

The life and impact of
emma lazarus on
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The statue of liberty is an iconic feature of the United States. People all over the world travel to New York City and go directly to the historic statue.

Costumes of the green woman are made, people dress up like the statue and hope tourists take pictures with them in exchange for money. Key-chains, tours, basically anything you could think of can be related to the statue.

However, the Statue of Liberty is more than just a tourist attraction and a symbol to put on T-Shirts. The statue's torch lights the way to freedom showing America the path to liberty. At the bottom of the significant statue, it says, " 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!" (1).

Emma Lazarus was the constructor of these words that will forever stand with America. Lazarus, born on July 22, 1849, was a poet in New York. She was born into a wealthy family that was descended from Sephardic Jewish Americans. Her family was large; her parents Moses and Ester Lazarus had seven children. Her father Moses gained wealth through the sugar refining business. Therefore, Emma was " educated by private tutors with whom she studied mythology, music, American poetry, European literature, German, French, and Italian" (2). Through her impeccable education she was able to write poetry with ease. Her family was also able to move high in society and was able to afford a mansion in Rhode Island.

Lazarus' parents supported her interest in poetry immensely. Her father even published a book of her poetry called " Poems and Translations Written Between the Ages of Fourteen and Seventeen." Two years later, Lazarus sent a copy of her first book to Ralph Waldo Emerson. He then became her

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mentor and a persistent reader of her works. Emerson helped her excessively throughout her writing career, despite a meager mishap. Lazarus had hoped and thought that her poems would appear in Emerson's anthology "Parnassus." However, she was angry when she discovered her work was nowhere in the anthology. Despite their fight, Lazarus continued looking at Emerson as a mentor and even commended him in some of her works.

Although Lazarus' father was very supportive of her works, he was incredibly strict over her. He had obsessive control over his daughter and that is why she never got married. Even though she never got married, Emerson romantically captivated her. Despite her love for her mentor, she continued single until she passed away at the young age of 38 from Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Lazarus was very well known during her lifetime because "she published more than 50 poems in popular magazines, including Lippincott's and The Century. She also published a book of poetry, called Admetus and Other Poems, in 1871, and a novel, called Alide: An Episode in Goethe's Life, in 1874" (3). Included in her abundance of works is "The New Colossus," which is what she is best known for today and the poem that is inscribed on the Statue of Liberty.

Despite being an impeccable poet, Lazarus is known for more than just that. She was an advocate for anti-Semitism as well as working with immigrants. She believed that it was time for actions rather than words. During her lifetime, she traveled to Europe twice and spoke out against anti-Semitism.

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When she was back in New York, she worked with Jewish refugees. In accordance with all her efforts, she was able to help start the Hebrew Technical Institute, which provides vocational training for new Jewish immigrants.

She visited at the New York harbor and witnessed the Russian refugees and the horrific conditions they lived in. She also volunteered at the Hebrew Immigrant Aid society. Growing up wealthy and high in society she was aware of how little she could relate to the immigrant's struggles. " While working among Russian immigrants, she would sometimes joke, " What would my society friends say if they saw me here?"" (4).

The best and most productive time for Lazarus was the early 1880s. In accordance to all her publications in magazines and essays, she put out a highly admired volume of translations. During this time she also spoke out as a Jew and American writer concurrently. Due to this, she had to face the challenge of being part of two often-conflicting cultures. To make matters even worse, she had unequal treatment in both cultures by being a woman as well.

Lazarus impacted America immensely with the writing of her words on the Statue of Liberty. Immigrants from all over the world enter through Ellis Island and will see her words, tourists will see her words, and even New Yorkers will see her words. Her words will forever be there.

In the magazines that she published in, she also talked about stereotypes that ignited prejudice against Jewish people. She also used the magazines to arouse passion for a new Jewish homeland in Palestine.

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Lazarus was important in the beginning of the Zionist movement. The Zionist movement is a nationalist political movement of Jews that supports the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland. She advocated for this thirteen years before the first official use of the term Zionism. The movement eventually led to Israel being the territory for Jewish people in 1948, all thanks to Lazarus who eventually ignited to movement.

I relate to Lazarus immensely because I am also a Jewish woman. Lazarus's writing was influenced by being Jewish and gave her the passion to speak out for their rights. Knowing that she was an advocate for anti-Semitism means a lot to me and I'm sure to any other Jew. I grew up Jewish and went to Hebrew school for about 8 years as well as having a Bat-Mitzvah. Reading about how passionate she is about Judaism as well as freedom and relief for everyone is eye opening.

Being Jewish is also a large part of my life. I engage in activities at UCF for Jewish students such as Hillel and Chabbad. We learn all about Judaism, however I've never heard of Emma Lazarus until now. I feel like a better Jew knowing she advocated for such important aspects in the Jewish religion.

I am finally eighteen years old and eligible to go to Israel on Birthright. Birthright is a free trip for Jewish people ages 18-26 to go to Israel and experience the land and their Jewish identity. Without Zionism, without Lazarus, I would never have this opportunity.

Although Emma Lazarus died at the age of 38, she did leave an impact on America. She had memorial issues filled with tributes to her as many people mourned her early death. As well as the Zionist movement, she also sparked <https://assignbuster.com/the-life-and-impact-of-emma-lazarus-on-america-through-the-construction-of-the-iconic-statue-of-liberty-in-new-york-city/>

inspiration in activists throughout the years. “ The Emma Lazarus Federation of Jewish Woman’s Club” is also a tremendous impact that she left. In this club, its members fought anti-Semitism and racism and also celebrated Jewish culture. This club therefore carried on Lazarus’ motives and her ideals were brought forward for the years to come.

Emma Lazarus is an impeccable woman. She fought for what she believed in even against all odds of Anti-Semitism and the horrific conditions of immigrants. She lived wealthy all her life but did so much to help those who were not as fortunate as her. Whenever I take my trip to Israel I will now feel a deeper connection to the Jewish homeland and learn more about my Jewish Identity.