

The Statue of Liberty

By Alison Fuller

In the late 18th century, two countries won their quests for freedom from tyranny; America and France. America was able to hang on to their fledgling democracy, however France could only maintain theirs for about a decade. The Statue of Liberty is unique because we Americans didn't create her. She symbolized what the French thought of our country.¹

The idea for the statue began at a dinner party hosted by Professor Edouard Rene Lefebvre de Laboulaye in 1865 ~ the Civil War in America has ended and slavery has been abolished. Laboulaye is an expert in American history and is recalling how the French had sent help to America to gain its independence. At the dinner party, it is suggested that the French create a monument for the people of America. In attendance is a French sculpture named Frederic-Auguste Berholdi. It was decided that Berholdi would create this monument.²

Berholdi was not new to gigantic sculptures. He had recently visited Egypt with an offer to build a large lighthouse with a feminine design. The offer was ultimately turned down. This design was the first rendition of our Torch Holder.

Berholdi traveled to the US, found an ideal location, and began promoting his idea. It was later decided that France would build the statue and the US would build the base.

Several models were made of the statue in increasing size. Three models were used for Lady Liberty: Berholdi's mistress, a French painting, and his own mother. France used a traditional form of metal work called Repousse, which involved making a cast, a wooden frame mold, and then hammering the metal into the mold. The art of Repousse eventually provided difficulty in our renovation of the statue a hundred years later, as many of the artisans who knew the art were killed during WWII, and we did not have the original molds.

There was concern for the stability of such a large hollow statue, so an engineer named Eiffel was brought in. He built a large iron frame with ribs, which were riveted to the insides of the copper skin. The statue was completed in France on May 21, 1884, 20 years after the original dinner party, which inspired the idea. There is much symbology with the statue including; the tablet in her hand, the date on the tablet, broken chains at her feet, the seven rays on her crown, and the poem (1903) at her base.

Completion was originally planned for the American Centennial Celebration, but due to funding issues in both lands, the completion was delayed ten years. Thanks to Joseph Pulitzer's editorials, the US was able to garner enough funds to complete the base one year after the statue arrived.

On October 28, 1886, Lady Liberty was dedicated amid a boatload of suffrage protesters, a rainstorm, and a premature unveiling. President Grover Cleveland, 600 dignitaries (plus 2 wives), and about a million spectators were in attendance.

Statistics:

Statue weight: 156 tons (including copper at 62,000 pounds, steel framework at 250,000 pounds), height 151'1'' from base to tip of torch; 305'1'' from the ground to the tip of the torch. Hand length is over 16 feet, nose is 4'6'' long. Pedestal weight is 54 million pounds.

Accounts match up with facts, both primary and secondary.

¹The Statue of Liberty by Hal Marcovitz, American Symbols and their Meanings; Mason Crest Publishers Copyright 2003 ISBN 1-59084-022-4

²Statue of Liberty, article by Jessica Soffer; Volume 14, Issue 2, February 2004; publisher Mark Levine; Kids Discover; Copyright 2004

TEACHING IDEAS:

Share primary source pictures/documents with your students and have them analyze them, do a jigsaw with small groups ~ could make a waterfall book ~ (each group covering a specific area to research then share ~ funding, construction methods, political climate/relations for France/America, background, symbology, timeline, etc..), study the poem "New Colossus" as a close read, study the propaganda historically used with Lady Liberty.

Statue of Liberty:

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/symbols-us/pdf/teacher_guide.pdf

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/programs-exhibitions/teaching-literacy-through-history-units-and-lesson-plans> (need a free membership ~ site is loaded with teaching LA through history lessons)

Statue of Liberty Documentary by Ken Burns and accompanying lesson plan:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRQf9P_idEc (available for purchase from Amazon)

<http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/statueofliberty/educators/>

"New Colossus" poem:

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/statue-liberty-bringing-new-colossus-america#sect-introduction>

<http://www.ohranger.com/statue-liberty>

Primary source documents websites:

<http://www.archives.gov/education/>

<http://blogs.archives.gov/education/2013/05/30/propaganda-posters-and-the-common-core/>

<http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=bays;g=moagrp;xc=1;q1=statue%20of%20liberty;rgn=full%20text;view=image;cc=bays;seq=0165;idno=bays0002-3;node=bays0002-3%3A4>

Worksheets for analyzing primary source documents:

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/index.html>