

LESSON WRITER: Evelyn R. Tolliver

DATE: July 24, 2009

COURSE/GRADE: American History/4th- 5th grade

UNIT: War of 1812

LESSON TITLE: “What was Francis Scott Key writing about?”

TIME NEEDED: One 45-minute class period

LESSON OVERVIEW:

This lesson should be taught after the introduction to the attack on Fort McHenry during the War of 1812. Students should have been introduced to some of the history behind the writing of “*The Star-Spangled Banner*”. The students will use this lesson to dissect the lyrics to “*The Star-Spangled Banner*” and gain a better understanding of the song. They will also discuss the song’s relevance to the country’s present state of the union and discuss whether the lyrics are still applicable to America today.

OUTCOMES: At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain the meaning of the lyrics of the National Anthem
- Reflect on the events of the bombardment of Ft. McHenry
- Form an argument on whether the “Star-Spangled Banner” is an acceptable National Anthem in today’s society

OBJECTIVES:

Focus Question for the Lesson: What was Francis Scott Key writing about?

Historical Thinking Skill Targeted:

- **Historical Comprehension:** Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage
- **Historical Analysis:** Hypothesize the influence of the past

VSC Content Objectives:

- **5.C.2.a** Describe Maryland’s role in the war of 1812

VSC Skills and Processes Objectives:

- **6.A.3.f** Periodically summarize or paraphrase important ideas while reading
- **6.A.4.c** Determine and explain the author’s purpose
- **6.G.2.c** Construct a sound historical interpretation

MATERIALS:

- Chart Paper
- Student copies of “*The Star Spangled Banner*”
- Instrumental version of “*The Star Spangled Banner*”
- Sentence Strips
- Markers
- Pencils and paper
- Worksheet, “National Anthem Lyrics”
- Worksheet, “What’s the National Anthem about?”
- Worksheet, “National Anthem”

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Francis Scott Key. The Star- Spangled Banner [1812]. Sheet music and lyrics. Fort McHenry.

“Bombardment of Fort McHenry” John D. Troy. Printer, Corner of St. Paul’s Lane and Market Street. 1812. Fort McHenry.

SECONDARY SOURCES:

(Optional)- May be used with students with IEP’s and 504 plans

Sonneborn, Liz (2004) *America in Words and Song “The Star-Spangled Banner”: The story behind our national anthem.* Chelsea Clubhouse Publishers. Philadelphia

SELECTED VOCABULARY:

- **broad-** wide
- **dawn-** the beginning of a new day
- **gallantly-** honorably
- **hail-** to praise
- **o’er-** over
- **perilous-** very dangerous
- **ramparts-** a hill used as a fort

PROCEDURE:

1) Motivation:

Teacher will play an instrumental of the National Anthem. Students will work in small groups or in pairs to write the title and words of the song. (The song may be played more than once, if necessary.)

Post the actual words to “*The Star-Spangled Banner*” (either on a transparency or chart paper). Discuss with students how accurate their versions are compared to the actual version. Were there any students who were able to recollect all of the words accurately? Explain that the words of the song were written as a poem by a lawyer, Francis Scott Key, who was being held on a British ship through the bombardment of Ft. McHenry during the War of 1812. The words were written as a reflection of that event. Ask: So, what was Key writing about?

2) Guided Practice:

Explain that students will attempt to figure out what Key was witnessing during the bombardment by reflecting on some of the lines of the first stanza of the poem that was to become our National Anthem. Model by dissecting the first two lines of “*The Star-Spangled Banner*,” the teacher should use the “think aloud” strategy while reciting the lines. For example, while reading, “O! Say can you see by the dawns early light,” the teacher may comment, “What does that mean to me? I know the word, ‘dawn,’ so maybe it means ‘look over there, where there is a little early sunlight.” Teacher should write down paraphrased version for students to view. Continue on by saying, “...what so proudly we hailed at the twilights last gleaming?’ What does that mean?” Encourage students to give interpretation; an acceptable response would be similar to “That thing we were so proud of last night.”

Keep the lyrics to the first stanza posted throughout the lesson as well as the paraphrased version on the first two lines so that students can refer to it throughout the lesson.

3) Independent Practice:

Divide students into four groups. Each group will receive a sentence strip with one or two lines of the “Star-Spangled Banner” written on it. Group members will work together to try and paraphrase what the line(s) mean, just as the teacher modeled.

Lines to be given to students:

Group 1:	Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight
Group 2:	O’er the ramparts we watch’d, were so gallantly streaming?
Group 3:	And the rocket’s red glare, the bombs bursting in air, Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there,
Group 4:	O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

The teacher may differentiate the process by having students rotate the lines among the groups so that each group will make an attempt to paraphrase each part of the stanza. Then compare.

The teacher may also accommodate by giving the shorter lines (Group 1 and 2) to those who may need extended time or for those who may struggle with written language.

4) Assessment

Students will complete the worksheet entitled “What is the national anthem about?” For differentiation students may either write or illustrate their response. Have students reflect on whether or not Key accurately depicted the bombardment of Ft. McHenry based on what they have learned in previous lessons.

5) Closure

Explain to students that in the years leading up to “*The Star-Spangled Banner*” becoming our National Anthem (in 1931) there were many people that debated that there were better patriotic songs that could be used. Inform the students that some still debate this same topic today. Many feel that the words to “*The Star-Spangled Banner*” do not reflect us accurately as the nation we are today. Use details from the lesson about “*The Star-Spangled Banner*” to answer the questions: Is “*The Star-Spangled Banner*” a good national anthem for the United States? Why or Why not? Are there other song options that may be better? Should someone write a new national anthem? What events or descriptions should the song contain? Students should use the worksheet, “National Anthem” to record their thoughts.

This response may be a journal entry, classroom assignment, or home assignment. Responses may lead to lesson extensions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCOMMODATIONS:

To assist students with IEPs and 504s, the small groups could be heterogeneous grouped to ensure that stronger readers are grouped with weaker readers. Weaker readers may also be assigned the optional book “*America in words and song...*” (See secondary sources) This book is

kid-friendly and contains the actual words as depicted in the primary resources distributed throughout the lesson. They may also receive extended time on the assessment.

LESSON EXTENSIONS:

1. Have students divide into two (or three) debate teams and hold a debate over whether “*The Star-Spangled Banner*” should be our National Anthem. Students can be given primary sources dealing with the original debates. Others may investigate other options for our National Anthem. Students should be able to give reasons why “*The Star-Spangled Banner*” or another patriotic song should be our National Anthem. (The third debate team could argue for a new National Anthem to be written to reflect the past, present, and future of America.)
2. Have students discuss whether the U.S. is “... the land of the free and the home of the brave.” The students can research what other events were going on in the United States during the War of 1812. Analyze whether or not we were “free and brave” then, and if we are “free and brave” now.

Name

Date

The National Anthem Pre/Post-test

1) Who wrote the National Anthem?

- a) George Washington
- b) William Paca
- c) Francis Scott Key
- d) Celine Dion

2) What is the name of the National Anthem?

- a) *“O! say can you see”*
- b) *“The Star-Spangled Banner”*
- c) *“God bless America”*
- d) *“America the Beautiful”*

3) Where was the National Anthem Written?

- a) Washington, D.C.
- b) Maryland
- c) New York
- d) Pennsylvania

4) What war was being fought during the writing of the National Anthem?

- a) American Revolution
- b) Civil War
- c) War of 1812
- d) World War I

5) What is the National Anthem about?

- a) The U.S. flag
- b) Brotherhood
- c) Immigration
- d) Civil Rights

Name _____

Date _____

What is the National Anthem about?

In the space provided explain the meaning behind the first stanza of "*The Star-Spangled Banner*." You may write or illustrate your response. ALL ILLUSTRATIONS MUST CONTAIN A CAPTION.

A large rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a student's response. The box is mostly empty, with several horizontal lines drawn near the bottom edge to provide a guide for writing. There are 10 horizontal lines in total, spaced evenly across the lower portion of the box.

Name _____ Date _____

The National Anthem

Is "The Star-Spangled Banner" still a good national anthem? Why or Why not?

What song would be a better national anthem? Explain your choice.



Should someone write a new national anthem? What events or descriptions should the song contain?



Name _____ Date _____

