

# DISCOVER AMERICA

## Course 23 - Teacher Guide



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

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Third 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.



# The First American Flag - Third 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 **Revolutionary War:** the war in which the American colonies won their independence from Great Britain.
- 05 **salute:** to show respect to someone or something.
- 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 - Third Grade

# Introduction

## TELL Students

Today, we are going to learn about a very special flag. Do you know what flag I am talking about? That is right, it is the American flag! Before we dive into our lesson, let's start by reading a wonderful book called *Red, White and Blue, Our Flag Matters to Me and You!* This book will teach us about the colors of the American flag and why they are important. Are you ready to learn? [Read the book or a similar book about the American Flag. As you read to the class, pause at key points to engage the students in discussion. Here are some prompts you can use: Page 1-2 (Red): What color is the first color mentioned in the book? That is right, it is red! Why do you think the author chose red to talk about first? What are some things that are red in our world? Page 3-4 (White): Now, we are talking about the color white. What does the author say white represents on the American flag? Can you think of other things that are white? Why do you think white is an important color for our flag? Page 5-6 (Blue): Finally, we are learning about the color blue. According to the book, what does blue represent on the American flag? What are some things that are blue in our world?]

## ASK Students

What do the colors of the American flag represent? When we see an American flag, what action do we take?

## TELL Students

Have you ever thought about why we salute the American flag every day during the Pledge of Allegiance? To **salute** means to show respect to someone or something. 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

# The First American Flag - Third Grade

# Introduction

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.

## WATCH

Star Spangled Adventures Cartoon Ep. 23: The American Flag





# The First American Flag - Third Grade Lesson

## ASK Students

How do we honor the American flag?

## TELL Students

Yes, one way to honor the American flag is to stand when we say the Pledge of Allegiance. The flag has fifty stars, one for each state, and thirteen stripes for the first colonies. It is 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*



*American Flag*



# The First American Flag - Third Grade Lesson

## 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, just like when friends work together to build a sandcastle at the beach.

## ASK Students

What does it mean when people unite?

## TELL Students

Uniting is like saying, "Let's 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.



*Lieutenant John Paul*

## ASK Students

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

# The First American Flag - Third Grade

## Lesson

### 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?

### 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

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! **Flag day** is June 14, the anniversary of the adoption of the Stars and Stripes as the official U.S. flag in 1777.



*Grand Union Flag*



*George Washington*

# The First American Flag - Third Grade

## Lesson

### 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.

### ASK Students

What types of variations did people make to the flag?

### TELL Students

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.



*Betsy Ross flag*

# The First American Flag - Third Grade Lesson

## ASK Students

What is Betsy Ross known for?

## 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.

## 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



President William Howard Taft



Hawaii

# The First American Flag - Third Grade

## Lesson

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 - Third Grade

## Exploring Different Versions of the American Flag

**Objective:** To engage students in investigating the evolution of the American flag and understanding the significance of its various versions throughout history.

### Materials Needed:

1. Pictures or illustrations of different versions of the American flag (Grand Union Flag, Betsy Ross Flag, current flag with different numbers of stars)
2. Information cards or posters detailing the history and significance of each version
3. Paper
4. Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
5. Chart paper or whiteboard
6. Sticky notes or index cards

### Introduction:

- Gather students and introduce the activity by explaining that they will be exploring the different versions of the American flag throughout history.
- Show pictures or illustrations of different versions of the American flag, such as the Grand Union Flag, Betsy Ross Flag, and current flag with different numbers of stars.
- Briefly discuss the significance of each version and its historical context.

### Investigation Stations:

- Set up different investigation stations around the classroom, each focusing on a specific version of the American flag.
- At each station, provide information cards or posters detailing the history and significance of the flag version.
- Encourage students to explore each station, read the information provided, and examine the pictures or illustrations closely.

### **Flag Drawing Activity:**

- Provide each student with a piece of paper and art supplies (crayons, markers, or colored pencils).
- Ask the students to choose one version of the American flag that they found interesting during their exploration.
- Instruct them to draw their chosen flag version on the paper, paying attention to the details and colors.
- Encourage creativity and allow students to add their own interpretations or embellishments to their drawings.

### **Flag Comparison Discussion:**

- Gather the students together and facilitate a discussion about the different versions of the American flag.
- Use chart paper or a whiteboard to create a comparison chart, listing the features of each flag version (e.g., number of stars, arrangement of stars, colors).
- Ask students to share what they learned about each flag version and how they are similar or different from one another.
- Use sticky notes or index cards to record key points and insights from the discussion.

### **Reflection and Conclusion:**

- Conclude the activity by asking students to reflect on what they learned about the evolution of the American flag.
- Invite students to share any interesting facts or discoveries they made during the investigation.
- Emphasize the importance of the American flag as a symbol of unity, freedom, and national identity.



# The First American Flag - Third Grade

## Multiple Choice Quiz: American Flag Edition

**Instructions:** Read each question carefully. Choose the best answer from the options provided. Mark your chosen answer on the answer sheet. After answering all the questions, review your answers to ensure they are correct.

1. Why do we salute the American flag during the Pledge of Allegiance?
  - A) To show respect and honor for our country
  - B) To show disrespect
  - C) To ignore the flag
  - D) To laugh at the flag
2. How do we honor the American flag during the Pledge of Allegiance?
  - A) By sitting down
  - B) By standing up straight, putting our right hand over our heart, and saying the Pledge of Allegiance
  - C) By looking away
  - D) By talking loudly
3. What battles marked the beginning of the Revolutionary War?
  - A) The Battle of Yorktown
  - B) The Battle of Bunker Hill
  - C) The Battles of Lexington and Concord
  - D) The Battle of Saratoga
4. What is the name of the ship that Continental Navy Lieutenant John Paul Jones was on?
  - A) The Mayflower
  - B) The Titanic
  - C) The Alfred
  - D) The Santa Maria

5. What does the Flag Act specify about the American flag?
- A) It should have thirteen stars, red and white stripes, and thirteen blue stripes.
  - B) It should have fifty stars and thirteen blue stripes.
  - C) It should have thirteen stripes, red and white, and thirteen white stars on a blue background.
  - D) It should have fifty stars and thirteen red and white stripes.
6. When is Flag Day celebrated?
- A) July 4th
  - B) June 14th
  - C) January 1st
  - D) December 25th
7. Who is believed by many to have made the first American flag?
- A) George Washington
  - B) Betsy Ross
  - C) Thomas Jefferson
  - D) Abraham Lincoln
8. What did Executive Orders 1556 and 1637 determine about the flag?
- A) They specified the design of the flag, including its dimensions, colors, and design.
  - B) They determined the number of stars and stripes on the flag.
  - C) They decided the location where the flag should be flown.
  - D) They specified the material from which the flag should be made.
9. How long has the present American flag been flying without changes?
- A) 20 years
  - B) 30 years
  - C) 40 years
  - D) Over 60 years

# The First American Flag - Second Grade

## Answer Key

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1. A) To show respect and honor for our country
2. B) By standing up straight, putting our right hand over our heart, and saying the Pledge of Allegiance
3. C) The Battles of Lexington and Concord
4. C) The Alfred
5. C) It should have thirteen stripes, red and white, and thirteen white stars on a blue background.
6. B) June 14th
7. B) Betsy Ross
8. A) They specified the design of the flag, including its dimensions, colors, and design.
9. D) Over 60 years

# The First American Flag - Third 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>

