

★ The Star-Spangled Banner ★

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to teach students about the background and meaning of our national anthem, “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Students will complete a vocabulary and comprehension activity on the background and first verse of this song.

Objective

1. The student will discuss and explain the causes of the War of 1812.
2. The student will explain the events surrounding the writing of “The Star-Spangled Banner.”
3. The student will examine “The Star-Spangled Banner’s” first verse and explain why the United States adopted it as our national anthem.

Theme-Unity

This song helps unify the United States by providing a story that demonstrates why/how people will fight for freedoms for themselves and their fellow citizens.

NCSS Standards

IVb. describe personal connections to place—as associated with community, nation, and world.
IVc. describe the ways...nationality, and institutional affiliations contribute to personal identity.
IXa. describe instances in which language, art, music, belief systems, and other cultural elements can facilitate global understanding....
Xa. examine the origins and continuing influence of key ideals of the democratic republican form of government....

Time

30 minutes

Materials

- ★ “The Star-Spangled Banner” activity sheet and song sheet
- ★ Dictionaries
- ★ Website - www.americanheritage.org

Preparation

Copy “The Star-Spangled Banner” activity sheet for each student.

Focus

Ask a student to volunteer to recite or sing “The Star-Spangled Banner.” You may want to sing the song together as a class.

Activity

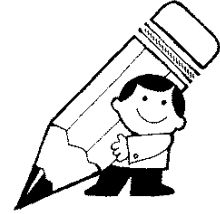
1. Have students complete “The Star-Spangled Banner” activity sheet. (See Links page on www.americanheritage.org for additional resources on the “Star-Spangled Banner.”)
2. Discuss the vocabulary in the context of the background information and the first verse of the song.
3. Discuss the comprehension questions as well as the meaning of the first verse of the song.

Closure

Review the circumstances surrounding the writing of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Discuss why we have a national anthem and what our anthem tells us and others about the values we share as Americans.

Assessment

Students will write a paragraph or journal entry explaining why they think the flag and our national anthem unify the citizens of the nation.



The Star-Spangled Banner

In the early 1800s, Great Britain and France were involved in a war in Europe. During the war, both countries violated the neutrality of countries like the United States by seizing trading ships. In addition to seizing American ships, the British impressed, or kidnapped, the American sailors on these ships and forced them to serve in the British navy. When the British refused to stop this practice, the United States declared war on Great Britain on June 18, 1812. The war that followed is called the War of 1812.

British troops invaded the United States during the War of 1812. The Americans fought to preserve the independence that they had won just 30 years before. The British actually captured and burned Washington, D.C., including the Capitol Building and the White House. Next, the British marched toward Baltimore,

Maryland. The American troops at Fort McHenry bravely defended Baltimore and stopped the British advance.

During the battle at Baltimore, a Maryland lawyer and poet named Francis Scott Key was aboard a British ship to arrange for the release of an American held prisoner by the British. The British bombarded Fort McHenry throughout the night of September 13, 1814. The next morning, when Key observed from the ship that the American flag was still flying above the fort, he was inspired to write the words of his poem, "The Star-Spangled Banner."

"The Star-Spangled Banner" was adopted informally as an anthem by the Union Army during the Civil War and was adopted officially by the U.S. Army in World War I. It became the United States' national anthem on March 3, 1931.



Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro' the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof thro' the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say, does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

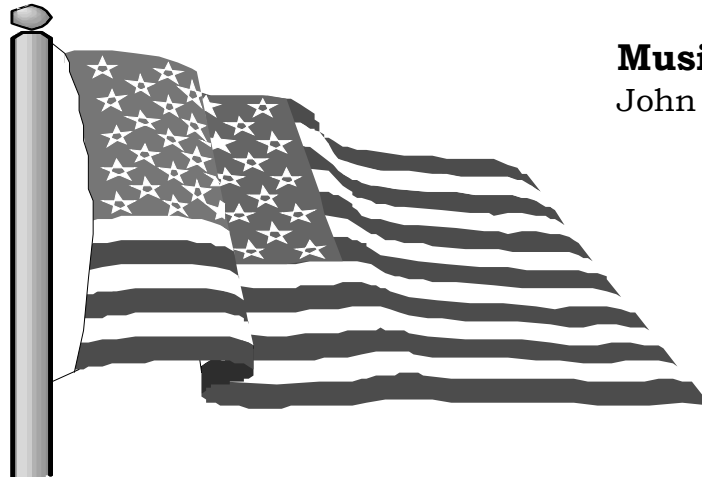
Complete the following on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Define: neutrality, seize, invade, bombard, anthem, dawn, twilight, perilous, rampart, gallant
2. Why did the United States declare war on Great Britain in 1812?
3. What did the British do to Washington, D.C.?
4. Why was the battle at Baltimore important for the Americans?
5. What inspired Francis Scott Key to write "The Star-Spangled Banner"?
6. When did "The Star-Spangled Banner" become our national anthem?

The Star-Spangled Banner

Words by
Francis Scott Key

Music by
John Stafford Smith



1. Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro' the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof thro' the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say, does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?
2. On the shore, dimly seen thro' the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines on the stream;
'Tis the Star-Spangled Banner, O long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!
3. And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion,
A home and a country should leave us no more!
Their blood has washed out of their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight and the gloom of the grave:
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.
4. Oh, thus be it ever when freemen shall stand
Between their lov'd homes and the war's desolation!
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n rescued land
Praise the Pow'r that hath made and preserved us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto, "In God is our trust."
And the Star-Spangled Banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!