

Hometown History

Parent Guide

Read the “Directions” sheet for step-by-step instructions.

SUMMARY

In this activity, you and your child will go on a field trip to a historic place to learn through asking questions and seeking answers through observation and using experts.

WHY

An important part of learning history is to experience it outside of the classroom and the textbook. All communities have important history, and visiting local resources is a great way for children to connect what they learn in school to places that they are familiar with.

TIME

- 40 minutes for Internet research and planning
- 90 minutes at trip site (travel time to site will vary)

CHALLENGE WORDS

- **historic site:** a place where an actual historic event took place, such as a historic house, a state park, or a national park

YOU NEED

- Directions sheets (*attached*)
- Computer with Internet and printer
- Camera (*optional*)
- Notebook (*optional*)
- Step Back in Time sheet (*attached*)
- Transportation (*possibly*)
- ThinkAbout sheet (*attached*)
- Poster board (*optional*)

GET READY

- Read the book *The Flag Maker* together to begin building an understanding of the War of 1812, knowledge about the Star-Spangled Banner, and emotional connections to the themes of pride and patriotism. For tips on reading this book together, check out the Guided Reading Activity (http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/starspangled/reading_the_flag_maker.pdf).
- Visit the Web site for Fort McHenry (www.nps.gov/fomc). This fort will be the comparison for visits to any other forts. It will also help the children know what to expect at a historical site like a fort.

RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best with children in kindergarten through fourth grade.



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For adults and kids to follow together.

1. First, you should find out what forts or other historic sites are near you.

Start by checking these Web sites:

Tip A historic site is a place where an actual historic event took place, such as a historic house, state park, or national park. A historic event doesn't necessarily involve a famous event. It could also be that people from long ago used the place in some way, like living in a house, working in a building, or planting fields for farming.

- <http://www.nps.gov/findapark/index.htm> Many forts and other historic sites are a part of the National Park Service. Some of these sites even have "Junior Ranger" programs, so you could become a Junior Ranger by doing activities to learn about the site, talking to a Park Ranger about your answers, and getting a special badge.
- <http://www.preservationnation.org/travel-and-sites/sites/index.html> The National Trust for Historic Preservation is an organization that helps people protect and enjoy historic places. As you learn about the sites, find out what time period they are most related to. For example, a house that George Washington lived in would be most related to 1732 to 1799, since those are the years he was alive.

Tip Try to find at least one site that is related to the early 1800s, when the War of 1812 occurred and "The Star Spangled Banner" was written. If there aren't any forts or sites from that time period, the trip can still be valuable, but may not connect directly to the book.

2. Work with your parents or teachers to make sure you can actually go to the sites.

Some might be too far away, or closed during the time you want to visit. Together, pick the site that will work best, considering how interested you are in the site, how easy it is to visit, and what time period it relates to.



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3. Before you go, take a look at the ThinkAbout sheets. Pick either the “fort” sheet or the “other historic sites” sheet. Try to think of other questions that you would like to find answers to, and add those at the bottom of the sheet.

4. Take your ThinkAbout sheet, your pencil, and your camera and head to the fort or other historic site. While you’re out, here are some suggestions for how to find the answers to your questions:

- Look around. Take or draw pictures of what you see.
- Talk to experts at the site and listen to their answers.
- Read signs, exhibits, or paper hand-outs that are at the site.

Tip After you get back from your trip, you can also visit the Web site of the historic site again, to answer any last questions.

5. Now, share what you’ve learned with someone else! Tell your family about your adventure over dinner, write about it in your diary, or make a poster with some pictures and captions to hang in your classroom.

Tip If you went to a fort or a historic site related to the early 1800s, think about how the site you visited might connect to the story of the Star-Spangled Banner.



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ThinkAbout: Visiting a Fort

Here are some ideas for questions you might want to answer during your trip to a fort. Feel free to add questions at the bottom. And don't be surprised if you come up with more questions while you're at the site!

When was it built? _____

Why was it built? _____

Are there any objects inside or around the fort that help tell its story? If "yes," what are they? _____

Compare the fort you visit to what you know about Fort McHenry. Sort these words into this chart to compare them.

Fort McHenry	(My Fort) _____

Older Newer Bigger Smaller Closer to Water Farther from Water
More Famous Less Famous Mostly Wood Mostly Stone Mostly Metal

More Questions!

Who ...? Write a question about the people who built the fort, lived in the fort, worked in the fort, or work in the fort today.

Question: _____

Answer: _____

When ...? Write a question about the specific times and time periods, like the time it took to build the fort, when the fort was used, when the fort was closed, or the times of day when people worked at the fort in the past.

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Why ...? Write a question about the reasons why different things happened here, like opening, closing, battles, or becoming a historical site for people to visit.

Question: _____

Answer: _____



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ThinkAbout: Visiting Other Historic Sites

Here are some ideas for questions you might want to answer during your trip to a historic site. Feel free to add questions at the bottom. And don't be surprised if you come up with more questions while you're at the site!

Who lived in this area in the early 1800s? _____

How many people lived in this area in the early 1800s? _____

Had this state been granted statehood yet in the early 1800s? _____

What important event happened here? _____

Why was it built? _____

Are there any objects inside or around the site that help tell its story? If "yes," what are they? _____

Compare what you can learn about the time period relates to the historic site to what you know about your community today. Sort these words into this chart for comparing.

My community during the ____ (era)	My community today

Bigger Smaller Has More Trees Has Fewer Trees
Has More People Has Fewer People

More Questions!

Who ...? Write a question about the people who built the site, lived at or around the site, worked at the site, or work at the site today.

Question: _____

Answer: _____

When ...? Write a question about the specific times and time periods, like the time it took to build the site, the time the site was used for its original purpose, the time the site stopped being used for its original purpose, or the times of day when people worked at the site in the past.

Question: _____

Answer: _____



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Step Back in Time

For more information, visit the National Museum of American History Web site <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/starspangled/>.

The flag that is now known as the Star-Spangled Banner was made by Mary Pickersgill's flag shop in Baltimore, Maryland in 1813. The Battle of Baltimore, during the War of 1812, was fought while this flag was flying over Fort McHenry. During this battle, Francis Scott Key was looking at the flag flying over Fort McHenry and thought of the words that we now sing as the national anthem of the United States. For more information, visit: <http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner>.



Illustration of the Battle of Fort McHenry, from *The Flag Maker*

Fort McHenry was built between 1799 and 1802. The fort is located in Baltimore, which was an important city during the War of 1812. During the War of 1812, the people of



The Star-Spangled Banner was created in 1813.

Baltimore were certain that the British would attack the city. Everything was made ready at Fort McHenry to defend Baltimore, including having a flag created that was large enough for the British to see from a distance. This flag became known as the Star-Spangled Banner. The fort was also used as a prison and a war hospital during the Civil War and World War I. It is now part of the National Park Service. For more information, visit: <http://www.nps.gov/fomc/historyculture/index.htm>.

What town do you live in?

What kind of historical events happened in your town or area?

Investigate your local area, think up some questions, and go explore!

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Read the “Directions” and “Parent Guide” sheets for step-by-step instructions.

OBJECTIVES

The students will be better able to:

- use their senses to collect information.
- ask and seek answers to historical questions.
- draw conclusions based on historical information.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Demonstrates knowledge of content
- Investigates a variety of questions
- (if applicable) Connects to the story of the Star-Spangled Banner

STANDARDS

NCHS History Standards

K-4 Historical Thinking Standards

- 2A. Examine local architecture and landscape to compare changes in function and appearance over time.
- 4A. Formulate historical questions
- 4B. Obtain historical data from a variety of sources

K-4 Historical Content Standards

- 3E. The student understands the ideas that were significant in the development of the state and that helped forge its unique identity.
- 4E. The student understands national symbols through which American values and principles are expressed.

ISTE Education Technology Standards for Students (NETS.S)

- 3A. Plan strategies to guide inquiry.
- 3B. Locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media.

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/starspangled/>



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21st-Century Skills

Life and Career Skills

- Initiative and Self-Direction

