

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
Glow 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!

— Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus,” 1883

We will rise from the gold-limbed hills of the west.
We will rise from the windswept northeast,
where our forefathers first realized revolution.
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the midwestern states.
We will rise from the sunbaked south.
We will rebuild, reconcile and recover.
And every known nook of our nation and
every corner called our country,
our people diverse and beautiful will emerge,
battered and beautiful.
When day comes we step out of the shade,
aflame and unafraid,
the new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,
if only we’re brave enough to see it.
If only we’re brave enough to be it.

— Amanda Gorman, from “The Hill We Climb,” 2021

Inspiring words

Two poems, written by two women almost 150 years apart, reach for the soul of the United States.



Emma Lazarus, 34, a Jewish poet, wrote “The New Colossus” in 1883. “Her words, lyrical and poignant, decades later came to define the American vision of liberty,” The Washington Post wrote. It took 20 years to place the poem on the Statue of Liberty, long after her death.



Amanda Gorman, 22, an African-American poet, wrote “The Hill We Climb” for the inauguration of President Biden in January 2021. She is the United States’ first National Youth Poet Laureate, and her reading received critical acclaim in the United States and elsewhere in the Americas.