



Name: _____

The Story of "The Star-Spangled Banner"

"The Star-Spangled Banner" is the national anthem of the United States, a song that is sung at important events, sports games, and ceremonies. But have you ever wondered where this song came from and why it is so important?

The War of 1812

The story of "The Star-Spangled Banner" begins during the War of 1812, a conflict between the United States and Great Britain. The war was caused by disagreements over trade, territory, and the rights of American sailors. In 1814, the British attacked Washington, D.C., and then turned their attention to Baltimore, Maryland. The British planned to capture Fort McHenry, a fort that protected the city of Baltimore.

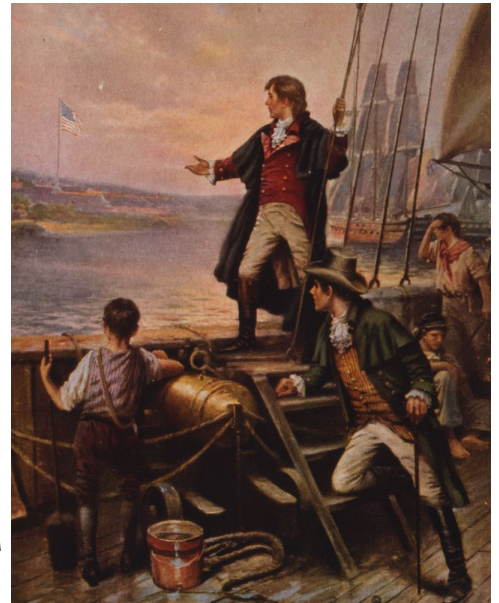
The Battle at Fort McHenry

On the night of September 13, 1814, British ships surrounded Fort McHenry and began firing cannons at it. The battle raged all night long, and the sky was filled with explosions. An American lawyer named Francis Scott Key was on a ship nearby, watching the battle. He was there to try to negotiate the release of an American prisoner, but instead, he found himself witnessing a fierce fight.

As the night went on, Key worried about what would happen. Would the fort fall to the British? Would the American flag that flew over the fort be taken down?

A Symbol of Hope

When the first light of dawn broke on September 14, Francis Scott Key looked anxiously toward Fort McHenry. Through the smoke and haze, he saw something that filled him with relief and pride—the American flag, still flying high over the fort. The sight of the flag meant that the fort had not fallen, and the Americans had won the battle.



Francis Scott Key seeing the flag still flying.



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Inspired by what he saw, Key began to write a poem. He called it "The Defence of Fort M'Henry." The poem described the battle and the sight of the "broad stripes and bright stars" of the flag waving proudly in the sky.

The Birth of a National Anthem

Key's poem was soon set to music, using the tune of a popular song of the time. The new song became known as "The Star-Spangled Banner." Over the years, it grew in popularity, especially at patriotic events and celebrations.

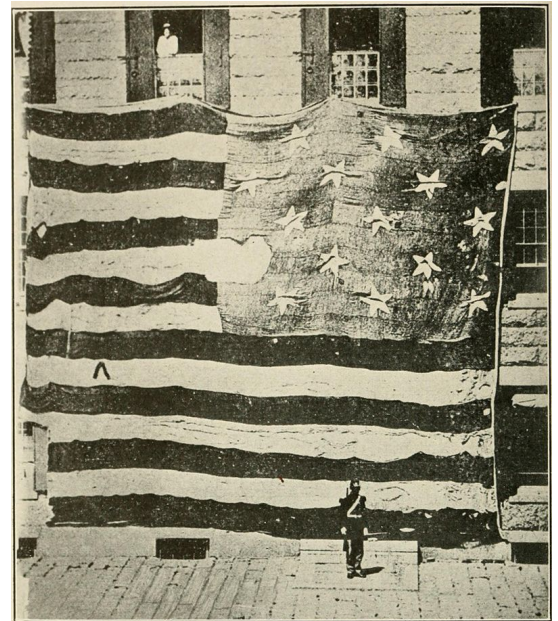
In 1931, many years after it was written, "The Star-Spangled Banner" was officially declared the national anthem of the United States by President Herbert Hoover. Since then, it has been sung at countless events, from Independence Day celebrations to the start of major sports games.

What the Anthem Represents

"The Star-Spangled Banner" is more than just a song; it is a symbol of American resilience, courage, and pride. The flag that inspired the anthem is now known as the "Star-Spangled Banner," and it is preserved at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. People visit the museum to see the flag and learn about the history behind the anthem.

Every time Americans sing "The Star-Spangled Banner," they are reminded of the bravery of those who fought to defend their country and the enduring symbol of freedom that the flag represents.

"The Star-Spangled Banner" actually has 4 verses, but we usually only hear and sing the first verse.



The flag that inspired the anthem.



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The Star-Spangled Banner

**O! say can you see by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through 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 through the night that our Flag was still there;
O! say does that star-spangled Banner yet wave,
O'er the Land of the free and the home of the brave?**

1. What inspired Francis Scott Key to write the poem that became our national anthem? _____

2. When did "The Star-Spangled Banner" become the national anthem? _____

3. What does the anthem represent now? _____