



### TERMS TO KNOW:

Before or after watching this episode, encourage students to define and review the terms below. Students may also want to make their own lists of new vocabulary words and identification terms as they watch.

- Audacious
- Filament
- Irrevocable
- Molten
- Rogue
- Tenement
- Unscrupulous
- Veritable



*America The Story of Us is useful for American History, Social Studies, and Media courses. It is appropriate for 7th grade students and above, and is an excellent resource for professional development.*

## EPISODE 7: CITIES

### INTRODUCTION

Between 1880 and 1930, nearly 24 million new immigrants arrive in the United States. Many go to work building a new frontier: the modern city. The high cost of land in cities like New York and Chicago means the only way to build is up. A new kind of building, the skyscraper, is made possible by steel. Produced on a massive scale, steel production underpins the infrastructure of the modern city.

This new urban frontier depends on the labor of rural migrants and newly arrived immigrant workers to grow. For many, the Statue of Liberty is their first sight of the New World and Ellis Island is the gateway to the American Dream. The lawless city offers opportunities for many and astronomical wealth for a few. Police chief Thomas Byrnes uses his harsh new innovation “the third degree,” to keep a lid on crime.

The millions flocking to urban areas of the U.S. often experience terrible conditions in disease-ridden tenements. Jacob Riis, photographer and reformer, brings their plight to the world with his groundbreaking photographs in the book “How the Other Half Lives.” Workers in new high-rise factories become urban martyrs in New York City’s Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire in March of 1911, as the city struggles to make these new buildings safe. Powered by steel and electricity, the city begins to be tamed and defined by mass transportation, stunning skylines, electric light...and the industrious American spirit.





## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What was the Bessemer steel converter? How did this invention shape U.S. history?
2. Why do you think so many everyday Americans contributed money to help build the Statue of Liberty?
3. What was the “rogues’ gallery” and what was its importance? What were some of the other methods used to curb crime?



4. What was the key factor in Thomas Edison’s success in designing the light bulb? What were some of the new things that were possible because of this invention?
5. Why do you think the Triangle Shirtwaist fire happened? What were some of the results of this tragedy?

Primary Source:

**Emma Lazarus wrote the following poem in 1883; today it is engraved on a plaque in the Statue of Liberty museum. Lazarus was an immigrant to the U.S. who became an advocate for other immigrants arriving on new shores for the first time.**

### THE NEW COLOSSUS

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  
Glowes 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!"

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think the phrase "world-wide welcome" means in relation to immigration in the U.S.? What are some other phrases from this poem that are meaningful?
2. Why do you think this poem is considered an American classic today?

### FURTHER EXPLORATIONS:

What else was going on during this time period? Explore the sites below to learn more about the era of U.S. history covered in this episode.

**Read more about the Reconstruction era in U.S. history**

[www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/reconstruction/index.html](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/reconstruction/index.html)

**Learn about the Dawes Act of 1887**

[www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=old&doc=50](http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=old&doc=50)

**Additional background on Ellis Island**

[www.history.com/topics/ellis-island](http://www.history.com/topics/ellis-island)

**The Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum feature on the Wright Brothers and early aviation**

[www.nasm.si.edu/wrightbrothers](http://www.nasm.si.edu/wrightbrothers)

### PLACES TO VISIT:

Interested in what you saw in this episode? Visiting historic sites is a great way for teachers, students, and families to learn more about the past. Explore these historic sites, or look for local historic sites in your town or city to visit.

**The Statue of Liberty National Monument**  
[www.nps.gov/stli/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/stli/index.htm)

**The Chicago History Museum**  
[www.chicagohs.org](http://www.chicagohs.org)

**The Thomas Edison National Historical Park**  
[www.nps.gov/edis/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/edis/index.htm)

