

# The Melting Pot Myth and the story of America

## Summary

This activity is designed to encourage students to think about how stories shape cultures. Specifically, this activity focuses on the inscription on the Statue of Liberty and the theory of the "melting pot" as a story about the United States. This activity is taken from the lesson plan "The Melting Pot Myth."

## Time Frame

1 class periods of 90 minutes each

## Group Size

Individual

## Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication, Social & Civic Responsibility

## Materials

Text of inscription on Statue of Liberty

## Background for Teachers

Teachers should be aware of the cultural and historical significance of the Statue of Liberty and the story (of America) it represents.

Teachers should have an understanding of the metaphor of "the melting pot" and how it has been used as a way to describe how minorities have been integrated into U.S. culture (assimilation). Teachers should be aware of how this metaphor no longer accurately or fairly depicts U.S. culture. One alternative way U.S. culture has been described is as a "salad bowl" which replaces the melting pot method of assimilation and instead acknowledges and values diversity and difference.

## Student Prior Knowledge

Students should be aware of the concept of the melting pot (even if they cannot define it). Students should understand that the Statue of Liberty is representative of a number of stories about U.S. culture (immigration, the "American Dream," etc.).

## Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will learn how the "melting pot" metaphor has been taught in U.S. History classes, and how this concept is no longer representative of U.S. culture.

Students will learn how to talk about the United States as a diverse and not homogeneous culture.

Students will learn the history of the "melting pot myth" in U.S. culture.

## Instructional Procedures

Present the concept of the "Melting Pot" myth as represented by most U.S. history books.

Ask the class if they have heard of this idea before and what it means?

Even if students are not aware of the concept they should have an idea of what the "melting pot" idea stands for.

Discuss the concept with the class until it is clear that they understand the idea of a "melting pot" as a

way to define a culture.

Either in a handout or on an overhead, have the students read the inscription on the base of the [Statue of Liberty](#). Discuss what this statement means and how they think this statement reflects U.S. culture and the idea of the melting pot.

Based upon what the students know, what they have read, and what they have learned have the students re-write the inscription to better reflect how they see U.S. culture.

Have students first share their statements in small groups and then select a few students to share their work with the entire class.

### Authors

[Mary Gould](#)

[LINDA RICHMOND](#)