



The Star-Spangled Banner

by Francis Scott Key

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The War of 1812: Inspiration for The Star-Spangled Banner

The following events led up to the writing of *The Star-Spangled Banner*:

- War broke out in 1812 over Britain's attempts to regulate American shipping and other activities.
- Summer of 1813 at Fort McHenry, the commander, Maj. George Armistead, asked for a flag to be made so big that "the British would have no trouble seeing it from a distance".
- Mary Young Pickersgill, a "maker of colours," was commissioned to make the flag with her thirteen year old daughter Caroline.
 - 400 yards of the best quality wool bunting
 - 15 stars that measured two feet from point to point
 - Eight red and seven white stripes, each two feet wide
 - The flag was hand-sewn together
 - By August 1813 it was finished
 - It measured 30 feet by 42 feet and cost \$405.90
- The British had entered Chesapeake Bay on August 19th, 1814.
- September 3rd, Francis Scott Key and Col. Skinner set sail from Baltimore aboard a sloop flying a flag of truce approved by President Madison to free Dr. Beanes.
 - Dr. Beanes, a physician, had been taken captive and held on a British ship
 - He was released because of how well he had taken care of the wounded British soldiers, but not until the battle at Fort McHenry, Baltimore was over
- At 7 a.m. on the morning of September 13, 1814, the British bombardment began, and the flag was ready to meet the enemy.
- The bombardment continued for 25 hours, the British firing 1,500 bombshells that weighed as much as 220 pounds
- The Americans had sunk 22 British vessels
- The British land assault on Baltimore as well as the naval attack, had been abandoned and the British officers ordered a retreat.
- When at last daylight came, Key and Skinner could see "through the mist of the deep that the flag was still there!"

This flag went on view for the first time after flying over Fort McHenry, on January 1st, 1876 at the Old State House in Philadelphia for the nations' Centennial celebration. It was then placed in the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of American History. An opaque curtain shielded the fragile flag from light and dust. The flag was exposed for viewing for a few moments once every hour during museum hours. However, in 1994, it was decided to do some major restoration and cleaning of the flag. After a several year process, the flag has been cleaned and preserved with it's many signs of wear. It is on display for all to see in the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

Here is a link to the restoration process that shows pictures and tells how it was carefully cleaned and supporting fabric removed. <https://amhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/preservation-project.aspx>

(Thank you, Kerry Seip, for sending me the information about the restoration.)



Star Spangled Banner Flag¹

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 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, 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, 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 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.

O thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation.
Blest with vict'ry 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!

Answer Key

Star-Spangled Banner Worksheet

1. Francis Scott Key
2. The Ward of 1812
3. Dr. Beanes
4. Fort McHenry, Baltimore
5. The Smithsonian Institution's Museum of American History
6. Because it is so fragile that it can't be in the light for very long or to help preserve it
7. The Maryland Historical Society and the Library of Congress
8. John Philip Sousa, Walter Damrosch, Will Earhart, Arnodl J. Gavtvoort or Oscar Sonneck
9. Betsy Ross
10. 50 stars and 13 stripes
11. The Civil War
12. Because it puts the British in a negative light or is negative about the British

1. "Star Spangled Banner Flag on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of History and Technology, around 1964" by Unknown - Star Spangled Banner, NMAH, Smithsonian Institution Archives.. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Star_Spangled_Banner_Flag_on_display_at_the_Smithsonian%27s_National_Museum_of_History_and_Technology,_around_1964.jpg#/media/File:Star_Spangled_Banner_Flag_on_display_at_the_Smithsonian%27s_National_Museum_of_History_and_Technology,_around_1964.jpg
2. "Francis Scott Key by Joseph Wood c1825" by attributed to Joseph Wood (1778-1830) - [1]. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francis_Scott_Key_by_Joseph_Wood_c1825.jpg#/media/File:Francis_Scott_Key_by_Joseph_Wood_c1825.jpg
3. "Stafford Smith" by by Thomas Illman after William Behnes - <http://www.npgprints.com/image/56872/thomas-illman-william-behnes-john-stafford-smith>. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stafford_Smith.png#/media/File:Stafford_Smith.png
4. "The Star-Spangled Banner - Project Gutenberg eText 21566" by No image credit - The Project Gutenberg EBook of The Good Old Songs We Used to Sing, '61 to '65, by Osbourne H. Oldroyd - <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/21566>.. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Star-Spangled_Banner_-_Project_Gutenberg_eText_21566.jpg#/media/File:The_Star-Spangled_Banner_-_Project_Gutenberg_eText_21566.jpg

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