

- Show students the flag of the state where they live. (A list of images and descriptions of the state flags can be found at [www.50states.com/flag/](http://www.50states.com/flag/).) Have students learn the significance of the images on this flag and discuss how they relate to the state's history.
- Arrange for someone to come and talk about the importance of flag etiquette, such as a representative from the American Legion, the National Guard or the Veterans of Foreign Wars. As a follow-up, obtain a U.S. flag and have students practice folding it correctly.
- "The Star-Spangled Banner" did not become America's national anthem until 1931. Talk with students about how a national anthem represents the country and ask them what they think does or does not make this song a good national anthem. Students can write their own poems that could be anthems for either the United States or for their schools.
- In honor of the Flag Resolution of 1777, June 14th is National Flag Day. Ask students to imagine that they have been given the responsibility to organize a Flag Day celebration for their class or for their local communities. What would they put into the program? How would their celebration honor the meaning of the flag? In small groups, students can create a program for this special day. Students can also create a television or newspaper advertisement promoting their Flag Day event.
- Distribute copies of the first stanza of the National Anthem and discuss the meaning. Review the story of Francis Scott Key and the battle at Fort McHenry and ask students what details from the story they can identify in the song. Students can imagine they were at Fort McHenry for these events and write a story, diary entry or newspaper report about what happened. Students can also draw pictures illustrating the anthem.

### Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com).

- [bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/symbols/index.html](http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/symbols/index.html)  
"Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids" provides information on patriotic symbols, songs and oaths.
- [americanhistory.si.edu/ssb/](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ssb/)  
The Smithsonian Institute hosts this Star-Spangled Banner Project web site on the history and preservation of the actual flag that flew at Fort McHenry.
- [www.usflag.org](http://www.usflag.org)  
The "United States Flag Page" contains historical information, flag etiquette and trivia.

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- [www.bcpl.net/~etowner/patriot.html](http://www.bcpl.net/~etowner/patriot.html)  
This site is dedicated to the "birthplace of the national anthem" and includes a virtual tour of Fort McHenry and information on "The Star-Spangled Banner."
- [www.ushistory.org/betsy/](http://www.ushistory.org/betsy/)  
The "Betsy Ross Homepage," hosted by the Independence Hall Foundation, includes information, pictures and activities relating to Betsy Ross and the flag.

### Suggested Print Resources

- Bartoletti, Susan Campbell. *The Flag Maker*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA; 2004.
- Hess, Debra. *American Flag*. Benchmark Books, New York, NY; 2004.
- Martin, Bill Jr. and Michael Sampson. *I Pledge Allegiance: The Pledge of Allegiance with Commentary*. Candlewick Press, Cambridge, MA; 2002.
- Thomson, Sarah. *Stars and Stripes: The Story of the American Flag*. Harper Collins Publishers, New York, NY; 2003.

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### TEACHER'S GUIDE

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### TITLES

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## United States Flag

Grades K-4

Studying history is an essential part of understanding the world we live in today. The history of the United States includes the experiences and accomplishments of diverse peoples, from Native Americans and immigrants to the descendants of European settlers and of Africans brought here by force. Key events such as the Revolutionary War, the writing of the Constitution and the Emancipation Proclamation influenced how the nation developed. The study of history also involves facing painful aspects of the country's past, such as slavery and the treatment of Native Americans. Over time, songs, holidays and other observances have shaped and reflected how Americans see themselves and their country. History provides a framework for interpreting and living in the ever-changing present.



## Program Overview

The national flag is the most important symbol of the United States. Its evolution reflects the history of the American colonies and their growth into today's United States. The 13 red and white stripes represent the first states. As the nation expanded and as new territories became states, the stars also increased in number, from 13 to 50, one for each state. Seeing our country's flag still flying after the bombardment of Fort McHenry during the War of 1812 inspired Francis Scott Key to write the poem "The Star Spangled Banner," which later became the national anthem. The Pledge of Allegiance, written by Francis Bellamy, highlights respect for the flag and for the notions of unity, liberty and justice that are central ideals of the nation.

## Vocabulary

**symbol** — Something that represents, or stands for, something else.

**colonists** — The original people who came and settled in the English colonies on the East Coast.

**patriots** — Persons who love their country with active and enthusiastic pride.

**Flag Resolution** — An act passed by Congress on June 14, 1777, that set the official design of the flag.

**truce** — A temporary cease-fire between two groups fighting each other.

**evolution** — Gradual change.

**territory** — In American history, a newly-settled land area before it became a state.

**Louisiana Purchase** — A large area of land between the Mississippi River and Rocky Mountains that Thomas Jefferson helped America purchase from France in 1803. The purchase nearly doubled the size of the United States.

**pledging** — Promising loyalty.

**allegiance** — Loyalty to something, such as a country.

**republic** — A form of government controlled by the people through elected representatives instead of by a king or queen.

**indivisible** — Unable to be divided.

**justice** — A system that assures equal, fair and rightful treatment of people.

**anthem** — A song of praise, such as the official song of the nation.

## Pre-viewing Discussion

- Have students look carefully at the U.S. flag in the classroom and describe all of its elements, including the number of stars and stripes. Ask them to speculate about the significance of these colors, images and numbers. Do they think the flag has always looked like this?
- Ask students to remember all of the times and places they have seen the American flag being flown. Why was the flag being flown there? Why do Americans display the flag?
- The flag is a symbol of the United States. Ask students how many other symbols of the country they can think of.
- The American flag has many nicknames, such as Old Glory, the "Stars and the Stripes" and the "Star-Spangled Banner." Ask students what they think these nicknames mean. Can they think of any other names used to refer to the flag?

## Focus Questions

1. What did the colonial and early United States flags look like?
2. What do the stars and stripes on the flag represent?
3. What event does "The Star-Spangled Banner" describe?
4. Describe how the country grew from 13 to 50 states. Where did the new states come from?
5. What do you promise when you "pledge allegiance to the flag"?
6. What is the right thing to do when you see a flag being raised or lowered?

## Follow-up Discussion

- Ask students to explain how the flag is a record of the history of the United States.
- Ask students when and where they have heard the National Anthem being sung. How do they feel when they hear this song? Why?
- Have students discuss what it means when they put their hands over their hearts while saying the Pledge of Allegiance. What are other times when people put their hands over their hearts?
- Ask students to describe what the flag means to them and why. Why is it important to follow certain rules when handling the flag?
- The actual flag that Francis Scott Key saw flying over Fort McHenry was made by a woman named Mary Pickersgill and her 13-year-old daughter, Caroline. It measured 30 feet high and 42 feet wide. Help students to picture how large an area that is and ask them to imagine what it would be like to make a flag that large by hand.

## Follow-up Activities

- Help students to create a time line showing when new territories were added to the country and when each of the 50 states was admitted to the union. Students can create accompanying maps of the United States and color them according to when various areas were added to the country, using different colors for areas such as the original colonies, the Louisiana Purchase, the Texas lands annexed in 1945 and the territory won from Mexico in 1848.
- Help students to create a wall display showing the different U.S. flags that have flown over the country's history. Include those that preceded American independence: the British Union, United American Colonies and Grand Union flags. Imagine that one or two more states are to be added to the Union, and ask students to come up with designs to increase the number of stars on the flag.
- Ask students to design flags to represent the class, school or local community. Working in small groups, students can decide what shapes, images and colors would be the best symbols to convey what the flags stand for.
- Ask students to research the flags of other nations, including the United Nations. (For quick reference, see the following web site: [www.flags.net/](http://www.flags.net/).) What do other country's flags look like? Give students flag challenges to solve, such as: find the flags of the countries of their families' origins; compare the flags of Liberia and Puerto Rico and learn why they resemble Old Glory; or look for common elements in the flags of New Zealand, Australia, India and Canada and find out why these commonalities exist. Students can make copies of the flags they have studied and descriptions of what they learned to create a class book of flag facts.
- Many people purchased and displayed American flags after the attack of September 11, 2001. Discuss students' reactions to this tragedy. How do they think people directly affected by the attacks must have felt? How about the feelings of those not directly affected? Discuss the feelings of the nation as a whole during this time. How does showing the flag help people to cope with difficult times?
- Vexillology means "the scientific study of flags" and includes interpreting the special meanings of the colors found in certain flags. (For a list of meanings, see [www.newton.mec.edu/Angier/DimSum/History%20of%20Flags.html](http://www.newton.mec.edu/Angier/DimSum/History%20of%20Flags.html).) Discuss these meanings with students, explaining how certain flags, such as a white truce flag or a black pirate flag, use colors to send certain messages. As a follow-up, students can choose an idea and design a flag that represents that idea, as described in the "Design a Flag Lesson" found on the same web page.

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