



Eric Groce, Guest Editor

Re-examining Symbols of America

What symbols represent America to you? The bald eagle or The Statue of Liberty? Maybe Uncle Sam ... How about Old Glory? This issue of *SSYL* addresses the variety of symbols (traditional and nontraditional) that remind us our nation and our common values, and it provides lessons and activities for exploring different aspects of the theme.

In the opening article, **Judy Britt** investigates the history of the Statue of Liberty using a pair of children's literature selections. The book *Emma's Poem* introduces readers to the story

behind the poem *The New Colossus*, and *Naming Liberty* allows readers to learn about this iconic statue through two distinct perspectives. Her article also includes connections to literacy and technology activities.

Brad Maguth, Josh Dustman, and Megan Kerr continue to focus on Lady Liberty as they describe research in which fourth graders examined various ideals represented by the statue and its

inscription, as well as identified local symbols and landmarks. The project included a collaborative "picture walk" activity in which students completed a photograph analysis and then reported their findings to classmates.

Andrea S. Libresco provides a short article and an accompanying Pullout that challenge students to think critically about a living symbol of freedom—the Bill of Rights. Unlike visual icons, the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution are not seen at a glance; they have to be experienced. That means students must exercise their reasoning skills and become "comfortable with some level of ambiguity."

Kristy Brugar and **Andrew Dickman** explain a series of lessons they taught to Andrew's fifth grade class about the symbols embedded within American culture, for example, on coins and through architecture such as the White House. The students examined informational texts and images as part of this exciting inquiry based project.

Scott Roberts shares how he has used the circle of knowledge strategy to guide classroom discussions centering on symbols in America. This instructional tool features multiple skills includ-

ing critical thinking, group processes, analyzing multiple sources, and communication skills.

Megan Smith and Jenny Wei, both Smithsonian educators, present the story of Mary Pickersgill, the woman who sewed (along with her daughter, nieces, and an indentured servant) the flag that inspired Francis Scott Key's famous words. They compare the historical evidence of her con-

tribution with that of Betsy Ross's. These authors also share some web-based resources and photographs for teaching about the Star Spangled Banner.

Finally, **Beth Frye** worked with **Lisa Hash** on an interdisciplinary unit that engaged fifth graders in thinking about social justice. After reading *Wildflower* (a trade book about the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II), students participated in technology driven literacy activities such as Internet workshops and blogs before creating and publishing poetry as "meaningful representations of their understandings." ●



Nationals baseball presidential puppets with children.

Photographer Bruce Guthrie