

# Lesson Thirty-Five

## Miss Liberty

### LESSON IDEA

To explain the origin and significance of the Statue of Liberty.

### PREPARATION

Read "During the Week" and prepare copies of the Lazarus quotation. Practice the pronunciation of Laboulaye (La-boo-lay) and Bartholdi (Bar-tol-de) so the names can be cited accurately during the lesson.

**S**EVERAL LESSONS AGO we discussed a proud American beauty who is now more than 200 years old. Do you remember who she was? ["Old Glory," our nation's flag.] Tonight we will learn about another famous beauty who weighs-in at 225 tons! Can anyone guess her name?

Formally, she is called "Liberty Enlightening The World," but most of us know her as the Statue of Liberty. Her home is an island in the harbor near one of our greatest cities. Does anyone know the names of the island and the city?

This proud lady stands as a towering statute on Liberty Island (formerly Bedloe's Island) in New York harbor. She has greeted millions of immigrants who have come to America seeking freedom. She holds in her right hand a torch that symbolizes liberty; in her left, a tablet inscribed with the date July 4, 1776, the birthday of our Republic. At her feet lie the broken chains of slavery and bondage. She is dressed in the robes of an ancient goddess, and her head is adorned with a crown befitting a queen. Though she stands motionless, she seems a moment ago (in the words of one American author) to have "stepped forward, and halted, and raised her torch into the sky. There is

energy without effort and movement combined with repose. Her aspect is grave almost to sternness; yet her faultless features wear the serenity of power and confidence. Her message is the sublimest ever brought to man, but she is adequate to its delivery.... No words are needed to interpret her meaning, for her gesture and her countenance speak the universal language, and their utterance reaches to the purest depth of the human soul."

Does anyone know why the Statue of Liberty resides in New York harbor? Was she a government project created by an act of Congress? Was she a gift from a foreign country? Was she a bequest from an American millionaire who arrived on our shores as a penniless immigrant? [The answers given by each family member will indicate how much each knows about this famous American landmark.]

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Statue of Liberty is that she is one of the most statues ever made, yet she was designed, built, and paid for by thousands of individual citizens in two nations: France and America. She is an outstanding example of individual responsibility and cooperation. Neither Congress nor the French national government planned her design or appropriated tax money to finance her construction. Can you imagine what would happen today if it were proposed to give some other freedom-loving nation a statue symbolizing a mutual regard for freedom? How many

voices would likely be raised urging Congress to pass legislation appropriating tax money to pay for it? How many would contend that the government must coordinate the project because individuals cannot cope with such a huge undertaking? [For high school students, this is an opportunity to



The Statue of Liberty

point out that “central planning” by government, a dictum drummed daily into students in government schools, is not essential to a large project. If one of the most gigantic statues in history can be constructed and put in place by the citizens of two nations, with no planning and financing by their central governments, so can many other undertakings.

Some younger children may also be able to comprehend the many flaws in the “government-must-plan-and-finance-everything” dictum.]

**T**HIS UNIQUE PROJECT was launched in France in 1865 when a small group of artists, politicians, and men-of-letters met at the home of Edouard de Laboulaye (A-dwar de La-boo-lay) near Versailles (Ver-sigh). Laboulaye, who loved and understood the American dream of liberty more than any other Frenchman since Lafayette, led the group.

Many Frenchmen had learned the hard way what liberty was not. The French Revolution, which was fought under the banner of liberty, had proved a sham. The champions of liberty who expected that revolution to produce freedom found, to their dismay, that they had been duped. They were once again enslaved by enslaved by their rulers.

The American Revolution had a had a different outcome, because the principles of liberty were meant to be honored and implemented, not employed merely as a deceptive slogan leading to yet another tyranny. Laboulaye, who had great

respect for the American ideals, had not only studied the Constitution, but had written Political History of the United States (a learned paper on the youth of Benjamin Franklin) and Paris in America (a novel). In the latter, one of the characters expressed a conviction that apparently echoed Laboulaye’s thinking: “The folly of love and the madness of ambition are sometimes curable, but no one was ever cured of a mania for liberty.”

From the mind of this determined French patriot, and those of similar persuasion who met with him in 1865, came the momentous decision to have France give the United States a great token to symbolize their mutual love of liberty and eternal friendship. It was to be a people-to-people, not government-to-government, gift.

Auguste Bartholdi (O-goost Bar-tol-de), a young sculptor and one of those who attended the meeting, was chosen to create the liberty monument. He was advised to travel the length and breadth of America, meeting and conversing with its people and leaders, before attempting to design a sculpture that would depict the spirit of liberty.

Bartholdi did so, but the plan for the monument was entered his mind virtually as soon as his feet touched American soil. It was the sight of the busy New York harbor, and the majesty of the city and what it represented, that inspired him to visualize a liberty statue at America’s doorstep.

“The picture that is presented to the view when one arrives in New York is marvelous ... ” he wrote. “It is indeed, the New World, which appears in its majestic expanse with the ardor of its glowing life ... Yes, in this very place shall be raised the statue of Liberty, as grand as the idea which it embodies, casting radiance upon the two worlds ... ”

After Bartholdi returned to France in 1875 to begin work on the monument, Laboulaye began organizing the fund-raising effort. Contributions flowed in from ordinary citizens, deputies, cabinet ministers, and chambers of commerce. The city of Paris gave \$2,000. Other cities also made contributions, but no money was requested or received from the French national government. In all, some 5,000 Frenchmen provided the money to pay Bartholdi and his workmen, and purchased the 100 tons of copper and 125 tons of steel required for the project.

#### FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

Freedom (or liberty) is not a new concept. Since ancient times it has been the dream of many, but the realization of few. From the beginning, recorded history has been replete with battles between freedom and tyranny. For a brief survey of this ancient struggle, we suggest the printed text of “More Stately Mansions,” a speech delivered by Robert Welch in 1964. It may surprise you to learn that the Romans devised history’s first authentic republic and that Sparta was ruled as tyrannically as any communist or other collectivist state today. “More Stately Mansions” was included as a chapter in Mr. Welch’s book *The New Americanism*. Though out-of-print, the book may be available at your local library. [Can we scan/post the speech on our website?— rw]

**I**T HAD BEEN AGREED earlier that America would build the pedestal, so in January 1877 a committee was organized for that purpose. One of the many artists, authors, and songwriters who volunteered their talents to the fundraising effort was Emma Lazarus, a young New Yorker. Having watched so many refugees arrive on tramp steamers, she expressed her feelings about the Statue of Liberty that would grace the harbor in a poem whose last few lines have become almost as famous as the statue itself. Here is what she wrote in 1883:

### 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-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Today, thousands of visitors to Liberty Island still thrill to the words of that poem. Do you know where a visitor to the Statue of Liberty would find these famous words? [In 1903 the poem was cast in bronze and placed on the interior wall of the pedestal.]

In that same year, ground was broken for the 89-foot granite pedestal would serve as the foundation for the towering statue. But the next year (1884), when only 15 feet had been completed, work stopped. Funds were exhausted.

To solve the crisis, many thought that government aid would be required. Bartholdi had finished the statue, they pointed out. Indeed, it was being crated for shipment to America. How embarrassing it would be to keep such a magnificent gift kept waiting for a pedestal that depended on the whim of public enthusiasm to finance its

construction. Taking tax money from the national treasury was the answer, they concluded. If people would not give the required sums voluntarily, then the money must be extracted from them forcibly by the government.

What is wrong with that line of thinking? How does it conflict with the concept of liberty? [Encourage family discussion. Point out that forcing people to give when they are not willing to do so is a characteristic of totalitarianism, freedom. Moreover, there was no provision of the U.S. Constitution that authorized the use of federal tax dollars to finance pedestals for statues.]

Fortunately, Congress in 1884 had a keen appreciation of, and respect for, the restraints that the Constitution placed on its authority. A pedestal appropriation bill died in committee. And in New York, Governor (later U.S. President) Grover Cleveland vetoed a local appropriation for the pedestal on grounds that it was, in his opinion, unconstitutional. Are Congress and other public officials as careful with our money today? What about the huge amount of tax dollars devoted to sundry contemporary monuments, such as the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts? Can you cite other examples of the unconstitutional expenditure of federal tax dollars? [This is an especially appropriate subject of discussion for high school students. Many examples may be found in issues of *The New American* and in daily news stories. Have several in mind if you open this point for discussion.]

The problem of funding the pedestal was eventually solved in a typical American way by Joseph Pulitzer, an immigrant from Hungary who had benefited enormously from the freedom and opportunities inherent in the American system. Pulitzer had recently purchased *The New York World*, which had the largest circulation of any newspaper in the United States. On March 15, 1885 the World launched a campaign to raise \$100,000, contributing \$1,000 itself and calling for donations, large and small, from Americans in every state. Because the statue was a gift from the French people, not its Government, Pulitzer believed that money for the pedestal should come from the ordinary people of our nation, not from its government or millionaires. A cartoon that repeatedly accompanied a special column devoted to Statue of Liberty news portrayed Uncle Sam,

hat in hand, collecting contributions. The World encouraged theatrical, musical, and sports events to raise money. It also publicized a project of the American Committee to sell statuettes of "Liberty" for one to five dollars each. Sheet music composed in honor of the statue was lithographed and sold. And other newspapers joined the crusade, soliciting contributions from readers, and donating funds themselves.

*The World* printed the names of all contributors. For example, on July 12, 1885 the list included "Little Wallie, May, Van Velsor, and Little Georgie, 10 cents each ... Mix's fifth contribution. 1 cent ... Total to date \$92,090.83."

On August 11th, less than five months after the campaign began, the World was able to send the American Committee a check for \$101,091 — more than \$1,000 over its original goal. A total of more than 120,000 Americans had contributed, 80 percent in amounts of less than \$1.

Fourteen months later, one October 28, 1886, the Statue of Liberty was unveiled and dedicated to a cheering audience of thousands. Of all the words spoken since that memorable day, perhaps the most succinct were by French envoy Jules J. Jusserand in 1916:

Not to a man, not to a nation the statue was raised, not to a man, famous and useful as he may have been, not to a nation, great as she may be. It was raised to an idea — an idea greater than any man or any nation, greater than France or the United States — the idea of Liberty!

### **Concluding Thought**

The Statue of Liberty, one of the largest statues in the history of the world, was designed, built, and financed by individuals in two nations. There was no central government financing or planning. It was a gift from one people to another, not from one government to another.

### **Looking Ahead**

The dream of the French people for liberty remains a dream. It has not realized by the French Revolution, even though that revolution was fought in the name of liberty. Next week, we will learn why the French Revolution was fraudulent, why it failed, and why it resulted in dictatorship.

Ask family members to memorize the last six lines of Emma Lazarus' poem "The New Colossus." Have a contest and give a reward to the first family member to memorize the lines.