The Beacon of Freedom

"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!"
-Emma Lazarus

“…the torch was a beacon of freedom. From the moment I saw it, I felt transformed, like a new person. I knew that whatever I would become would be up to me. In America I would have a fair chance to make the most of my life.”¹ These words were found in the diary of a young Polish immigrant who arrived in New York Harbor in 1910. They expressed what so many felt as they approached American shores. For millions of people immigrating to the United States in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s, the Statue of Liberty represented a chance for a better life. It represented freedom. Officially named Liberty Enlightening the World, it was for many the very first thing they saw as they approached America’s shores.

This icon of hope was a gift to the people of the United States from the people of France. It was paid for by donations from the French, and it was given in recognition of the strong friendship established between France and the United States during the American Revolution. French sculptor Frederic Auguste Bartholdi was selected to design and create this gift. Bartholdi, knowing that people around the world saw America as “the land of opportunity,” wanted to create a lasting inspirational symbol that embodied the American dream. He more than succeeded. Standing 151-feet from foot to torch tip and weighing 225 tons, Bartholdi’s Lady Liberty, with broken chains at her feet, continues to represent freedom, hope, and democracy to the world’s “huddled masses yearning to breathe free.”

The classical features of the statue suggest that Bartholdi fashioned his symbolic work after Libertas, the ancient Roman goddess of freedom. Lady Liberty is clothed in the Roman stola or robe and wears the roped sandals of the ancient Romans upon her feet. Her raised right foot symbolizes a nation moving forward. Her left foot defiantly tramples the broken shackles of oppression and tyranny. The seven spikes on her crown represent the seven seas and the seven continents, saying to the world that America’s shores are open to all of the world’s “tired, poor, tempest-tossed, and homeless.” In her left hand, Lady Liberty clutches the tablet of knowledge, inscribed with the date July 4, 1776. And, finally, held in her right hand, the beacon of freedom—the burning torch of enlightenment and liberty—stretches high above her head, guiding those who have fled their homelands in search of a better life.

While the statue itself was designed and created in France, the United States was responsible for building the foundation and the granite pedestal upon which this historic landmark rests. It was decided that the statue would stand on what was then Bedloe’s Island (now known as Liberty Island) in New York Harbor, across from Ellis Island². Construction of the pedestal, however, was significantly delayed due to a lack of financial resources. Americans

¹ From “Through the Eyes of Immigrants” at http://www.history.com/minisites/ellisisland/
² Ellis Island served as an immigrant-processing center between 1892 and 1954. Approximately 12 million people passed through Ellis Island seeking refuge, freedom, and opportunity in America.
were simply not willing to open their pocketbooks. It took Joseph Pulitzer’s\(^3\) harsh public criticisms of the wealthy and the middle class to motivate people to contribute. Two years after the statue was completed and one year after she arrived on American soil, the foundation and pedestal were completed. It took four months for the statue to be reassembled atop the pedestal. The 151-foot statue soared over 305-feet into the sky once secured on her granite foundation. On October 28, 1886, the dedication of the Statue of Liberty, formally known as Liberty Enlightening the World, took place.

It would not be until 1912, however, that Emma Lazarus’ poem, “The New Colossus,” would be inscribed in bronze at the base of the Statue of Liberty. Lazarus actually penned the sonnet two years before the statue was completed. Upon seeing the statue, even in its incomplete stage, she was overwhelmed by its symbolic meaning. So inspired was she by the promise of this masterpiece that in her poem she compared it to the statue of the Greek god Helios, the Colossus of Rhodes.

### 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*
*Glows 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!"

-Emma Lazarus

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\(^3\) American journalist and publisher, Pulitzer was committed to raising the standards of the profession. Pulitzer was the founder of the Pulitzer Prizes. Today the most prestigious prize in American journalism is named after him.
1. What is the primary purpose of “The Beacon of Freedom”?
   - A to convince people to move to America
   - B to provide details about the Statue of Liberty
   - C to explain the meaning of Lazarus’ poem
   - D to tell the story of a young immigrant from Poland

2. Read the opening lines from the passage.
   “…the torch was a beacon of freedom. From the moment I saw it, I felt transformed, like a new person. I knew that whatever I would become would be up to me. In America I would have a fair chance to make the most of my life.”

   The lines above suggest the speaker is feeling all of the following except
   - A hope
   - B anticipation
   - C excitement
   - D fear

3. Which of the following best states the main idea of the passage?
   - A Lady Liberty served as the inspiration for Emma Lazarus’ well-known poem, “The New Colossus.”
   - B France gifted the Statue to the United States as a symbol of friendship.
   - C The Statue has been a symbol of freedom and hope for people around the world for over 100 years.
   - D Bartholdi based his masterpiece on the Roman goddess of freedom.

4. Which word or phrase best defines the word embodied as it is used in the passage?
   - A represented
   - B suggested
   - C identified
   - D described

5. Which word or phrase best defines the word defiantly as it is used in the passage?
   - A wearily
   - B timidly
   - C rebelliously
   - D hesitantly
6. Which of the following messages is presented in both the passage and the poem?
   - A Lady Liberty represents peace between France and the America.
   - B The United States will defend its allies against tyranny and attack.
   - C People were transformed when they saw the bright torch of liberty.
   - D America’s shores are open to all people throughout the world.

7. The last line of Lazurus’ poem reads, “I lift my lamp beside the golden door!” The golden door is a symbolic reference to which of the following?
   - A the door leading to the statue
   - B the gate to the shores of America
   - C a land of hope and opportunity
   - D a life of great wealth and happiness

8. Which literary technique does the author of the passage use to create interest and introduce the main idea?
   - A anecdote
   - B repetition
   - C circular reasoning
   - D personal opinion

9. Based on the passage, which is the most logical inference the reader can make about the Statue of Liberty?
   - A The United States did not want to accept the statue from France.
   - B The details of the statue are intended to be highly symbolic.
   - C Bartholdi’s work is one of the greatest pieces of art in the world.
   - D The statue is no longer considered significant or important.

10. According to the passage and/or the poem, what was the primary reason people immigrated to America in the late 1800s?
    - A They were brought here to work in factories.
    - B They were looking for a better way of life.
    - C They were forced out of their homelands.
    - D They were seeking freedom of religion.

11. Lazurus’ poem tells the world to send which group of people to America?
    - A the criminals
    - B the leaders
    - C the scholars
    - D the oppressed
12. What is inscribed on the tablet of knowledge?
   ○ A the date of America’s independence from England
   ○ B the date France offered aid to the United States
   ○ C the date France delivered the statue to America
   ○ D the date of the first Presidential election

13. Compare and contrast immigration to this country at the turn of the 20th century to immigration to this country at the turn of the 21st century. Use specific details to support your assertions.
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13. Reading and Social Studies – Connect information in text to experience and to current events. Answers should reflect a clear understanding and knowledge of social, political events occurring in the late 1880s/early 1900s as well as knowledge of the current state of political and social events that effect US immigration policies. For example: America at turn of 20th century offered freedom from persecution, freedom to worship, opportunities for jobs – people were oppressed in many countries, starving, unemployed. Current situation: may include border issues, economic crises which are keeping people from immigrating in such large numbers; may discuss general feelings of ill will toward America by some countries; may discuss strong desire by many from poor countries to immigrate to America – similar to that of 100 years ago. Clear topic sentence, details which support thesis, and conclusion; conventions should be part of rubric.