

The Land of Marvels
American Land, by Bruce Springsteen, in Wrecking Ball (2012)

What is this land America, so many travel there
I'm going now while I'm still young - my darling meet me there
Wish me luck my lovely, I'll send for you when I can
And we'll make our home in the American land

5
Over there all the women wear silk and satin to their knees
And children, dear, the sweets, I hear, are growing on the trees
Gold comes rushing out the rivers straight into your hands
When you make your home in the American land

10
There's diamonds in the sidewalk, the gutters lined in song
Dear, I hear that beer flows through the faucets all night long
There's treasure for the taking, for any hard working man
Who'll make his home in the American land

15
I docked at Ellis Island in the city of light and spires
I wandered to the valley of red-hot steel and fire
We made the steel that built the cities with the sweat of our two hands
We made our home in the American land

20
There's diamonds in the sidewalk, the gutters lined in song
Dear, I hear that beer flows through the faucets all night long
There's treasure for the taking, for any hard working man
Who'll make his home in the American land

25
The McNicholas, the Posalskis, the Smiths, Zerillis too
The Blacks, the Irish, Italians, the Germans and the Jews
They come across the water a thousand miles from home
With nothing in their bellies but the fire down below

30
They died building the railroads, they worked to bones and skin
They died in the fields and factories, names scattered in the wind
They died to get here a hundred years ago, they're still dying now
Their hands that built the country we're always trying to keep out

35
There's diamonds in the sidewalk, the gutters lined in song
Dear, I hear that beer flows through the faucets all night long
There's treasure for the taking, for any hard working man
Who'll make his home in the American land

40
Who'll make his home in the American land
Who'll make his home in the American land



The spire of the Empire State Building



Understanding the lyrics

FOCUS ON STANZA 1

1. Who or what do the following pronouns refer to?

- *there* (l. 1): - *we* (l. 4):

2. Who is speaking? What do we learn about the narrator? Quote key words only.

- Age: - Family status:

- Plans for the future:

FOCUS ON STANZA 2

3. Who does “your” (l. 8) refer to?

4. Fill in the grid below by quoting the appropriate lines:

Wealth	Abundance	Luxury

FOCUS ON THE CHORUS

5. The country: classify the information given in the following grid.

A new Eldorado (paradise)	A land of opportunity

6. What quality is required to succeed?

FOCUS ON STANZA 3

7. Who do the following pronouns refer to?

- I (l. 16): - we (l. 18):

8. “I docked at Ellis Island in the city of light and spires” (l. 16). What were the narrator’s impressions upon arrival.

- amazement fear surprise fascination joy apprehension

Why?

9. “We made the steel that built the cities with the sweat of our two hands” (l. 18)

a) What social class is mentioned here?

b) Is the tone: tragic? humorous? contemptuous? (*méprisant*)

FOCUS ON STANZA 4

10. Organize your notes and classify the information given in this stanza. Quote key words only.

A nation of immigrants	Poverty	Determination

FOCUS ON STANZA 5

11. Who does the pronoun “they” (l. 31) refer to?

12. Who built America? Pick out key words.

Social class	Economic sectors	Consequence

13. “They died to get here a hundred years ago, they’re still dying now” (l. 33)

a) Who or what do the underlined pronouns refer to? - *They*: - *here*:

b) Rephrase what you have understood.

ACTION!

1. What were / are people’s reasons for emigrating?

an open society – wealthy = well-off – can afford – expensive materials (*tissus*) / clothes – be on an equal footing (*être sur un pied d’égalité*) – overcome the social barriers – climb the social ladder (*grimper dans l’échelle sociale*)- overnight (*d’un jour à l’autre*) – start from scratch (*partir de zéro*)

2. a) Who built America? b) Who does Springsteen pay tribute to in his song and why?

a) destitute (*démuni*) / poverty-stricken – live in dire straits (*vivre dans des conditions très difficiles*) – living conditions – income (*revenu*) – standard of living – better prospects (*perspectives d’avenir*) – achieve success

b) pay tribute to – wave of immigration – working-class – labour force – thanks to – tough / *tʌf* / job – factory / plant - integrate into society – praise (*faire l’éloge de*) – blue collars ≠ white collars

3. What is Bruce Springsteen’s vision of America?

jingoistic (*d’un patriotisme exacerbé*) idealised biased / *baɪəst* / (*partial*) still alive (*encore vivant*)

To what extent would you say immigrants believed in a myth?