

# 9/11 MEMORIAL

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UNIT: Mourning, Memorializing, and Meaning-Making of 9/11

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GRADE LEVEL/S: 6-8

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TIME NEEDED: 2-3 sessions

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TEACHER: Mary M. Vazquez

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LESSON TITLE:

## THE UNITED STATES FLAG AS A SYMBOL

### Common Core Standards

**RH 1** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

**WH 3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

### Key Questions/ Issues Addressed

How and why has the national flag become a fundamental American symbol?

What common themes of experience bind the flag that flew over Fort McHenry during the War of 1812 and the National 9/11 Flag discovered at Ground Zero in the aftermath of 9/11?

### Lesson Goals/ Objectives

Students will be able to understand the symbolism and meaning of the American Flag through two significant historical events: The War of 1812 and 9/11.

### Key Terms

Desolation, Havoc, Perilous, Ramparts, Repose, Vauntingly

### Materials

Biography of Francis Scott Key (See [Appendix A](#))

Lyrics to The Star Spangled Banner (See [Appendix B](#))

Interactive 9/11 Timeline: <http://timeline.national911memorial.org> (See also [Appendix C](#) for a written version.)

American Flag

Access to computer and the Internet

### Background for lesson

If necessary, view the Interactive 9/11 Timeline on the 9/11 Memorial website to provide a background of 9/11 (See [Appendix C](#) for a written version adapted for middle school students).

See also the [9/11 FAQ](#) for background on 9/11: [www.911memorial.org/faqabout911](http://www.911memorial.org/faqabout911).

**Instructional  
Activity/  
Procedures**

1. Discuss with students: *What is the significance of the American flag? What ideals does it convey to the American people? Does it carry emotional meaning as well? Describe. How has the flag served as a support to Americans in both good and bad times?*
2. Read the biography of Francis Scott Key (See [Appendix A](#)). *How did his experiences lead to his composition of The Star Spangled Banner?*
3. Read the lyrics to [The Star Spangled Banner](#) (See [Appendix B](#)). After reading the biography of Francis Scott Key, underline the words that best communicate what he was feeling at the moment the flag was displayed as the British retreated.
4. Part of an American flag was salvaged in the World Trade Center debris pile in the days after 9/11. It was then displayed at the site during the rescue, recovery, and clean-up operations. Since then, this flag has experienced controversy and acclaim. See the following primary sources examining the flag's history:

- a. In "Twice Saved from Destruction," an article in [The Star Ledger](#), a New Jersey newspaper, reporter Wayne Woolley tells how Marilyn Zoidis, former curator of the Star Spangled Banner Project, and some local residents of New Providence wanted to save the National 9/11 flag while some veterans wanted to retire it by proper burning. The debate sparked deep emotions.

According to Zoidis, "The passions this flag raised were powerful." See Zoidis online at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ECPyLV83OQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ECPyLV83OQ)

- b. In another Star Ledger article, "Stitching Up the Pieces" by Mark Dilonno, a Verona, NJ flag company discusses repairing the flag for a tour of the United States: [blog.nj.com/njv\\_mark\\_diionno/2011/02/september\\_11\\_flag\\_is\\_being\\_rep.html](http://blog.nj.com/njv_mark_diionno/2011/02/september_11_flag_is_being_rep.html).
- c. This 9/11 Memorial blog post discusses the flag's tour throughout the United States: [www.911memorial.org/blog/tags/national-911-flag](http://www.911memorial.org/blog/tags/national-911-flag)

*Ask: How does the flag represent events, attitudes, and patriotism? Why did some want to preserve the flag? Why did some want to burn it?*

This 9/11 Memorial blog post highlights how flags were placed at the World Trade Center site after the death of Osama bin Laden:  
[www.911memorial.org/blog/%E2%80%98flag-honor%E2%80%99-waves-atop-911-memorial-museum-pavilion-wtc](http://www.911memorial.org/blog/%E2%80%98flag-honor%E2%80%99-waves-atop-911-memorial-museum-pavilion-wtc)

*Ask: Why did people place flags at the site after bin Laden's death? Do you think this was appropriate? Why or why not?*

*In all of these events, does the 9/11 flag continue to represent similar values as during the American Revolution and the War of 1812? Why or why not? Like the flag from the War of 1812, how does the National 9/11 flag reflect its own time?*

**Instructional Activity/ Procedures**

5. Let students know that songs have been written about the events of 9/11, for example:
  - “We Will Remember You” Robyn Adams
  - “Tears” Sarah McLachlin
  - “Pray for Peace” Michele Tumes

Thus far, though, there have been no songs written and dedicated to the National 9/11 flag. Working in pairs or groups, write a song in tribute to the 9/11 flag. Think about the events of that day, the emotions of those who experienced the attacks, and how your words will affect future generations.

6. Ask students: *How does the significance of the American Flag displayed in Baltimore, MD have the same significance as the National 9/11 flag? How is it different?*
7. Tell students that the flag that flew over Fort McHenry during the War of 1812 resides in the National Museum of American History in Washington, DC. After concluding its journey to each of the 50 states, the National 9/11 flag will be taken to the 9/11 Memorial Museum where it will be accessioned as part of the museum’s collection. *Do you think this is where the flag belongs? Why or why not?*

**Evidence of Understanding**

Question/answer, class discussion, and completed songs in tribute to the 9/11 flag.

**Extension Activities**

Depending upon one’s location, plan a visit to one of the memorials in honor of Francis Scott Key: Fort Henry, Baltimore, Maryland; Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Frederick, Maryland; Presidio, San Francisco, California.

Plan a visit to the 9/11 Memorial Museum after it opens in fall 2012 to view the National 9/11 flag.

Note: The flag will be rotated in/out of the exhibition to help protect it.

Think of this symbol while reflecting on these two historical events. *What are some feelings the flag might convey to someone experiencing an important event?*

Cross-curricular project with world language and/or social studies teacher. Each student will select a flag from another country and research the origins and symbolism of each flag. Write a one-page explanation of that flag. *Does this flag symbolize similar ideals for citizens in other countries as the American flag does for Americans?* Create a bulletin board depicting Flags of the World.

## APPENDIX A

**Francis Scott Key  
1780-1843**

Excerpted from: [www.usflag.org/francis.scott.key.html](http://www.usflag.org/francis.scott.key.html)

Francis Scott Key was a respected young lawyer living in Georgetown just west of where the modern day Key Bridge crosses the Potomac River (the house was torn down after years of neglect in 1947). He made his home there from 1804 to around 1833 with his wife Mary and their six sons and five daughters. At the time, Georgetown was a thriving town of 5,000 people just a few miles from the Capitol, the White House, and the Federal buildings of Washington.

But, after war broke out in 1812 over Britain's attempts to regulate American shipping and other activities while Britain was at war with France, all was not tranquil in Georgetown. The British had entered Chesapeake Bay on August 19th, 1814, and by the evening of the 24th of August, the British had invaded and captured Washington. They set fire to the Capitol and the White House, the flames visible 40 miles away in Baltimore.

President James Madison, his wife Dolly, and his Cabinet had already fled to a safer location. Such was their haste to leave that they had had to rip the Stuart portrait of George Washington from the walls without its frame!

A thunderstorm at dawn kept the fires from spreading. The next day more buildings were burned and again a thunderstorm dampened the fires. Having done their work, the British troops returned to their ships in and around the Chesapeake Bay.

In the days following the attack on Washington, the American forces prepared for the assault on Baltimore (population 40,000) that they knew would come by both land and sea. Word soon reached Francis Scott Key that the British had carried off an elderly and much loved town physician of Upper Marlboro, Dr. William Beanes, and he was being held on the British flagship TONNANT. The townsfolk feared that Dr. Beanes would be hanged. They asked Francis Scott Key for his help, and he agreed, and arranged to have Col. John Skinner, an American agent for prisoner exchange, to accompany him.

On the morning of September 3rd, he and Col. Skinner set sail from Baltimore aboard a sloop flying a flag of truce approved by President Madison. On the 7th they found and boarded the TONNANT to confer with British Gen. Robert Ross and Adm. Alexander Cochrane. At first they refused to release Dr. Beanes, but Key and Skinner produced a pouch of letters written by wounded British prisoners praising the care they were receiving from the Americans, among them Dr. Beanes. The British officers relented but would not release the three Americans immediately because they had seen and heard too much of the preparations for the attack on Baltimore. They were placed under guard, and forced to wait out the battle behind the British fleet.

**APPENDIX A**  
(Continued)

Going back to the summer of 1813 at the star-shaped Fort McHenry, the commander, Maj. George Armistead, had asked for a flag so big that “the British would have no trouble seeing it from a distance.” Two officers, a Commodore and a General, were sent to the Baltimore home of Mary Young Pickersgill, a “maker of colors,” and commissioned the flag. Mary and her thirteen year old daughter Caroline, working in an upstairs front bedroom, used 400 yards of best quality wool bunting. They cut 15 stars that measured two feet from point to point. Eight red and seven white stripes, each two feet wide, were cut. Laying out the material on the malt house floor of Claggett’s Brewery, a neighborhood establishment, the flag was sewn together. By August it was finished. It measured 30 by 42 feet and cost \$405.90. The Baltimore Flag House, a museum, now occupies her premises, which were restored in 1953.

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 and carried lighted fuses that would supposedly cause it to explode when it reached its target. But they weren’t very dependable and often blew up in mid air. From special small boats the British fired the new Congreve rockets that traced wobbly arcs of red flame across the sky. The Americans had sunk 22 vessels, so a close approach by the British was not possible. That evening the canons stopped, but at about 1 a.m. on the 14th, the British fleet roared to life, lighting the rainy night sky with grotesque fireworks.

Key, Col. Skinner, and Dr. Beanes watched the battle with apprehension. They knew that as long as the shelling continued, Fort McHenry had not surrendered. But, long before daylight there came a sudden and mysterious silence. What the three Americans did not know was that the British land assault on Baltimore, as well as the naval attack, had been abandoned. Judging Baltimore as being too costly a prize, the British officers ordered a retreat.

Waiting in the predawn darkness, Key waited for the sight that would end his anxiety; the joyous sight of Gen. Armistead’s great flag blowing in the breeze. When at last daylight came, the flag was still there!

Being an amateur poet and having been so uniquely inspired, Key began to write on the back of a letter he had in his pocket. Sailing back to Baltimore, he composed more lines and in his lodgings at the Indian Queen Hotel he finished the poem. Judge J. H. Nicholson, his brother-in-law, took it to a printer and copies were circulated around Baltimore under the title “Defense of Fort M’Henry.” Two of these copies survive. It was printed in a newspaper for the first time in the Baltimore Patriot on September 20th, 1814, then in papers as far away as Georgia and New Hampshire. To the verses was added a note: “Tune: Anacreon in Heaven.” In October, a Baltimore actor sang Key’s new song in a public performance and called it “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

Immediately popular, it remained just one of several patriotic airs until it was finally adopted as our national anthem on March 3, 1931. But the actual words were not included in the legal documents. Key himself had written several versions with slight variations so discrepancies in the exact wording still occur.

**APPENDIX A**  
(continued)

The 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 nation's Centennial celebration. It now resides in the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of American History. An opaque curtain shields the now fragile flag from light and dust. The flag is exposed for viewing for a few moments once every hour during museum hours.

Francis Scott Key was a witness to the last enemy fire to fall on Fort McHenry. The Fort was designed by a Frenchman named Jean Foncin and was named for then Secretary of War James McHenry. Fort McHenry holds the unique designation of national monument and historic shrine.

Since May 30th, 1949, a United States flag has flown continuously, by a Joint Resolution of Congress, over the monument marking the site of Francis Scott Key's birthplace, Terra Rubra Farm, Carroll County, Keymar, Maryland.

The copy that Key wrote in his hotel on September 14, 1814 remained in the Nicholson family for 93 years. In 1907, it was sold to Henry Walters of Baltimore. In 1934, it was bought at auction in New York from the Walters estate by the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore for \$26,400. In 1953, the Walters Gallery sold the manuscript to the Maryland Historical Society for the same price. Another copy resides in the Library of Congress.

**APPENDIX B**

**The Star Spangled Banner Lyrics**  
**Francis Scott Key**  
**1814**

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 thru the perilous fight,  
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?  
And the rocket's 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, 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!

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!

**APPENDIX C****TIMELINE OF EVENTS ON 9/11**

- 7:59 A.M.** American Airlines Flight 11 with 92 passengers and crew members on board, including the terrorists, departs Boston, MA bound for Los Angeles, CA.
- 8:14 A.M.** United Airlines Flight 175 with 65 passengers and crew members on board, including the terrorists, departs Boston, MA bound for Los Angeles, CA.
- 8:20 A.M.** American Airlines Flight 77 with 64 passengers and crew members on board, including the terrorists, departs from Washington, DC bound for Los Angeles, CA.
- 8:37 A.M.** Air Traffic Controllers report the suspected hijacking of Flight 11.
- 8:42 A.M.** United Airlines Flight 93 with 44 passengers and crew members on board, including the terrorists, departs Newark, NJ bound for San Francisco, CA.
- 8:46 A.M.** Flight 11 crashes into the North Tower of the World Trade Center.
- 9:03 A.M.** Flight 175 crashes into the South Tower of the World Trade Center.
- 9:37 A.M.** Flight 77 crashes into the west side of the Pentagon in Washington DC.
- 9:42 A.M.** The Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) grounds all flights nationwide.
- 9:59 A.M.** The South Tower of the World Trade Center collapses.
- 10:03 A.M.** Flight 93 crashes near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.
- 10:15 A.M.** The E Ring section of the Pentagon collapses.
- 10:28 A.M.** The North Tower of the World Trade Center collapses.
- 11:02 A.M.** New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani orders the evacuation of lower Manhattan.
- 5:20 P.M.** 7 World Trade Center, which was damaged by falling debris from the Twin Towers, collapses.

\* Timeline for middle school students prepared by Karen H. Levine.