

MODULE 3:

Page 131: The Statue of Liberty

A symbol of freedom

For more than a century “Miss Liberty”, as it is affectionately nick-named by New Yorkers, has stood in New York’s harbour as a symbol of freedom in the world. This gigantic copper statue is also a celebration of French-American friendship.

This is its history: in 1865 a French historian, Edouard de Laboulaye and the French architect Frederic Auguste Bartholdi discussed the idea of giving a great monument of Liberty to the United States from France as a gift and a sign of friendship.

In 1867 Bartholdi went to America and decided where to put the Statue: Beldos’s Island, in New York harbour. At the entrance to the New York city, the statue would welcome people from all over the world with its torch of Liberty. In 1875 after some discussion, the French agreed to pay for the statue and the Americans for the base and then the constructions began. Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, the designer of the metal frame of the Statue built it in a suburb of Paris.

In 1884 the Statue was completed and shipped to the United States in 214 cases aboard the French ship Isère. The parts were reassembled in New York in 1885, where on 28th June it was unveiled¹.

The Statue, which 151 feet and 1 inch tall and weighs 450,000 pounds², was one of the first sights to greet the ships carrying immigrants and refugees³ as they arrived in the USA. It soon became for them the symbol of America’s promise of better living conditions.

On a marble tablet inside the base of the statue, there are words of a poem written by Emma Lazarus, a New York-born poet of Jewish origin, in 1883. The words are greeting to “the masses”, that is all the people suffering from poverty and oppression in Europe, giving them the opportunity to start a new life in this free and democratic country.

¹ Inaugurata

² 151 feet 1 inch = 46.05 metri;

450,000 pounds=204,000 kilogrammi;

1 feet = 30.48 cm;

1 inch = 2.54 cm;

1 pound = 453 g.

³Rifugiati

Activities:

The biography of the Statue of Liberty

1. Give a brief summary about the Statue of Liberty, using the dates given on the left: (the first is already given)

1865: the French historian Edouard de Laboulaye, had the idea of giving a great monument to the USA as a sign of friendship

1867:

1875:

1884:

1885:

1986:

2. Answer these questions:

1. Where does the Statue of Liberty stand?
2. What does it represent?
3. Why was it put at the entrance of the New York harbour?
4. When did the construction of the Statue begin?
5. Where was it built?
6. Who designed the metal frame of the Statue?
7. How was it shipped to the USA?
8. How tall is it? And how much does it weigh?
9. What did the Statue of Liberty represent to the immigrants and the refugees as they arrived in the USA?
10. What opportunity did the USA give to these people?
11. How old was the Statue in 1986?
12. How old is "Miss Liberty" now?