was responsible for another famous structure. Ask them to tell what it is, what its reception was like, and what it symbolizes now.
2. Note that the Pulitzer Prize, which began to be awarded in 1917, is given to people who excel in their fields. Invite students to find out more about the Pulitzer Prize, including who has received it in the past and why.
3. Present students a national map on which you have indicated the location of some important monuments around the country. (Examples might include the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, Mount Rushmore, the USS *Arizona* Memorial at Pearl Harbor, and St. Louis's Gateway Arch.) Ask each student to select a monument, conduct research about it, and write a brief description of it, including specifics such as its size, the date it was constructed, what it commemorates, and so forth. Use this information to create a key for the map. You may want to post the map in a central location in your school or have students use the map to give presentations to other classes.
4. Inform your class that in the years between 1892 and 1954, nearly 12 million people came to the United States to seek freedom and opportunity. Note that there are many websites and books that offer extensive information on this important time. Invite students to start with the Ellis Island Immigration Museum website, where some may be able to find information about the arrival of an ancestor.
5. On the last page of *Lady Liberty*, the author lists her research sources and additional books to read. Have students use these resources to find out more about the Statue of Liberty and the era in which it was constructed.

Teachers' guide written by Dr. E. D. Woodworth, freelance writer and educational consultant. Illustrations copyright © 2008 by Matt Tavares.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Doreen Rappaport has written many books of fiction and nonfiction for young readers, specializing in thoroughly researched multicultural history, historical fiction, retellings of folktales and myths, and stories of those she calls the “not yet celebrated.” In 1965, she went to McComb, Mississippi, to teach at a freedom school, and the experience changed her life. She says, “I met extraordinary ordinary people — black Americans who had been deprived of rights that I took for granted and who were threatened with death every day. Their courage inspired me. They were heroic. I knew there had to be many more unknown heroes, people who helped change history. I set out to recover and write about this lost history.” Her trilogy on the experience of black Americans includes the books *No More! Stories and Songs of Slave Resistance*; *Free at Last: Stories and Songs of Emancipation*; and *Nobody Gonna Turn Me 'Round: Stories and Songs of the Civil Rights Movement*. Doreen Rappaport divides her time between New York City and a village in upstate New York.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Matt Tavares grew up surrounded by books and reading. From the time he was very young, his mother read to him every night, and his family made countless trips to the public library. Years later, as a junior in college, he rediscovered his love of picture books and decided to try to make his own. “I thought back to my own childhood and tried to make a book that I would have liked when I was a kid,” he says. From this was born *Zachary's Ball*, a classic picture book about a boy's baseball fantasies coming true. Matt Tavares is also the author-illustrator of two more baseball books, *Oliver's Game* and *Mudball*, and the illustrator of such classics as *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and *Iron Hans*. He lives with his wife and their two daughters in Ogunquit, Maine. Catching a foul ball at a Red Sox game, he says, remains a fantasy.