

What Emma Wrote: The Woman Behind the Words on the Statue of Liberty

By Ann D. Koffsky | Illustrated by N. Tarcán

READING GUIDE

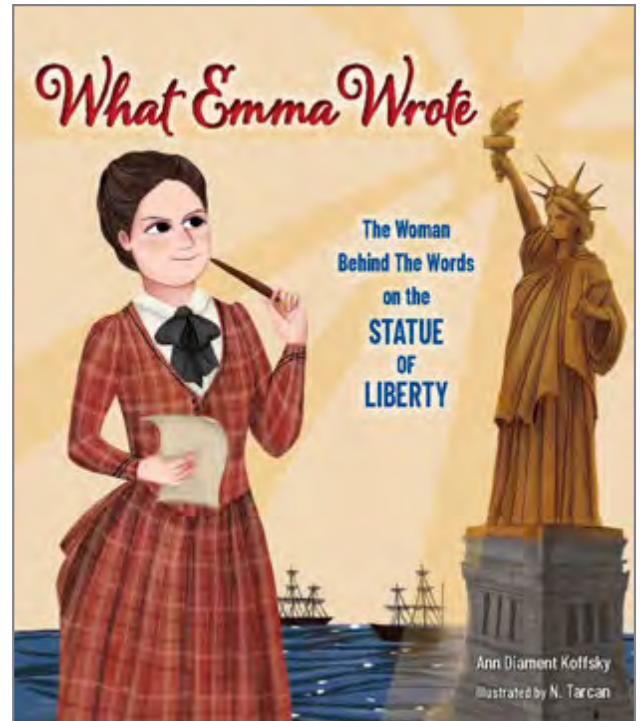
About the Book

With its poetic message of welcome, the Statue of Liberty holds an important and beloved place in American history. In time for anniversary of our nation's founding, this biography of the woman who wrote the now-famous poem on its pedestal has deep relevance for readers today.

Emma loved stories, loved writing poetry, and was curious about the world. When she met poor immigrants arriving in New York City, she knew she had to help. And when she was asked to write a poem about the Statue of Liberty, she imagined Lady Liberty as a mother, welcoming her children home. Her famous poem, "The New Colossus," is still there on the statue's pedestal, sharing its message of welcome with the world.

Ann D. Koffsky is an award-winning author and illustrator of more than thirty books for children, including *The Peddler and the President*, the *Kayla and Kugel* series, *What's In Tuli's Box?*, *Under-the-Sea Seder*, and *Noah's Swimathon*, all published with Apples & Honey Press. She lives in West Hempstead, New York.

N. Tarcán is a Turkish illustrator. She studied photography at Yildiz Technical University, before joining and performing with a circus around the world—from Qatar to Georgia and beyond. When COVID hit, she decided to return to her first love: drawing. Today, she draws inspiration from the small details of everyday life. She lives in Namur, Belgium.



Key Themes:

Immigration, Inclusivity and equality, Religious freedom and the First Amendment, Tikkun olam

ISBN 978-1-68115-719-1

Ages 4–7 years

Use these questions to preface and conclude a reading of this book with children. Encourage them to share their observations as you read the book together, and take time to linger on pages or spreads that generate more discussion.

Before Reading

- Look at the artwork on the cover of the book. Now guess: where do you think this story takes place? When? What do you see on the cover that makes you think so?
- Have you ever seen the statue on the cover before? What do you already know about it?
- What is the woman holding? What do you think that tells you about her?
- After reading the title and looking at the cover illustration, describe what you think the story might be about.

After Reading

- In the story, we learn that Emma loved writing, but she was looking for something “more” to write about. Why do you think she wanted more? Why wasn’t writing about kings and goddesses enough for her?
- The last page of this book explains that this story took place in the 1800s. Think about what you know about how people lived in those years. How do you think their lives were different than people’s today? The same?
- Throughout the book, there are illustrations of different spaces: the outside of Emma’s home, the newspaper office, Ward’s Island and more. What do you see in each one that helps you know that the story is taking place in the 1800s rather than today?
- The book describes how Emma’s ancestors were Jewish immigrants. In what ways do you think Emma’s family history helped her decide to help the immigrants she met at Ward’s Island?
- In the last pages of the book, there are lots of facts about the statue of liberty. Which ones did you already know? Which ones were new to you? Which surprised you the most?

Extension Activity: Discover an Immigrant’s Story

Interview someone who moved to the United States from somewhere else, or whose family (like their grandparents or great-grandparents) came from somewhere else.

Ask them:

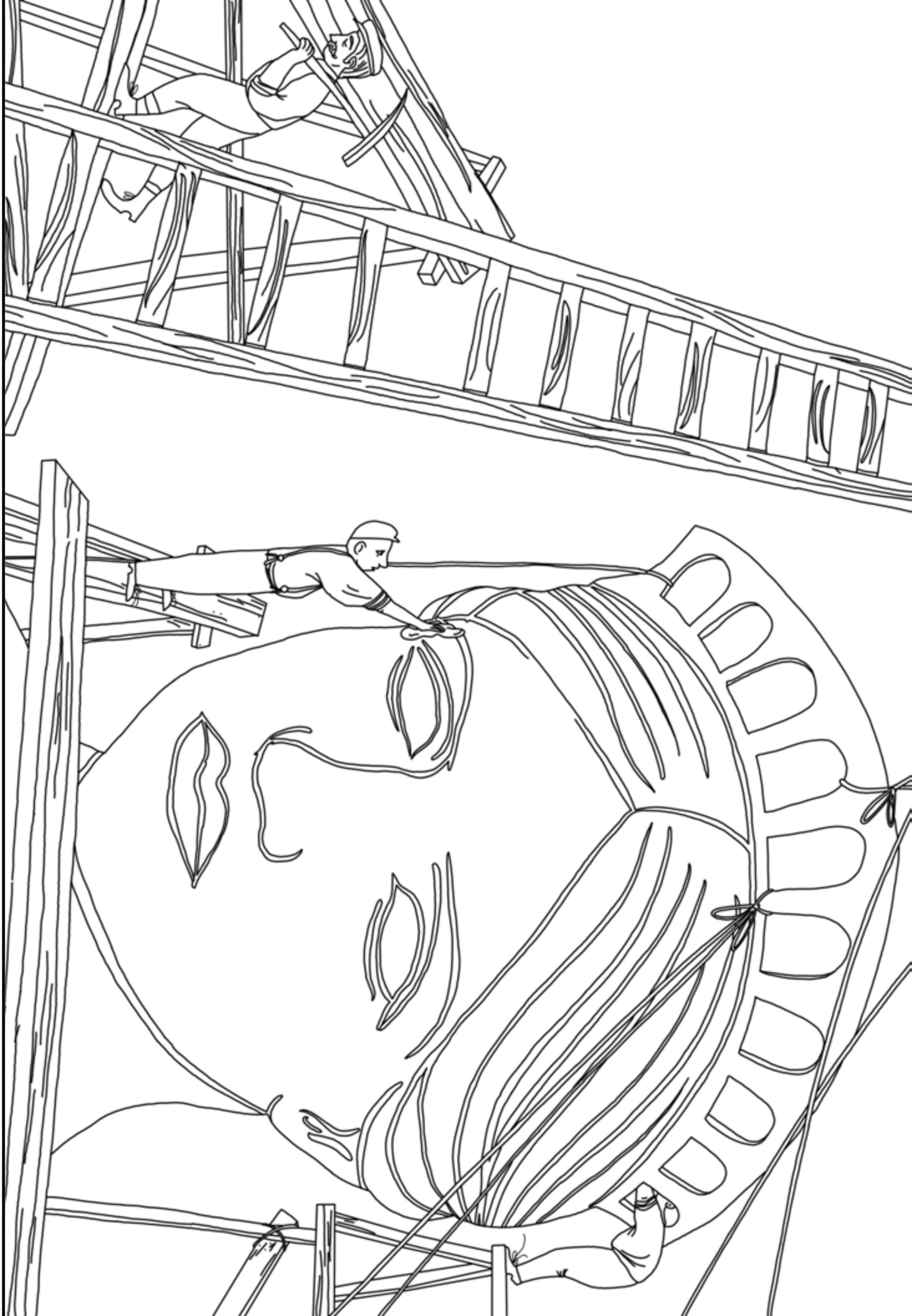
- What country did they or their ancestors come from?
- Why did they choose to come to the United States and not a different country?
- When they arrived, were there people who helped them? If yes, in what ways?
- What do they know about the statue of liberty, and the poem Emma wrote about it?
- What does the statue and the poem mean to them?

Take a photo of yourself with the person you interview. Print it out and glue it onto larger piece of paper. Draw details of their story in the spaces around the photo. Give it to the person you interviewed as a gift.

Discussion Questions by Ann Diament Koffsky

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Character Cut Outs

