



# STAR SPANGLED BANNER

**NO-PREP MINI-UNIT**



# HISTORICAL READING & COMPREHENSION



## THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

Historical Reading

### The History Behind the Song

"The Star-Spangled Banner" is the National Anthem of the United States of America. The history of this patriotic anthem begins during the War of 1812 when James Madison was President of the United States. The War of 1812 was a military conflict between the newly formed United States and its former motherland country, Great Britain.

Two years into the fighting, at the Battle of Baltimore, British ships began firing upon Fort McHenry which was built to protect the Baltimore harbor. During this perilous fight, a 35-year-old American lawyer, who had been taken captive, was watching aboard a British ship as a prisoner of war. The British siege and bombardment of Fort McHenry lasted nearly 25 hours. During that rainy night aboard the British ship, while hearing and seeing continual bombs bursting in air, Key would not know how the battle would turn out until morning.



### The Flag Inspires a Poem

By the dawn's early light, Francis Scott Key looked to Fort McHenry and saw that the United States flag, the "Star-Spangled Banner", was still there flying high above the fort. On September 14, 1814, amazed that the American troops had successfully defended the fort from British attack, Key was inspired to write a poem entitled "Defence of Fort McHenry." He found some blank paper on the back of a letter and wrote down four verses that expressed his passion regarding this victorious event.

The 15-star, 15-stripe flag Key saw that morning flying high-above the fort, had been made by Mary Young Pickersgill. The 15 stars and stripes represented the 15 states that were a part of the United States at that time. This flag later came to be known as the "Star-Spangled Banner" and is today on display in the National Museum of American History, a treasure of the Smithsonian Institution.

### The Song Becomes an Anthem

Key's poem "Defence of Fort McHenry" gained attention throughout the years after the war, and was later set to the tune of a popular British song written by John Stafford Smith. Although Key's poem has four stanzas, only the first is commonly sung. This new poem set to song was entitled "The Star-Spangled Banner", and quickly became a very popular, patriotic song.

"The Star-Spangled Banner" was later recognized for official use by the United States Navy in 1889, and by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson in 1916. However, on March 3, 1931, nearly 117 years after Key wrote the words, Congress along with President Hoover's signature, made the "Star Spangled Banner" the official National Anthem of the United States. Thanks to Francis Scott Key and the American victory at Fort McHenry, "The Star Spangled Banner" has become a symbol of American freedom and patriotism. At sporting events, olympic games, political rallies and military events around the globe, this song has celebrated the United States as "the land of the free and the home of the brave."

Some portions of this writing have been adapted from the Wikipedia article [The Star-Spangled Banner](#), which is released under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). (view authors)  
Worksheet from [MisterHarms.com](#)

## THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

Historical Reading Questions

name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The war of 1812 was a conflict between which two parties?
2. The second paragraph of the reading best summarizes and answers which question?
  - a. How did "The Star-Spangled Banner" become the United States National Anthem?
  - b. How did United States defeat Great Britain?
  - c. When was Key's poem set to music?
  - d. Where was Francis Scott Key before he was inspired to write the poem?
3. What was the name of the poem that inspired the United States National Anthem?
4. What role did John Stafford Smith play in the history of the National Anthem?
5. Mary Young Pickersgill was known for?
  - a. Writing the melody to "The Star-Spangled Banner"
  - b. Sewing the flag that inspired the song
  - c. Helping Francis Scott Key while prisoner on the ship
  - d. Convincing Congress to make a National Anthem
6. Why did the "Star-Spangled Banner" flag have 15 stars and 15 stripes?
7. Which President signed the congressional resolution making "The Star-Spangled Banner" the official National Anthem of the United States?
  - a. James Madison
  - b. Woodrow Wilson
  - c. Franklin Roosevelt
  - d. Herbert Hoover

© MisterHarms.com

official National  
States  
a poem  
recognizes the song  
ny

ning? Write a few

otism? Explain.

© MisterHarms.com

## READING & 11 COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS WITH ANSWER KEY.

# CREATIVE RE-WRITING of NATIONAL ANTHEM



## THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

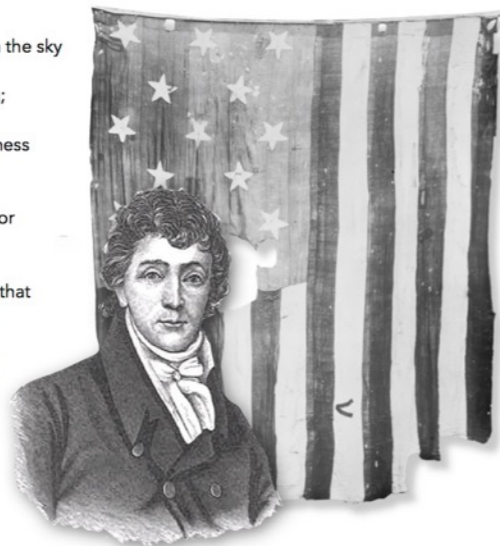
Creative Writing

name: \_\_\_\_\_

Written by Francis Scott Key, the poem "Defence of Fort McHenry" has become the lyrics to the United States National Anthem entitled "The Star-Spangled Banner." Below are the lyrics of this great anthem. Though the words are sung by many Americans, they are not necessarily understood by all. Use the definitions below to translate and write a more understandable, modern-day version of this historical song.

**Oh, 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 watched 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.  
Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?**

**dawn** - the first appearance of light in the sky before sunrise  
**hailed** - call out to, to attract attention; acclaim enthusiastically  
**twilight** - between daylight and darkness  
**gleaming** - shine brightly  
**perilous** - full of danger or risk  
**rampart** - a defensive wall of a castle or walled city  
**gallant** - grand, brave, heroic  
**streaming** - a large number of things that happen or come one after the other  
**proof** - evidence or argument  
**spangled** - a small piece of glittering material or object  
**banner** - a long strip of cloth bearing a slogan or design



© Mister Harms

## THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

All Four Verses

Oh, 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 watched 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.  
Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore, dimly seen through 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 in the stream:  
'Tis the star-spangled banner! Oh long may it wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

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 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.

Oh! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand  
Between their loved home and the war's desolation!  
Blest with victory and peace, may the heav'n rescued land  
Praise the Power 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.

Written by Francis Scott Key

**DIRECTIONS & TEMPLATE FOR CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY!**

# INTRODUCTORY "WHOLE-GROUP" QUIZ



1

Who wrote the lyrics to the United States National Anthem?

- A. James Madison
- B. Francis Scott Key**
- C. Patrick Henry
- D. Samuel Adams

2

The lyrics to the United States National Anthem is actually the name of the

- A. Defense of Fort Mifflin
- B. Star Spangled Banner**
- C. Home of the Brave
- D. Oh Say Can You See

6

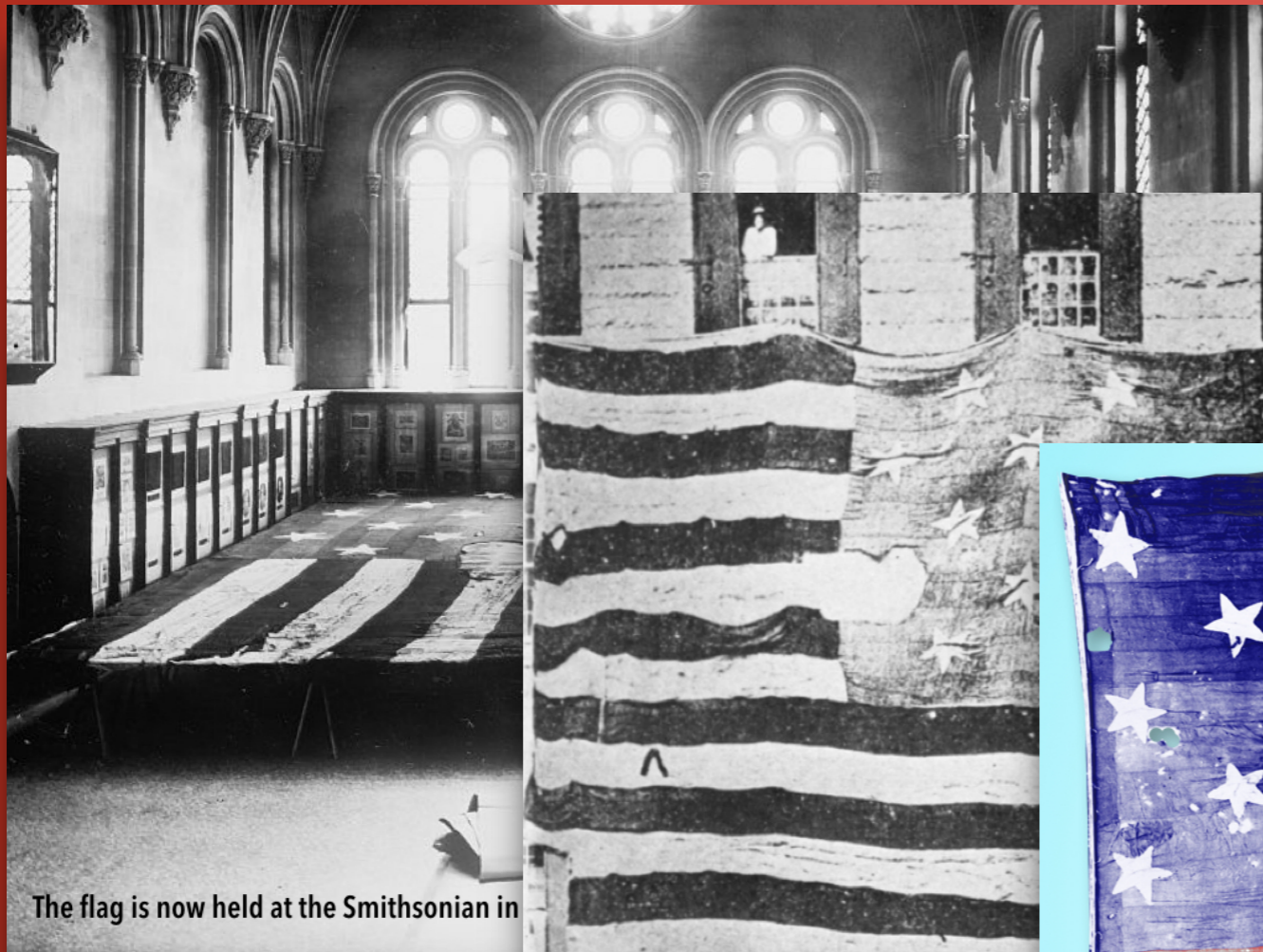
The Star Spangled Banner had some competition. What song almost became the National Anthem?

- A. God Bless the USA
- B. America The Beautiful**
- C. Battle Hymn of the Republic
- D. Yankee Doodle

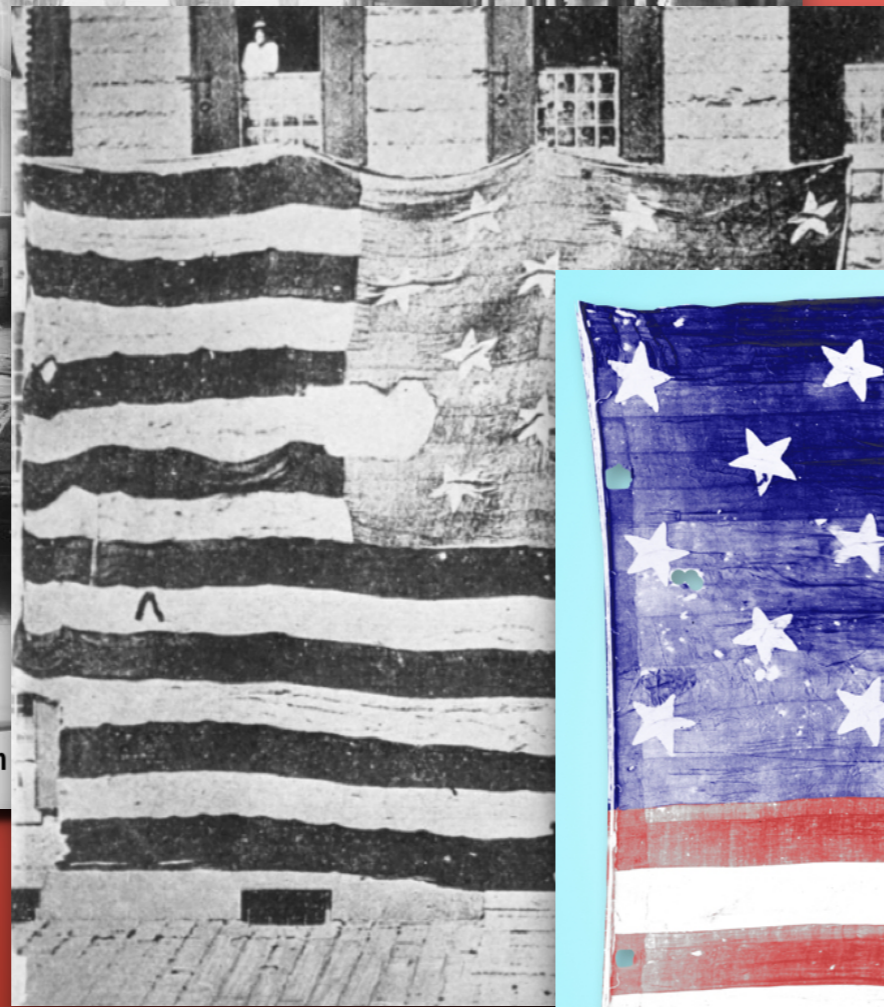
9 QUESTIONS WITH  
REVEALING ANSWERS



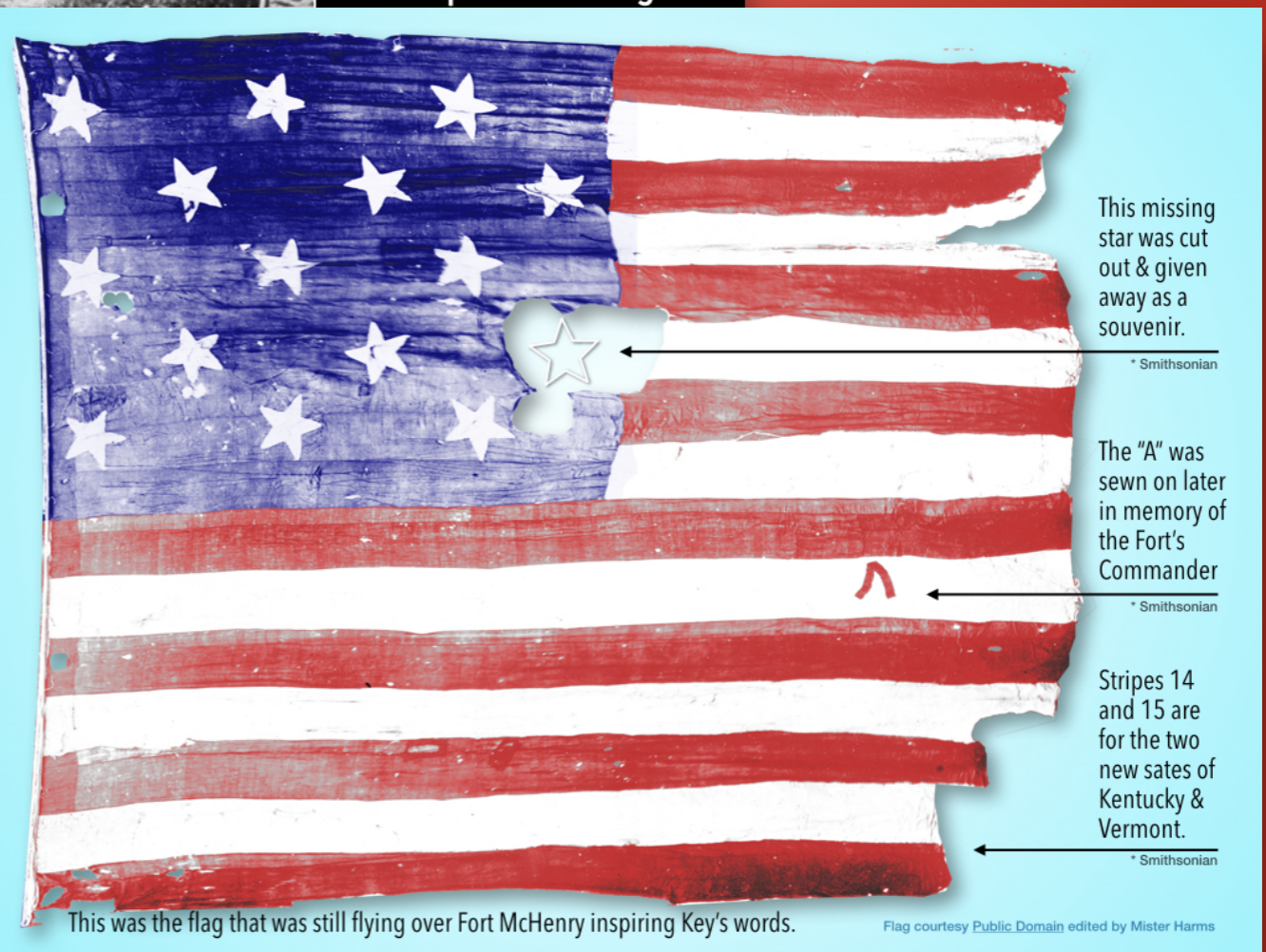
# INTRODUCTORY "WHOLE-GROUP" QUIZ



The flag is now held at the Smithsonian in



The largest battle flag in it's day, The Fort McHenry flag that inspired the song



This missing star was cut out & given away as a souvenir.

\* Smithsonian

The "A" was sewn on later in memory of the Fort's Commander

\* Smithsonian

Stripes 14 and 15 are for the two new sates of Kentucky & Vermont.

\* Smithsonian

This was the flag that was still flying over Fort McHenry inspiring Key's words.

Flag courtesy [Public Domain](#) edited by Mister Harms

**VARIETY OF PRIMARY SOURCE VISUALS & VIDEO CLIPS**



# QUIZ DIRECTIONS

---



1. HAVE FUN WITH THIS QUIZ USING IT TO INTRODUCE YOUR LESSON.
2. DIRECT STUDENTS TO TAKE OUT A PIECE OF PAPER AND NUMBER IT 1-9.
3. EXPLAIN TO STUDENTS THAT THEY WILL CORRECT THEIR OWN ANSWERS AS WE GO AND WINNERS WILL GET CANDY TREATS (OR SOME OTHER CLASS REWARD)!
4. PROJECT POWERPOINT FOR ALL TO SEE.
5. CLICK THROUGH QUESTIONS ONE AT A TIME.
6. MAKE IT INTERACTIVE. AFTER EACH QUESTION, ASK FOR A RAISE OF HANDS FOR "THOSE THAT CHOOSE ANSWER A." "WHO THOUGHT B?" ETC.
7. CLICK TO REVEAL THE ANSWER AND WATCH STUDENTS GET EXCITED, DISAPPOINTED, OR SAY "I KNEW THAT!"
8. CONTINUE ONE AT TIME UNTIL ALL 9 QUESTIONS ARE REVEALED.
9. ASK WHO GOT MORE THAN 1 RIGHT, MORE THAN 2, MORE THAN 3, ETC.
10. GIVE A CANDY TREAT TO THE WINNER OR WINNERS!
11. BEGIN YOUR EXCITING UNIT OR LESSON!
12. CHECK OUT **MISTER HARMS TPT STORE** FOR MORE ENGAGING CLASSROOM RESOURCES!

