

- On her trip to Colorado in 1893, Katherine Lee Bates made stops at locations across the country, including Niagara Falls, the World's Fair in Chicago and Pike's Peak in the Rocky Mountains. Her poem "America the Beautiful" celebrates all of the things she saw along this journey. Ask students to remember important trips they have taken and remind them that a trip does not need to be long or far away to be significant. Students can write poems or stories about what they experienced on their trips.
- Organize a student concert of patriotic songs to be performed for parents, other classes or the whole school community.
- Show students an example of a book which illustrates a patriotic song, such as Neil Waldman's vision of "America the Beautiful" (Atheneum, 1993) or Errol Le Cain's selection from "Hiawatha" (Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1984). Discuss how the pictures enhance the poem and ask students to analyze how illustrators decide which images to draw. Distribute copies of song lyrics and poems and invite students to make their own illustrated books.
- Ask students to write the story of "John Henry" from the perspective of either John Henry or one of the other laborers on the railroad.

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at www.LibraryVideo.com.

- 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."
- bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/symbols/index.html
"Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids" provides information on patriotic songs and oaths.
- www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/nametune2a.htm
"Name that Patriotic Tune" is a web site of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

Suggested Print Resources

- Kent, Deborah. *Star-Spangled Banner*. Childrens Press, Chicago, IL; 1995.
- Lester, Julius. *John Henry*. Dial Books, New York, NY; 1994.
- Martin, Bill Jr. and Michael Sampson. *I Pledge Allegiance: The Pledge of Allegiance with Commentary*. Candlewick Press, Cambridge, MA; 2002.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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TITLES

- NATIVE AMERICAN LIFE
- EARLY SETTLERS
- AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE
- UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION
- AFRICAN AMERICAN LIFE
- EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL
- UNITED STATES FLAG
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U.S. Songs and Poems

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

Many people have written poems, songs and oaths that express their national pride and love for their country. During a battle in the War of 1812, Francis Scott Key penned the words to “The Star-Spangled Banner” as a response to seeing the flag still flying after a difficult battle. Set to music, it has since become the national anthem of the United States.

Other popular patriotic songs include “America the Beautiful,” written by Katherine Lee Bates and “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” by Samuel Francis Smith. The song “John Henry” celebrates the folk story of a powerful African-American man who helped to build the country’s railroads. The Pledge of Allegiance, written by Francis Bellamy, is now recited in schools by most children to begin the school day. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s poem “Hiawatha” describes the imagined childhood of a Native American boy. These songs and stories are fun for everyone to share.

Vocabulary

banner — A flag.

national anthem — A song of praise of one’s nation that is regarded as its official song.

patriotic — Being loyal to and enthusiastically supportive of one’s nation.

pilgrims — The English settlers who founded Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts.

Native Americans — The people who inhabited America before the coming of Europeans and Africans.

pioneers — People who explore and move to new lands.

Revolutionary War — The war fought by the American colonists to win their independence from Great Britain.

pledge — A promise or formal agreement.

allegiance — Loyalty to one’s nation.

republic — A form of government in which the people elect representatives to govern the country.

indivisible — Unable to be divided.

folk song — A song, about a real or mythical person or about a real or mythical event, that is handed down among people.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Ask students to name all the songs they know that celebrate the United States. What feelings do these songs express? Invite students to sing any of these songs they know.
- Ask students to describe any songs or poems that have special significance to them and to explain why.
- What is an “anthem”? Can any students identify what song is the anthem of the United States? Why do people stand when they hear the national anthem being sung?
- Ask students to explain the meaning of the Pledge of Allegiance. Why is it recited every morning? What does it mean to “pledge allegiance”?

Focus Questions

1. What events does “The Star-Spangled Banner” describe?
2. What details of the country did Katherine Lee Bates include in her poem “America the Beautiful”?
3. Which groups of people are honored in the words of the song “My Country ‘Tis of Thee”?
4. Who first sang “Yankee Doodle”? Why?
5. What was John Henry’s special talent?
6. Why is it important to respect the flag?
7. Name at least five animals mentioned in the poem “Hiawatha.”

Follow-up Discussion

- Ask students to consider the words to three famous patriotic songs about America: “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “America the Beautiful,” and “My Country ‘Tis of Thee.” Which of these songs do students find most appealing and powerful? Why?
- “Yankee Doodle” was originally created and sung by British soldiers who were making fun of the American colonials. (A “doodle” meant a simple-minded person.) Why do students think the Americans began to sing the songs themselves? Can students think of any other examples of someone taking a teasing or mean statement and changing the meaning to something positive?
- To what things do we pledge allegiance in the Pledge of Allegiance? Why are these important?
- John Henry is an example of an American folk hero. Ask students to share stories they know about other folk heroes, such as Paul Bunyan or Johnny Appleseed.
- Discuss with students what the poem “Hiawatha” says about the importance of nature in the life of Hiawatha.

Follow-up Activities

- Play several patriotic songs for students, asking them to listen carefully and make a list of the special qualities of the United States that are described in each of these songs. Discuss with students the kinds of people, places, events or feelings patriotic songs usually include. What do students think should be included in a new, modern song of praise about the country? Ask students to write the words for such a song.
- “The Star-Spangled Banner” was not declared the national anthem until March 3, 1931; in fact, many people during the 1920s believed that “America the Beautiful” should be the national anthem, since it was less violent and easier to sing. Others wanted “Yankee Doodle” to be chosen. Ask students to decide what song they think makes the best anthem and why. Students can write their own poems to be anthems for the school or class.
- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow loosely based parts of the poem “Hiawatha” on an actual person, who was a chief of the Onondaga tribe. Encourage students to research some facts about the real Hiawatha and to use this information to write their own stories about him. (One source on the historical Hiawatha and the Onondaga people can be found at www.onondaganationschool.org/history/history.html.)
- Discuss how John Henry is an example of the heroic workers who built railroads in the second half of the 19th century. Discuss with students the physical labor that was involved before the machinery we have today was available. (See www.summerscvb.com/john_henry.html for a description.) Divide students into small groups and ask each group to select another type of workers or professionals you could write a song for in honor of the heroic work they do. Students should be prepared to explain their choices.
- The bombardment of Fort McHenry occurred in 1814, during the War of 1812. Have students research this war, learning who was involved, what the causes were and how it ended. Students can create a time line of the events of this war.
- Francis Scott Key only wrote the words to “The Star-Spangled Banner”; the melody comes from a song that was extremely popular in 1814. At least 85 different American poems have been sung to the tune of “To Anacreon in Heaven.” Ask students to think of popular tunes today to which they could set poems they have written.

(Continued)