

We Came to America

Ellen Share

Description: The speaker will use the life of two important Americans, Emma Lazarus and Levi Strauss, to compare and contrast two different immigrant experiences and attitudes. It is especially interesting because they were both from different waves of Jewish immigrants: Emma was from an established Sephardic family in America and Levi from a newly arrived Ashkenazi family. They both made lasting contributions to America. Ms. Share will also mention books that are available on these historical figures.

1. This presentation will present ideas for library programs and in addition provide you with background information about 2 great and influential American Jews. Hopefully, it can spark ideas for you to carry back with you. These are two Award winning books that I recommend. One is for children and the other for adults. I am now introducing you to Emma Lazarus born July 22, 1849 in New York City. Levi Strauss born Feb. 26, 1829 in Bavaria, Germany.

Ellen Share, who was AJL's 2015 Jubilee Conference co-chairperson, holds an MLS degree from the University of Maryland at College Park. She has worked for nearly thirty years as the librarian at Washington Hebrew Congregation managing two libraries at the Temple in Washington, D.C. and one library at the Julia Bindeman Suburban Center. Ellen sees students of all ages, plans a yearly Jewish Book Month Shabbat celebration and runs an active book club which meets four times a year.

2. Lazarus was descended from a notable Sephardic family originally from Portugal. They had been living in America before the Revolutionary War. Strauss and his family had recently arrived in America to escape the antisemitism in Germany. Now meet Emma...
3. My name is Emma Lazarus. My father was a successful sugar merchant and we lived in a large brownstone house in New York City. Tutors came to our house. I learned to speak French, Italian, and German. I loved books and literature. At 18, I had a book of poems published.
4. I have visited Ward Island many times and seen what a frightening "welcoming" station for immigrants. It was once an insane asylum! I have seen firsthand what a difficult life it is for the Jews who come here

from Russia to escape the horrible pogroms. I have great admiration for these people and have come to understand a need for a Jewish home in Palestine.

5. I have been involved with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. The society provides food and clothes for the Russian immigrants and their children. I have helped to establish the Hebrew Technical Institute where teen-age boys are trained to use tools and instructed in other subjects to develop their thinking.

6. The French have donated a statute to the United States in honor of our shared ideas and America's 100th anniversary. The French raised money for the Statue known as Liberty Enlightening the World, and America was needed to raise the money for the pedestal.

7. I received a visitor and was asked to do something that I thought that I could not do: To write a poem on demand. The pedestal fund committee decided as fundraiser that there would be a fundraising auction and art loan exhibition.

8. I thought and thought and finally wrote "The New Colossus:"
"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."

9. Sadly, Emma Lazarus died in 1887 at only 38 years old. In 1903, a woman, Georgina Schuyler arranged to have the five lines engraved on a bronze plaque and placed inside the statue's pedestal. This statue and the poem have been a symbol of the freedom and opportunity of America.

10. You can buy multiple copies of Emma's Poem and read the book together in class and discuss the immigrant experience. Another idea, the librarian can present a monologue and display books on Emma and Jewish immigration for check-out.

11. Levi blue jeans are the quintessential American fashion and are seen and worn around the world. The style is continually being interpreted and reinvented by designers. The jeans were designed and marketed by a German Jewish immigrant who came to California to seek his fortune.

12. Levi named Loeb at birth was born in this house in Germany. Two years after his father died of tuberculosis, his mother, Levi and two sisters immigrated to America and were met by his two older brothers. The brothers had already started a dry goods business named J Strauss Brother & Co.

13. Loeb began to learn the trade of a peddler and by 1850, he was know as Levi among friends and customers. He peddled needles, pins, ribbon and cloth in New York City, upstate New York and Kentucky. He had one pair of socks he washed every night.

14. In 1853, he bid his family farewell and headed for San Francisco where his brother-in-law David Stern had gone into business. Levi started a company importing-clothing, underwear, umbrellas and bolts of fabric and selling them to small stores that were springing up in the West.

15. Miners needed pants made with sturdy fabric to work in the mines. Levi ordered bolts of heavy cotton denim from his brothers in the East to make these pants. The nickname name Jeans came from sailors who were referring to the Italian city of Genoa. Denim was made in the French city of Nimes.

16. Levi received a letter from Jacob Davis, a Reno Nevada tailor. He told about placing metal rivets on pants on the points of strain-pocket corners and at the base of the button fly. He needed a business partner and Levi agreed to take out a patent with him. Blue jeans were born.

17. The demand was great for these reinforced pocket and riveted waist overalls-the old name for jeans. Davis came to San Francisco and Levi and Davis opened a factory. Two horses pulling the jeans apart is one of the most famous fashion trademarks.

18. Levi, who never married, was a humanitarian and gave to charity. He supported the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, the Home for Aged Israelites, Roman Catholic and Protestant Orphanages, and launched scholarships at the University of California, Berkley.

19. Here is the 501 jean which was created in 1890 and became the world's bestselling clothing item. It is still available today. Here is a

recent fashion magazine devoted to women's clothes in denim and shows dresses, skirts, tops and jackets.

20. This award winning book can be a good choice for an adult book club. It is informative, readable and provides background information on Jews in the textile trade. Ideas for a library program for children and adults include a denim fashion show or making collages of denim fashions.