

## Poetry and Our National Anthem

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**Objectives:** Students will be able to express the meaning of the Star-Spangled Banner national anthem in their own words and write their own poetry in relation to the flag or other historical event.

**Time:** 50 minutes, plus homework

**Skills:** Paraphrasing, recognizing and using poetic devices, poetry writing.

**Content area:** Social Studies- United States history, Language Arts- Storytelling, Language Arts- Mechanics, Language Arts- Poetry

**Materials:**

- ◆ Copies of the Star-Spangled Banner

**Standards:**

### **NCHS History Standards**

5-12 Historical Thinking Standards

**2A:** Identify the author or source of the historical document or narrative and assess its credibility.

**2B:** Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage.

**2E:** Read historical narratives imaginatively.

5-12 U. S. History Content Standards

**Era 4:** Expansion and Reform (1801—61)

**1A:** The student understands the international background and consequences of the Louisiana Purchase, the War of 1812, and the Monroe Doctrine.

### **IRA/NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts**

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other

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texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

## Introduction:

Francis Scott Key was a well-known attorney in his day, but he was also an amateur poet. His most famous poem, written with the tune of a popular British song, was originally entitled “the Defense of Fort M’Henry”. When formally connected to the music, a few days after the battle in 1814, it was rechristened “The Star-Spangled Banner”. Listen to the original British song and a 19th-century version of The Star-Spangled Banner online at <http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/mp3/song.anac.dsl.mp3> and <http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/mp3/song.ssb.dsl.mp3> respectively. By studying the works of this song – which became our national anthem in 1931 – students will learn vocabulary, paraphrasing, and various poetic devices. They will also have a chance to write original poetry.

## Vocabulary:

**alliteration**— a phrase with two or more words having the same initial sound

**desolation**—in a state of hopelessness, in despair

**disclose**—expose to view

**fitfully**—irregular bursts of activity

**gleaming**—a brief beam or flash of light

**haughty**—proud and vain

**havoc**—widespread destruction and devastation

**hireling**—someone who offers their services solely for a fee

**imagery**—mental pictures of images of something

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- metaphor**—a figure of speech in which a term is transferred from the object it ordinarily designates to an object it may only describe by comparison
- metonymy**—a figure of speech in which an attribute or well-known feature is used to name or designate something
- paraphrase**—a restatement of text in another form
- personification**—giving human qualities to inanimate objects
- rampart**—barriers used to defend against attack
- reposes**—places trust in
- rhyme scheme**—the arrangement of rhymes in a poem or stanza
- simile**—a figure of speech in which two essentially unlike things are compared
- spangled**—to decorate with bright objects for a glittering effect
- symbolism**—representing things through the use of symbols
- vauntingly**—boastfully, bragging about

## Poetic Devices Used by Francis Scott Key:

Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of a word. Find three examples of alliteration in the poem. How does alliteration affect a poem?

Imagery is the use of words that create a picture. Francis Scott Key uses many adjectives to help create a concrete image in the reader’s mind. Go through the poem and find the words or phrases that Key employs to “paint a picture” with words.

Metonymy is the part standing for the whole. For instance, asking for “a glass” when you want a glass of water is a use of metonymy since “glass” is used to represent that which it holds. Does Key use metonymy in his poem? Is “The Star-Spangled Banner” itself metonymous as it stands for Fort McHenry and the Battle of Baltimore Harbor?

Personification is the transferring of human qualities or actions to inanimate objects. Find an example of personification in the poem and discuss why Key would use personification in his poem.

Rhyme Scheme is a way to describe the structure of a poem, usually by comparing the end of each line and how they rhyme. What is the rhyme scheme of this poem?

Symbolism is the use of a physical object to represent an idea, person or another object. The flag itself is a symbol of the United States and the ideas of liberty and justice that the nation embodies. Where does Key use symbolism in the poem and to what effect?

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## Activities:

The following may be used as an assignment, in which a student completes one or more of the activities at home or during class time.

- ◆ “The Star-Spangled Banner” is a narrative poem since the poet desire to tell a story through verse. What is Francis Scott Key trying to communicate through the poem? To whom do you think he is trying to communicate? If you were trying to tell the story in prose, how would you communicate his intended message? As Francis Scott Key, compose a letter to a neighbor describing the events.
- ◆ Research the War of 1812 and the Battle of Baltimore in 1814. What were the events the led up to the poem? What do you think followed the events of the poem? Write two additional verses, or paragraphs, to add at the beginning and end of the poem that describe the events before and after the poem.

Use these websites to help in your research:

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/printable/section.asp?id=2>  
<http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner>

- ◆ Paraphrase “The Star-Spangled Banner” into your own words. You can work in a group or individually.
- ◆ Create your own poem that expresses your feelings about the United States or about a historic event. You should incorporate some of the poetic devices used by Key in “The Star-Spangled Banner”, such as alliteration or personification. Did you notice that Key did not use any *metaphors* or *similes*? Look up metaphor and simile in the dictionary or online if you are unfamiliar with these terms. See if you can use these poetic devices in your own poem.
- ◆ Some politicians and scholars have tried to replace “The Star-Spangled Banner” as the national anthem due to the violent imagery in the poem. Find the violent imagery in the poem and discuss whether the content of “The Star-Spangled Banner” is appropriate for the national anthem. What is your personal opinion of the anthem’s verse and music? Do you think it is well-written poetry? Why or why not? What about the tune?
- ◆ Each national anthem has its own distinct history and reason for being used as the musical representation of a people and culture. Research the national anthem of a foreign nation and explain the significance of the song to the people it represents. If possible, interview a native of that country about his or her national anthem.

## The Star-Spangled Banner

By Francis Scott Key (1814)

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 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,  
O 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, now conceals, now 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!

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, or the gloom or 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 homes and the war's desolation!  
Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven-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!

THE  
STAR SPANGLED BANNER

A PATRIOTIC SONG.

Baltimore. Printed and Sold at CARRS Music Store 36 Baltimore Street.  
Air, Anacreon in Heaven.

Con Spirito

O! 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 & bright stars thro' the  
perilous fight, O'er the ramparts we watch'd stre so gallantly streaming. And the  
Rockets red glare, the Bombs bursting in air Gave proof through the night that our

T. C. C. (Adapt'd & Arr'd by T. C.)

Sheet music to the Star-Spangled Banner appears courtesy of Corbis-Bettman.

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2<sup>d</sup> Time Chorus.

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.

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,	And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence re-	That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,	A home and a country, shall leave us no more,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses,	Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution!
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,	No refuge could save the hireling and slave,
In full glory reflected now shines in the stream,	From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,
'Tis the star-spangled banner, O, long may it	And the star-spangled banner, in triumph doth
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.	O'er the Land &c.

(4)

Oh thus be it ever when freemen shall stand,  
Between their lov'd home, 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 preserv'd 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 &c.

For the Flute.

Con Spirito

(Adap<sup>d</sup> & Arr<sup>d</sup> by T. C.) (Pl. 2.)

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Business Manager

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Business Coordinator

**Lourdes Gamez**

Created By

**Libby O’Connell, Ph.D.**  
**Beth Ann Marian, M.Ed.**  
**Kevin Blake**  
**Jodi Greenwald**

Research

**Jamie Eschric**  
**Jodi Greenwald**  
**Kevin Blake**

Creative Design

**Madeline Gleason**  
**Wendy Toffel**

### For The National Museum of American History

---

Director, Education and Visitor Services

**Nancy McCoy**

Director, Star-Spangled Banner Project

**Ron Becker**

Director, Hands-On Science Center

**Theresa Esterlund**

Chief Conservator

**Suzanne Thomassen-Krauss**

Education Specialists

**Amy Bartow-Melia**  
**Burt Glassman**  
**Tim Grove**

Curator, Star-Spangled Banner

Conservation Exhibition

**Lonn Taylor**

Chief of Education, Lemelson Center

**Michael Judd**

Teacher Advisors

**Gloria Allen, Bunker Hill Elementary, Washington, D.C.**  
**Veronica Bryant, Cameron Elementary, Fairfax Co., VA**  
**Rhonda Dillard, Francis Scott Key Middle School, Montgomery Co., MD**  
**Henry Edwards, Burgundy Farm Country Day, Alexandria, VA**  
**Susan Hurscaldere, Blessed Sacrament, Chevy Chase, MD**  
**Mike Rutherford, Manassas County Public Schools, VA**  
**Robert Sindall, Cold Springs Elementary, Montgomery Co., MD**  
**Vikki Wismer, Flintstone Elementary, Prince Georges Co., MD**