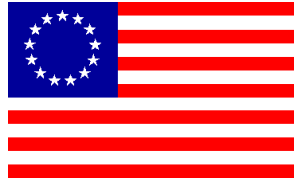


The United States Flag



Pre-reading

Questions:

- What do you know about the history of the American Flag?
- Where do you see the United States Flag flown?

Definitions:

- Unity – being or acting as one
- Congress – the branch of the United States (U.S.) government that is elected to make laws
- Interpret – to explain or understand the meaning of something
- Separate – to set apart, remove, or divide
- Ideals – standards for thinking or acting considered to be worthy of honor or respect

Reading

19 For more than 200 years, the American Flag has been a symbol of U.S. history and unity. On June
37 14, 1777 the Continental Congress, our nation's first Congress, voted to establish an official flag for the new
56 nation. Congress ordered the flag be made of thirteen red and white stripes, and thirteen white stars on a
72 blue background. The thirteen stripes and stars represented the thirteen colonies. The stars were placed in a
92 circle so that no colony would be viewed as above, or better than, another. It is reported that George
Washington said, "Let the thirteen stars in a circle stand as a new constellation in the heavens."

109 Today, the flag still has the thirteen horizontal stripes. There are seven red stripes and six white
126 stripes. These stripes represent the original thirteen colonies. The amount of stars has grown in number.
142 By 1960, there were fifty stars on the flag. The fifty stars represent the fifty states of the Union.

161 There are many interpretations of what the colors on the flag represent. However, there is no
177 official meaning for the colors of the flag. According to one legend, George Washington believed the stars
194 and color blue were taken from the sky. He thought the red was chosen from the British colors, and the
213 white stripes represented separation from the home country.

219 Others believe the color red represents blood shed to keep our nation free. White represents purity
235 of our nation's ideals. And, blue represents the midnight sky or courage. No one knows for certain why the
254 Continental Congress chose those colors. Members left no records about their color selection.

267 Throughout history, the American flag has been a symbol of inspiration for many people. It has
283 traveled to many exciting destinations. In 1909, Robert Peary placed a flag at the North Pole. In 1963,
301 Barry Bishop placed the flag on top of Mount Everest. On July 24, 1969, the American flag was planted in
321 space when Neil Armstrong placed it on the moon.

330 In the United States, the flag flies outside post offices, libraries and schools. It flies over the White
348 House and Capitol building in Washington D.C. It flies near many government buildings. In all of the fifty
366 states, the same United States flag is flown. Flag Day is a national celebration **observed** every year on June
385 14th to honor the flag. Many people display flags outside of their home on that day. Many towns and cities
405 also display flags along their main streets.

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