



Anchor Work: Statue of Liberty

To meet Social Studies Standards, third graders are expected to “know the histories of important local and national landmarks, symbols, and essential documents that create a sense of community among citizens and exemplify cherished ideals.”

The Statue of Liberty is a powerful example of such an enduring symbol. She holds a unique place in the hearts and imaginations of millions as a symbol of comfort and hope, but most of all, of freedom. With Emma Lazarus’ poem on her base, she reminds citizens of our more generous nature.

The Statue of Liberty and her poem constitute a worthy anchor work for achieving third grade Visual and Performing Arts Standards also. By studying it, students can gain understanding of the artist’s choices for the statue. They also have an opportunity to explore concepts of freedom, theirs as well as those of the immigrants who drew inspiration from this icon as they passed her and proceeded through Ellis Island.

In the following series of lessons, students will use various theater and visual arts skills to convey their notions of freedom as well as the statue’s history and symbolism. They will convey their knowledge as they:

1. create a cardboard Statue of Liberty with gussets so it will stand within a triorama illustrated with appropriate details of her surroundings;
2. physicalize new vocabulary found in Lazarus’ poem as a lead-in to understanding it and writing about what it means to them;
3. take a turn in the “Hot Seat”, being interviewed by the class in the character of the Statue of Liberty, Emma Lazarus, or a new immigrant to the U.S. whose story they find compelling;
4. design, paint, and assemble a tempera mural depicting the Statue of Liberty on its pedestal with the NYC skyline in the background, and New York Harbor with an inbound passenger ship approaching, loaded with newcomers. The class will also create a soundscape to accompany the mural as it is shared with other students or parents.
5. Finally, in teams, the class will write and perform scripts for a video documentary that tells the statue’s story, explains some symbolic elements, and introduces Emma Lazarus and her moving sonnet.