

# DISCOVER AMERICA

## Course 23 - Teacher Guide



### Stars, Stripes, and Stories: Unveiling the History of the American Flag

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Fifth Grade

# Teacher Guide



## Key Themes

- American Identity and Unity
- American Symbols

## Core Values

- Community
- Liberty

# Learning Objectives

## Students will be able to:

- Identify the historical events leading to the creation of the first American flag, including the Revolutionary War and the role of the Second Continental Congress.
- Recognize key figures associated with the creation of the first American flag, such as Continental Navy Lieutenant John Paul Jones and Margaret Manny.
- Understand the symbolism behind the design elements of the first American flag, including the colors, stripes, and stars.
- Analyze different versions of the first American flag, including the Betsy Ross flag, and distinguish between historical facts and legends surrounding its creation.
- Reflect on the values represented by the American flag and their relevance to American citizenship and patriotism.
- Describe the impact of the Flag Act of 1777 and its role in standardizing the design of the American flag.
- Discuss the importance of the American flag as a symbol of unity, pride, and national identity, both historically and in contemporary society.



# The First American Flag - Fifth Grade

## Key Terms

- 01 **executive order:** a rule or order made by the President of the United States.
- 02 **Flag Day:** June 14, the anniversary of the adoption of the Stars and Stripes as the official U.S. flag in 1777.
- 03 **honor:** to show respect and admiration for someone or something.
- 04 **patriotism:** having love and pride for your country.
- 05 **Revolutionary War:** the war in which the American colonies won their independence from Great Britain.
- 06 **unite:** to come together as one.
- 07 **variation:** a difference or change in something compared to another version of it.

# The First American Flag - Fifth Grade

# Introduction

## TELL Students

Today, I am going to introduce our learning topic with a riddle. Here is the riddle:

*I've seen many lands, flown through countless hands,  
Through wars and peace, I've proudly stood,  
My colors bold, my stripes and stars told,  
The story of a nation, strong and good.*

*From thirteen stripes, and stars not wide,  
To fifty now, across the sky they glide,  
Through Taft's decree, I stood so free,  
Yet changes came, not one, not three.*

*Though Ross may sew, it's hard to know,  
If she's the one who made me show,  
With stars in circles, and stripes that swirl,  
I've flown through time, a changing whirl.*

*So here I stand, through history grand,  
A symbol of unity, across the land,  
What am I? What do I show?  
A nation's pride, for all to know.*

## ASK Students

What am I talking about? Who is Betsy Ross?

# The First American Flag - Fifth Grade

# Introduction

## TELL Students

That is right, I am talking about the American flag. Have you ever thought about why we salute the American flag every day during the Pledge of Allegiance? Please stand and salute the American flag with me. [Stand and salute the flag.] When we salute the American flag, it means we are showing respect for our country and all the people who live here. We do this by standing up straight, putting our right hand over our heart, and saying the Pledge of Allegiance. This is a way of saying how much we love our country!

## ASK Students

Why do we salute the American flag?

## TELL Students

Yes, that is correct! When we salute the American flag, we are showing that we love, respect, and honor our country. To **honor** means showing respect and admiration for someone or something. When we honor someone, we treat them with kindness, fairness, and appreciation. We can honor our parents, teachers, and even our country by being kind, following rules, and showing gratitude. Let's watch another episode of Star Spangled Adventures to learn more about the American Flag.

## ASK Students

What are some ways that you can honor your family, friends, and country? [Have students discuss with their neighbor for a few minutes.]

## WATCH

Star Spangled Adventures Cartoon Ep. 23: The American Flag



# The First American Flag - Fifth Grade

## Lesson

### TELL Students

One way to honor the American flag is to stand and put your hand on your heart when we say the Pledge of Allegiance. Another way to honor the American flag is to stand and put your hand on your heart when you hear the National Anthem.

### ASK Students

When do you hear the National Anthem? How does it make you feel?

### TELL Students

Many people feel a sense of patriotism when they hear the National Anthem. **Patriotism** means having love and pride for your country. It is about feeling connected to your country and wanting to help make it the best it can be. Patriots show respect for their country's flag, symbols, and traditions. They also honor the people who have worked hard to protect and serve their country. Patriotism is like being a good friend to your country, always wanting to support and care for it.

### ASK Students

What does patriotism mean?

### TELL Students

The flag has fifty stars, one for each state, and thirteen stripes for the first colonies. It is a patriotic



*American Flag*



# The First American Flag - Fifth Grade

## Lesson

symbol and a living reminder of America's history and freedom. We learned in the Star Spangled Adventures episode that the American flag has not always looked the way it does today. It has changed twenty-six times over many years.

### ASK Students

Has the American flag always had fifty stars and thirteen stripes?

### TELL Students

That is correct! The American flag has changed over time. Let's learn about the very first American flag! In 1775, there was a lot of excitement in the thirteen colonies. The colonists decided to stand up to Great

Britain and fighting started in April during the Battles of Lexington and Concord. This was very important because these battles marked the beginning of the Revolutionary War! The **Revolutionary War** is the war in which the American colonies won their independence from Great Britain.



*Revolutionary War*

### ASK Students

What battles marked the beginning of the Revolutionary War?

### TELL Students

By May of 1775, a special group of leaders called the Second Continental Congress began to meet in Philadelphia. These leaders were trying to figure out how to win a war against Great Britain. They knew they needed something to unite them. To **unite** means to come together as one, like when all the pieces of a puzzle fit perfectly together. When people unite, they work together and help each other.

### ASK Students

What does it mean when people unite?

# The First American Flag - Fifth Grade

## Lesson

### TELL Students

Uniting is like saying, "Let's all work as a team!" When you play on a school or sports team, you may have a team flag or jersey to show you are all on the same team. Flags were very important during battles too! In all the noise and confusion, troops needed something to show them where to go.

### ASK Students

Why were flags important during battle?

### TELL Students

On December 3, 1775, something exciting happened that changed things for the American colonies. A brave man named Continental Navy Lieutenant John Paul Jones did something really important. He was on a ship called the Alfred, which was in the Delaware River. Lieutenant Jones decided it was time for a new flag, one that was different from Great Britain's flag.

### ASK Students

What was the name of the ship that Continental Navy Lieutenant John Paul Jones was on?

### TELL Students

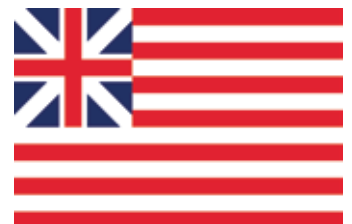
The new flag, sometimes called the Grand Union Flag, was special. It looked a little like the British flag, but it also had something new. In one corner, there was a small picture of the British flag. The rest of the flag had red and white stripes, just like the American flag we know today. People in the colonies liked the new flag. It was used in all thirteen colonies, replacing the different flags they had before.

### ASK Students

Where do you think this new flag came from? Who do you think made it?



*Lieutenant John Paul*



*Grand Union Flag*

# The First American Flag - Fifth Grade

## Lesson

### TELL Students

Some historians think a lady named Margaret Manny, who was a hat maker in Philadelphia, might have designed the flag. There are old records showing that she got materials to make flags before December 1775. Even though we do not know much about her, people think she might have had good reasons for making the flag the way she did.

### ASK Students

What do we know about Margaret Manny?

### TELL Students

Please read the following passage to learn more. [Teachers: Please print and give each student a copy of the student text.] *After Lieutenant Jones ordered the Grand Union Flag to be flown, other soldiers started using it too. General George Washington raised the flag on January 2, 1776, to show that all the colonies were working together against Great Britain. The Continental Congress also used the Grand Union Flag. When they declared independence on July 4, 1776, they did it under the Grand Union Flag. Even though the Grand Union Flag was popular, Congress wanted a new flag that did not look like Great Britain's flag. So, on June 14, 1777, they passed a law called the Flag Act. This law said the flag should have thirteen stripes, red and white, and thirteen white stars on a blue background. This day, June 14, is now **Flag Day**, when we celebrate our flag!*

### ASK Students

When is Flag Day?

### TELL Students

Different people made flags in different ways after the Flag Act was passed. They had their own ideas about how the flag should look, so they created variations of it. A **variation** is a difference or change in something compared to another version of it. Even though the flags looked a little different, they all had something in common: the stripes and the blue field stayed in the same places. The stars, however, were arranged differently on each flag. Sometimes they were in rows, sometimes in a circle, and sometimes they made a bigger star.

# The First American Flag - Fifth Grade

## Lesson

### ASK Students

What types of variations did people make to the flag?

### TELL Students

Please read the following passage to learn more. [Teachers: Please print and give each student a copy of the student text.] *One famous version of the flag is called the "Betsy Ross flag." Legend says that Betsy Ross, who was good at sewing, was asked by the Founding Fathers to make the new American flag. She came up with the idea of arranging the thirteen stars in a circle. But many historians think this story might not be true. They have not found any proof that Betsy Ross made the first flag. Even though the Betsy Ross flag might not have been made by her, it is still one of the most famous versions of the American flag we know today.*

### ASK Students

What is Betsy Ross known for? Why do you think she arranged thirteen stars in a circle on the flag?

### TELL Students

In 1912, President William Howard Taft made a significant decision about the American flag. He issued Executive Orders 1556 and 1637, which set specific rules for how the flag should look. An **executive order** is a rule or order made by the President of the United States. These orders included details about the flag's size, colors, and design, ensuring that every flag made from then on would be the same.



*Betsy Ross flag*

# The First American Flag - Fifth Grade

## Lesson

### ASK Students

What did Executive Orders 1556 and 1637 determine about the flag?

### TELL Students

Since these orders, the only updates to the flag have been to add stars whenever new states joined the United States. The last change happened on July 4, 1960, after Hawaii became a state. In the 1950s, people knew that Alaska would soon become a state, so they started making changes to the American flag to add a 49th star. At the same time, a 17-year-old student named Bob Heft from Ohio borrowed his mom's sewing machine. He took apart his family's flag that had 48 stars and added 50 stars in a nice pattern. He did this for a history class project because he thought Hawaii would become a state soon. Bob sent his flag to a congressman named Walter Moeller. The congressman showed the flag to President Eisenhower after both Alaska and Hawaii became states. The president liked Bob's design and chose it. On July 4, 1960, President Eisenhower and Bob Heft stood together as the new 50-star flag was raised for the first time. Bob's history teacher changed his grade from a B- to an A!

### ASK Students

How did Bob Heft influence the American flag?

### TELL Students

The American flag is more than just a piece of cloth waving in the wind. It is a powerful symbol of unity, pride, and the values that make our nation special. When we salute the flag, we are honoring the history of our country, remembering those who fought to protect it, and celebrating the freedoms we enjoy every day. So, the next time you see the American flag, take a moment to think about where it came from and what it means to you as a citizen of the United States.



# The First American Flag - Fifth Grade

## Exploring the Flag Act of 1777

**Objective:** The objective of this independent activity is for fifth-grade students to conduct research and gain a deeper understanding of the Flag Act of 1777 and its significance in American history.

**Materials Needed:**

- Approved internet access or library resources
- Notebooks or paper for taking notes

**Introduction:**

- Begin by reviewing the importance of flags as symbols of nations and their values.
- Introduce the Flag Act of 1777 and briefly discuss its historical significance.

**Research Phase:**

- Assign each student to research the Flag Act of 1777 independently using available resources.
- Encourage students to explore various aspects of the Act, including its purpose, key provisions, and historical context.
- Provide guidance on credible sources and effective research strategies.

**Note-taking:**

- Instruct students to take detailed notes during their research, highlighting key points, dates, and important figures related to the Flag Act of 1777.
- Encourage students to organize their notes logically for future reference.

**Reflection:**

- After completing their research and note-taking, ask students to reflect on what they have learned.

- Encourage students to consider the significance of the Flag Act of 1777 in shaping American history and identity.

**Optional Extension Activity:**

- As an extension, students can create a visual representation of the Flag Act of 1777, such as a timeline, poster, or infographic, highlighting key information and events.
- Alternatively, students can write a short essay or reflection piece discussing the importance of the Flag Act of 1777 in American history.

**Conclusion:**

- Conclude the activity by allowing students to share their findings and reflections with the class, either through presentations or discussions.
- Encourage peer feedback and further discussion on the significance of the Flag Act of 1777.

**Note to Teacher:**

- Provide support and guidance as needed throughout the research process.
- Encourage students to ask questions and seek clarification on any aspects of the Flag Act of 1777 they may find challenging.
- Review students' notes and reflections to assess their understanding of the topic and provide feedback as necessary.

# The First American Flag - Fifth Grade

## True or False Activity

**Instructions:** Read each statement carefully. Determine if the statement is true or false. Circle "T" for true and "F" for false.

1. The National Anthem is a patriotic song that makes people feel connected to their country. [ T ] [ F ]
2. Patriotism means having love and pride for your country, feeling connected to it, and wanting to help make it the best it can be. [ T ] [ F ]
3. The American flag has changed twenty-six times over many years. [ T ] [ F ]
4. The Grand Union Flag, also known as the Betsy Ross flag, was the first American flag with fifty stars and thirteen stripes. [ T ] [ F ]
5. The Second Continental Congress passed the Flag Act of 1777, establishing the design of the American flag with thirteen stripes and thirteen stars. [ T ] [ F ]
6. Executive Orders 1556 and 1637, issued by President William Howard Taft, determined specific rules for the size, colors, and design of the American flag. [ T ] [ F ]
7. The present American flag has remained unchanged for over 60 years, making it the longest period without any alterations to its design in U.S. history. [ T ] [ F ]
8. Flag Day is celebrated on June 4th to honor the anniversary of the Flag Act of 1777. [ T ] [ F ]
9. The American flag has always had fifty stars and thirteen stripes since its creation. [ T ] [ F ]
10. Margaret Manny, a hat maker from Philadelphia, is believed to have designed the Grand Union Flag. [ T ] [ F ]



11. General George Washington raised the Grand Union Flag on January 2, 1776, to signify unity among the colonies against Great Britain. [ T ] [ F ]

12. The Betsy Ross flag is one of the most famous versions of the American flag, known for its arrangement of stars in a circle. [ T ] [ F ]

13. The last change to the American flag occurred in 1960 after Alaska became a state. [ T ] [ F ]

14. The American flag symbolizes unity, pride, and the values that make the nation special. [ T ] [ F ]

15. Patriotism involves respecting the history of the country, honoring those who fought to protect it, and celebrating the freedoms enjoyed every day. [ T ] [ F ]

# The First American Flag - Fifth Grade

# Answer Key

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1. T
2. T
3. T
4. F
5. T
6. T
7. F
8. F
9. F
10. T
11. T
12. T
13. F
14. T
15. T

# The First American Flag - Fifth Grade

# Resource List

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-01-02-0004>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-grand-union-flag-free-at-last-and-lighting-up-broadway-110762522/>

[https://www.pdcnet.org/85257D7A006284F7/file/5BF4BBEA7EDEFD82C1257DC60053AE3E/\\$FILE/raven\\_2014\\_0021\\_0000\\_0027\\_0078.pdf](https://www.pdcnet.org/85257D7A006284F7/file/5BF4BBEA7EDEFD82C1257DC60053AE3E/$FILE/raven_2014_0021_0000_0027_0078.pdf)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-15634606>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/betsy-ross-likely-didnt-sew-the-first-us-flag;>

<https://www.history.com/news/did-betsy-ross-really-make-the-first-american-flag>

