

## Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the American Patriotic symbols. The Great Seal was produced by the Founders to help unify the nation and demonstrate to the world the qualities of the nation.

## Objective

The student will be able to identify elements and American patriotic symbols including the Great Seal of the United States.

## Theme - Unity

The Latin words on the Great Seal express our intention as a nation to be one. The nation is composed of people from all over the world & residents of different states, yet from these many the one people of the U. S. are formed.

## TEKS

113.2.b.k.10, 3.b.1.13, 4.b.2.14, 6.b.4.17, 7.b.5.18  
Citizenship. Student understands important customs, symbols, celebrations that represent American beliefs and principles and contribute to national identity.  
113.3.b.1.2 History. Student understands the origins of customs, holidays, and celebrations.  
113.3.b.1.15 Culture. Student understands importance of family, beliefs, customs, language, and traditions.  
113.6.b.4.6, 7.b.5.6 Geography. The student uses

geographic tools to collect, analyze, interpret data.  
113.7.b.5.16 Government. The student understands important ideas in the Declaration of Independence and the U. S. Constitution.  
113.7.b.5.17 Government. The student understands the framework of government created by the U. S. Constitution.  
113.2.b.k.16, 3.b.1.18, 4.b.2.18, 5.b.3.17, 6.b.4.23, 7.b.5.26 Soc Studies Skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms.

## Time

45 minutes

## Materials

- ★ Heraldry resources or references
- ★ Visuals of Great Seal and bald eagle
- ★ Great Seal and President Seal Reading
- ★ Great Seal Bookmarks
- ★ American Bald Eagle Group Activity
- ★ \$1 dollar bill or print
- ★ KWL Chart, posterboard, colors, other supplies as needed for in class work
- ★ Website - [www.americanheritage.org](http://www.americanheritage.org)

## Preparation

- ★ Copy handouts
- ★ Prepare visuals of the Great Seal, President Seal, and bald eagle

## Focus

(See also U. S. Flag lesson focus.) Write “symbol” on the board. Have students discuss what comes to mind. What is a symbol? Why are they used? Symbols have been used throughout time to identify groups and those who belong to them as well as to represent values and ideas. Heraldry is the ancient practice of devising, granting, and producing distinguished emblems or signs. In heraldry, each element on a seal, badge, crest, coat of arms, or flag has a meaning. Show pictures of a variety of seals and heraldic devices, both modern and historical. Explain how seals are used in these to represent various values, provide authentication, and establish authority. Each element and color has significance. Have students think of examples of historical and modern heraldic symbols and emblems (including seals, badges, crests, coat of arms, flags, etc.) and what they represent and are/were used for (in sports, business, education, government, business, advertising, religion, etc.) Discuss the meaning and merit of symbols. (See Links page on [www.americanheritage.org](http://www.americanheritage.org) for additional resources on Great Seal.)

## Activity

### Designing A Seal (See also “Designing a Flag” activity in U. S. Flag lesson)

1. Have students research and discuss the meaning and values represented in their school emblem, flag, and/or mascot (if they have one). An alternative could be a city or state emblem or

- family crest. Where is it displayed? How is it used? What are examples of modern seals?
2. Assign groups to design, at home or in class, a school (if there isn't one) or class seal or emblem. An alternative could be a family crest. References on seals and heraldry may be introduced if teachers want symbols and elements to be traditionally accurate. Students will present or write about their creations, describing the symbolism and elements used in their designs and the ideas, events, things, and/or values they represent. (This may be part of the evaluation—see step 4.) Students vote on a school or class seal. They may vote based on selected criteria if desired.
  3. Have students decide how their seal can be used to identify the school or class or authenticate a document. Suggestions include posting the seal in their room or hall, on the classroom door, on their cafeteria tables, on their book covers or papers, on class passes, on graded papers, as a teacher or student representative device, etc.
  4. Evaluation: Students will describe, through presentation and/or writing, the meaning of the symbols and elements used in their seal and the ways the seal can be used for school/class identification and authentication.

### **The Great Seal**

1. Have students fill out the “K” and “W” sections for what they know and what they want to know about the Great Seal of the United States. Ask students in class what they know about the seal, its appearance, and its uses. Have students think of where they might have seen the Great Seal displayed. Next, look at a real or drawn sample of the Great Seal. Also show or have students discover the seal that appears on the U. S. \$1 dollar bill. Let students get familiar with its appearance and point out its elements. Ask students what the seal looks like and contains, why the seal is on the dollar bill, and what they think it means.
2. Have students read and discuss “The Great Seal of the United States” reading. For younger students, the teacher may read-aloud and simply define terms, and summarize for students. Older students may do a teacher or student read-aloud or read in groups or individually. Students may ask questions. Discuss. Review and define any unclear terms or concepts and their meanings.

### **Visualizing the Great Seal**

1. Have students create book marks with the Great Seal on them. Students can include on their bookmarks their responses on what they like about America and what they do or plan to do to help make it a better country. Students may cut out and use these bookmarks.
2. Have students draw large Great Seals, color them, label all the parts and their descriptions and meanings (either by drawing arrows, color-coding, using a key or chart, etc.), and display them. Students could alternatively use a large print of the seal and color and label accordingly.

### **The President's Seal and Flag**

1. Student's may also do a KWL chart for the President's Seal, writing what they know and want to know about it. What does it look like? When and how is it used? Discuss.
2. Have students look at the appearance of the President's seal and flag and think of times they've seen them displayed. How is it similar to or distinct from the Great Seal?

### **The American Bald Eagle**

1. Have students form groups. Show and/or distribute pictures of the American Bald Eagle to student groups. Have students complete the group activity on the bald eagle.
2. Students may ask questions and share their findings in a whole class discussion.
3. Students may create their own visual (poster, collage, magazine cut out, drawing, sketch,

photo, totem pole, etc.) or written (poem, song, story, play, public service announcement, etc.) expression of the American bald eagle that uniquely interprets, presents, and expresses the eagle as a national symbol and/or as a symbol of strength, power, courage, and/or freedom. Students may display these in the class or hall.

## Closure

1. Students complete “L” section of KWL chart on what they learned about the Great Seal. Discuss. Students may also write/speak responses to questions: What does the seal look like? What are its elements? What do they mean, symbolize? What does the seal mean, symbolize, represent? What is its purpose? What is it used for? How is it used? Give examples of uses.

## Assessment

Discuss why symbols are important to the values, beliefs, and attitudes of individuals and society. Each student will write an essay or journal entry explaining why symbols are important to a nation.



# The Great Seal

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Great Seal of the United States, obverse and reverse sides  
U. S. Department of State

## The Great Seal of the United States

(summary and excerpts)

**U. S. Department of State**

**Bureau of Public Affairs**

**[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)**

The Great Seal of the United States is an important official and heraldic device or emblem of the United States. It was adopted by the Continental Congress to represent the United States and to demonstrate to the other nations of the world the ideas and values of the Founders and this nation. The seal is printed on U. S. money, also providing U. S. citizens with a ready reference to the nation's foundational ideas such as unity. The seal guarantees the authenticity of official U. S. documents.

The Great Seal was adopted by the Continental Congress on June 20, 1782. It was first used officially on September 16, 1782, to guarantee the authenticity of a document that granted full power to General George Washington "to negotiate and sign with the British an agreement for the exchange, subsistence, and better treatment of prisoners of war." Thomas Jefferson was the first Secretary of State to have custody of the Great Seal.

"Great Seals have their origins in the royal seals of the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries."

## The Design of the Seal

The Great Seal has two sides. The **front (obverse) side** of the Seal is the **coat of arms** of the United States. It shows an **American bald eagle** displayed with its wings spread, holding in one talon an olive branch with 13 leaves, and in the other talon a sheaf of 13 arrows. The eagle's head is turned to its right, consistent with heraldic custom, and toward the olive branch. The **Latin motto, E PLURIBUS UNUM**, on the banner or scroll in the eagle's beak means "**Out of Many, One.**" Over the eagle's head is a **crest** (a device placed above the shield)

which is a **constellation of 13 stars** surrounded by a **circle of clouds**. Across the eagle's breast is a **shield with 13 alternating red and white stripes** below a **solid blue field or "chief"** (upper part of shield).

The **reverse side** of the seal displays an **unfinished pyramid with 13 levels or steps**. The Roman numeral **MDCCLXXVI** (1776), the year of the Declaration of Independence, is written on the base of the pyramid. The **"Eye of Providence,"** surrounded by a "Glory" (rays of light), appears in a triangle at the zenith of the pyramid.

The Latin motto **ANNUIT COEPTIS** inscribed above the pyramid and eye means **"He (God) has favored our undertaking."** The Latin phrase **NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM** is inscribed on a scroll or banner below the pyramid and means **"a new order of the ages."**

The design of the Great Seal is "the composite product of many minds" from three committees over six years. The first committee in 1776 of Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson with artist Pierre Eugene du Simitiere contributed the Eye of Providence, the date of independence (MDCCLXXVI), the shield, and the Latin Motto *E Pluribus Unum*. The second committee in 1780 of James Lovell, John Morin Scott, and William Churchill Houston with consultant Francis Hopkinson contributed the red, white, and blue colors to the shield; the 13 stripes; the constellation of 13 stars; and the olive branch. The third committee in 1782 of John Rutledge, Arthur Middleton, and Elias Boudinot recruited William Barton who contributed the eagle and the unfinished pyramid. Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress, selected all the best features of the three committees and added a bundle of arrows and the Latin mottos *Annuit Coeptis* and *Novus Ordo Seclorum*.

The Great Seal was presented to congress by Charles Thomson and William Barton on June 20, 1782. After various versions, the design of the seal was made more "formal and heraldic" in 1885 by Tiffany & Co. and "served as the pattern for the die in use today." The original design concept and seal description of 1782 were maintained.

## The Meaning of the Seal

### Front or obverse side of Seal:

**American bald eagle** - symbol of power, strength, courage, and freedom; the national bird. The eagle's head is turned toward the olive branch to symbolize peace favored and the goal.

**Shield (or escutcheon)** - "born on the breast of an American eagle without any other supporters [figures holding up the shield] to denote that the United States of America ought to rely on their own Virtue."

**Stripes (or pales) on the shield** - "represent the several states all joined in one solid compact entire, supporting a Chief...."

**Chief (upper part of shield)** - the solid blue field that "unites the whole [as one nation] and represents Congress." "The pales in the arms are kept closely united by the Chief and the Chief depends on that union and the strength resulting from it for its support, to denote the Confederacy of the United States of America and the preservation of their union through Congress."

**Number 13 in stripes** of the shield, the **stars** of the constellation, **leaves** and **arrows** - represents the 13 original states of the union.

**Colors on the shield** - those of the American flag, “white signifies purity and innocence, red, hardiness and valour, and blue, vigilance, perseverance, and justice.”

**Olive branch and arrows** - “denote the power of peace and war.”

**Constellation of stars surrounded by clouds** - symbolizes “a new nation taking its place and rank among other sovereign powers and states.”

**Latin motto *E Pluribus Unum*** - means “Out of many, one.” It means that from many peoples, races, ancestries, and nationalities, one people and one nation is formed; from many states one nation is formed.

**Reverse side of the Seal:** (often referred to as its **spiritual side**)

**Unfinished pyramid** - signifies strength and duration. 13 levels of the pyramid represent the 13 original states of the union.

**“Eye of Providence” over the pyramid** - alludes to the many interventions and “signal interpositions of Providence in favour of the American cause.” (Some Bible verses mention the “eye of God” including Psalms 33:18: ‘The eye of God is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy.’) **Rays of light** surrounding the eye represent a “glory.”

**Roman numeral “MDCCLXXVI”** - means “1776” and refers to the date of the Declaration of Independence, the birth of the new nation. The total is calculated by adding the numerals up.

**Latin motto *Annuit Coeptis*** - means “He (God) has favored our undertaking.” It is used “to express the belief that God’s blessing was and is on the United States.”

**Latin motto *Novus Ordo Seclorum*** - means “a new order of the ages,” and heralds “the beginning of the new America era which commences from that date [1776].” (In the new American order, a new form of government receives its power, which is limited by a written constitution, from the people who freely elect their leaders. The rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were believed by our Founders to be God-given, unalienable rights of all people as opposed to man-made, vested rights that could be given or taken away by a human being. Unalienable rights are therefore permanent and unchangeable. Vested rights are temporary and changeable.)

## Uses of the Seal and Coat of Arms

The Great Seal is used to guarantee the authenticity of a U. S. document. It is used to seal documents 2,000-3,000 times per year. The custody of the Great Seal is assigned to the U. S. Department of State. The master die of the Seal is produced by the U. S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing. The seal can only be affixed by an officer of the Secretary of State.

Seals are pressed on the following official documents:

- Instruments of ratification of treaties and international agreements
- Presidential proclamations of treaties
- Commission appointments of certain government officials including Ambassadors, Foreign Service Officers, Cabinet Officers, Consular Officers, and Civil Officers appointed by the President
- Letters accrediting or recalling ambassadors
- Ceremonial communications from the President to the heads of foreign governments
- U. S. \$1 bill
- Design woven in the rug in the White House library

The front or obverse side of the seal, the coat of arms of the United States, is the only side of the seal for which a die has been made or used. It is used by the government in many ways. Some official uses:


- coins
- postage stamps
- stationary
- publications
- flags
- military uniforms
- public monuments
- public buildings
- passports
- items issued, used, or owned by the U. S. government
- displays above doors of U. S. embassies, consulates general, and consulates worldwide
- a stained glass window of the Prayer Room at the U. S. Capitol

# K-W-L Chart

<b>What I Know</b>	<b>What I Want to Know</b>	<b>What I Learned</b>

# The Great Seal Bookmarks

**Instructions:** Copy onto an index card or cardstock the pattern below. The pattern can be used for two one-sided bookmarks or for one two-sided bookmark. Students fill in the lists and laminate.



**What I like about America!**

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**What I do to help make America better!**

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## Seal of the President of the United States

The seal of the President of the United States is similar to the Great Seal. It portrays 50 stars in a circle to represent the 50 states. The words “Seal of the President of the United States” sometimes encircle the stars and inner design. The 50th and last star for the state of Hawaii was added to the seal in 1959. The presidential seal is officially used on:

- White House documents
- Lecterns at presidential speaking engagements or press conferences
- Presidential transports like Airforce One, Marine One and the presidential limosine
- Presidential flag (though without the words)
- Presidential china ware (in gold)
- Half dollar (though with different words)
- Rug and ceiling of the Oval Office of the White House



## U. S. President's Flag

The President's Flag is flown in the presence of the President of the United States.





# The American Bald Eagle

The American Bald **Eagle** became the national bird and symbol of the United States in 1782. The **founders** wanted an animal unique and **native** to the United States to symbolize and represent the nation on its national **seal** and **coat of arms**. Members of **congress debated** about which animal should serve as the national symbol. Consequently, the bald eagle was chosen because it symbolized **strength, power, courage, and freedom**. Eagles have been known as **symbols** of power and courage since **ancient** times in many nations and cultures. The bald eagle is also a native **inhabitant** of **North America** and resides on the **continent** from Alaska to northern Mexico.

The bald eagle is a large **bird of prey** with a brown body and a white head and tail of feathers. One meaning for the term “**bald**” comes from the old word **piebald** which means marked or spotted with white and/or having white feathers or markings on the head. The bald eagle has a yellow hooked **beak**, yellow **irises**, and powerful yellow **talons**.

Eagles have a strong **build** and **keen** eyesight. They grow to be two to three feet in length and have broad wingspans of approximately seven feet. Possessing **swift**, powerful, **sustained** flight, they **soar** high in the sky and use their **exceptional** vision to hunt. Bald eagles are fish or sea eagles, and fish is an important food source for them. When hunting, they swoop down and snatch fish out of the water with their large talons.

While the bald eagle was threatened with **extinction** in the past, it is no longer considered an **endangered species** and was taken off the U. S. government’s endangered and **threatened** list in 2007. The bald eagle is protected by the **Migratory Bird Treaty Act** and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection **Act** which have helped to **recover** the eagle **population**.

The eagle appears on the **Great Seal** of the United States, **federal agency** seals, the **president’s flag**, the one dollar bill, and the **silver dollar**. The eagle is often **portrayed** as **grasping** in its talons an **olive** branch (symbol of peace) and **arrows** (symbol of war).

## Group Activity

- Step 1:** Each person in the group will read part of the facts above to other members of the group.
- Step 2:** Each person will write definitions for at least three bold words. Every bold word must be defined by at least one member of the group and shared with

the rest of the group. This assignment may be complete in or out of class. In addition, some terms may be studied and researched more in depth to discover governmental, historical, symbolic, geographical, or scientific meanings such as “eagle,” “founders,” “congress,” “Great Seal,” “coat of arms,” and “President’s Flag.” Visuals may also be shared in the group. This step may be completed out of class, in the library, or in class if resources are available. Each person in the group should be assigned to at least one phrase to research more in-depth and to share/overview with group members as needed.

**Step 3:** When the group is finished defining and researching all the bold words and phrases, each student will read aloud/present their definitions and research findings to the others in the group. Students may ask questions or talk about what they want to know about the bald eagle or a related topic. Student groups may answer these as they are able. Afterward, students may ask questions and/or share their findings with the whole class.

# El Gran Sello

## El Propósito

El propósito de ésta lección es introducir los símbolos patrióticos americanos. El Gran Sello fue producido por nuestros antepasados para ayudar a que la nación se uniera y demostrara al mundo entero las cualidades de la nación.

## El Objetivo

Los estudiantes podrán identificar elementos de los símbolos americanos en el Gran Sello de los Estados Unidos.

## El Tema - La Unidad

Las palabras en latín en el Gran Sello son uno de los factores que expresan nuestra intención como una nación de ser una. La nación está compuesta de gente de todas partes del mundo y residentes de diferentes estados, pero de todos ellos se forma una nación de los Estados Unidos.

## TEKS

SS5 Gobierno. Analizar los principios e ideas de la Declaración de la Independencia y de la Constitución de los Estados Unidos.

SS2 Cultura. Explicar las costumbres importantes y los símbolos que representan las ideas americanas.

## Conocimiento General

Grado 6 – Historia y Geografía Americana Sec. 1: Inmigración. Tensiones detrás de las realidades e ideas del concepto de la gran sopa (melting pot) ¿Cómo se festeja la unión de la nación en el Gran Sello?

## El Tiempo Necesario

45 minutos

## Los Materiales

- Lectura del Gran Sello
- Separador – El Gran Sello
- SQA Carlon, posters, colores, billetes de dolar, billetes viejos
- Website - [www.americanheritage.org](http://www.americanheritage.org)

## La Preparación

- Copias de papeles para repartir.
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## El Enfoque

El Gran Sello de los Estados Unidos fue adoptado por el Congreso Continental como un esfuerzo para demostrar a otras naciones del mundo las ideas de nuestros fundadores y antepasados. El Gran Sello fue puesto en el dinero para que todos los ciudadanos tuvieron una referencia lista para que se hicieran a la idea de la unión. (See Links page on [www.americanheritage.org](http://www.americanheritage.org) for additional resources on the Great Seal.)

# El Gran Sello



Los dos lados del sello oficial de los Estados Unidos

El Gran Sello de los Estados Unidos imprimido en la parte de atrás del billete de un dólar fue adoptado por el Congreso Continental el 20 de junio del 1782. El Gran Sello tiene dos lados. Un lado muestra un águila sosteniendo en una garra una rama de oliva, un símbolo de paz, y en la otra garra tiene una flecha, símbolo de guerra. Las palabras latinas E PLURIBUS UNUM, escritas en un rollo al lado de la cabeza del águila quieren decir: “De Muchos, Uno.” La creación de una nación por 13 estados es representada por las estrellas sobre la cabeza del águila y por las barras y rayas en la bandera que cubre el pecho del águila.

El otro lado del sello muestra la base de una pirámide con trece niveles representando las 13 colonias originales. El Ojo de Dios aparece en la parte superior de la pirámide y es un símbolo sacado del Salmo 33:18: “El ojo de Dios esta sobre los que le temen a el, y los que esperan su misericordia.” El numero Romano MDCCLXXVI (1776), el año de La Declaración de la Independencia, está escrito en la base de la pirámide. ANNUIT COEPTIS está gravado arriba de la pirámide. El lema latino quiere decir “Él a favorecido nuestra empresa” y se usa para expresar la creencia que la bendición de Dios está sobre los Estados Unidos. NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM está inscrita debajo de la pirámide y quiere decir “La Nueva Orden de los tiempos” para demostrar el rechazo de la Vieja Orden en la cual los reyes eran considerados que tenían el derecho divino a la soberanía sobre la gente. En la Nueva Orden Americana, el gobierno recibe su poder, que está limitado por escrito en la constitución, de la gente que libremente elige a sus líderes. Los derechos a la vida, la libertad y a la búsqueda de la felicidad eran creencias de nuestros antepasados como derechos arraigados y dados a toda la gente de parte de Dios y no dados de parte de los hombres, que son derechos dados y quitados por el hombre humano. Los derechos arraigados son entonces permanentes y no intercambiables. Los derechos dados por el hombre son temporarios e intercambiables.

## Preguntas para Considerar:

1. Compare dinero de papel nuevo con dinero viejo. ¿Cuál es la diferencia entre ellos? ¿Descubre por qué es así?
2. ¿Eran los reyes igual a Dios? ¿Porqué sí o porqué no? ¿Qué era lo que pensaban los colonos americanos de antes?
3. ¿Cómo y por qué el águila alcanzó ser nuestro símbolo nacional?


# S-Q-A Carta

<b>Lo que Sé</b>	<b>Lo que Quiero saber</b>	<b>Lo que Aprendí</b>

# El Gran Sello Separadores

(Señaladores)

**Instrucciones:** Copie este patrón en tarjetas. El patrón se puede usar por los dos lados o por un lado. Los alumnos pueden llenar la lista y luego se puede laminar.



**Lo que me gusta  
de América**

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**Lo que hago  
para ayudar a  
hacer América  
mejor**

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