



Texas

5 Studies Weekly

OUR NATION

American Symbols, Landmarks, and Celebrations

The United States is rich with national symbols, monuments, and landmarks. A **landmark** is an object or feature that is easily recognized that identifies a place. For example, the White House is a landmark of Washington, D.C. Each symbol, monument, and landmark represents pivotal moments in U.S. history. A **symbol** is a visual representation of important ideas, beliefs, traditions, and events. The symbols of the United States can make us feel patriotic.

Patriotism is a feeling of love for your country. There are several holidays throughout the year for which patriotic celebrations are held. **Celebrations** are when people mark or remember certain events, often with parties or special traditions.

Over time, these symbols have taken on new meanings. They change to reflect the climate of American society. However, many of our important symbols continue to represent the ideas of freedom, democracy, independence, and citizens' rights. These symbols do not belong to one person. They belong to all Americans and are on display for visitors to view.

The United States has many well-known and widely recognized American symbols.

These include the Statue of Liberty, Mount Rushmore, the White House, the National

Anthem, the Pledge of Allegiance, Labor Day, Veterans Day, and other political symbols. Each symbol has a unique history and holds an important place in American culture.



The National Anthem

A **national anthem** is a song chosen to represent a country and its values. It often tells a story about an event in the country's history. It often remembers the courage of those who helped create the country or praises those who have protected the country in war. The national anthem of the United States is "The Star-Spangled Banner." It was written by Francis Scott Key during the War of 1812.

Key never intended to write the national anthem. He wasn't a poet, musician, or author by profession. However, his powerful words are a reminder of the strength and perseverance of the people of the United States. When the War of 1812 began, Key lived in Washington, D.C., and worked as a lawyer. He strongly opposed U.S. involvement in the war.

Despite his feelings about the war, Key was angered by the British attack on the nation's capital. He was also angry about the capture of his close friend, Dr. William Beanes. Key traveled to Baltimore, Maryland, to save his captured comrade. On September 7, 1814, Key and John Skinner, a British prisoner of war, boarded the British ship *Tonnant*. They went to negotiate

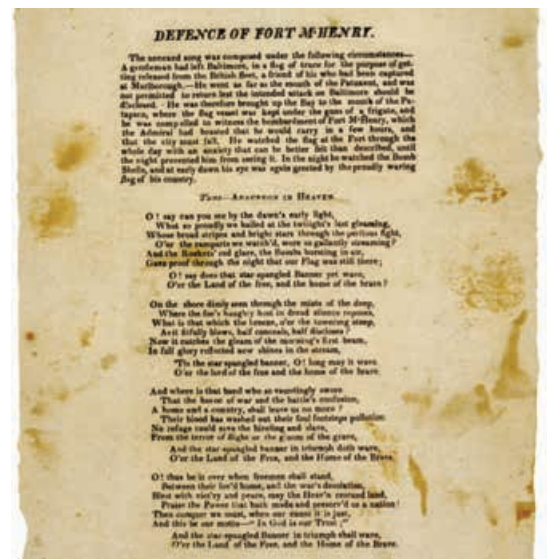
Beanes's release. The British agreed to release Beanes. However, they wouldn't let the Americans return to shore until after the British attack on Baltimore.

From the *Tonnant*, Key witnessed the bombardment of Fort M'Henry. He feared the British would capture the important military post. The British attacked the fort and the American soldiers inside with heavy cannon fire for 25 hours. Key watched the battle and was convinced that the Americans would surrender the fort.

On the morning of September 14, 1814, Key was amazed to see the American flag flying over the fort. Key was inspired by the events he witnessed. Before he returned to shore, he composed several verses of a poem on the back of a letter he carried with him. He titled his poem "Defense of Fort M'Henry." Key gave the poem to his brother-in-law, Joseph Nicholson, who was a commander of militia men at Fort M'Henry. Nicholson reprinted the poem and distributed it to the soldiers. Within weeks, the poem was featured in newspapers across the country and inspired American patriotism.

Key died in 1843, but his memory lives on. Statues and monuments were erected in

his honor in towns all over the United States. His famous words were set to the tune "To Anacreon in Heaven" and was renamed "The Star-Spangled Banner." In 1931, the song officially became the national anthem of the United States.



Broadside printing of "The Defense of Fort M'Henry" a poem that later became the national anthem of the United States

The Statue of Liberty

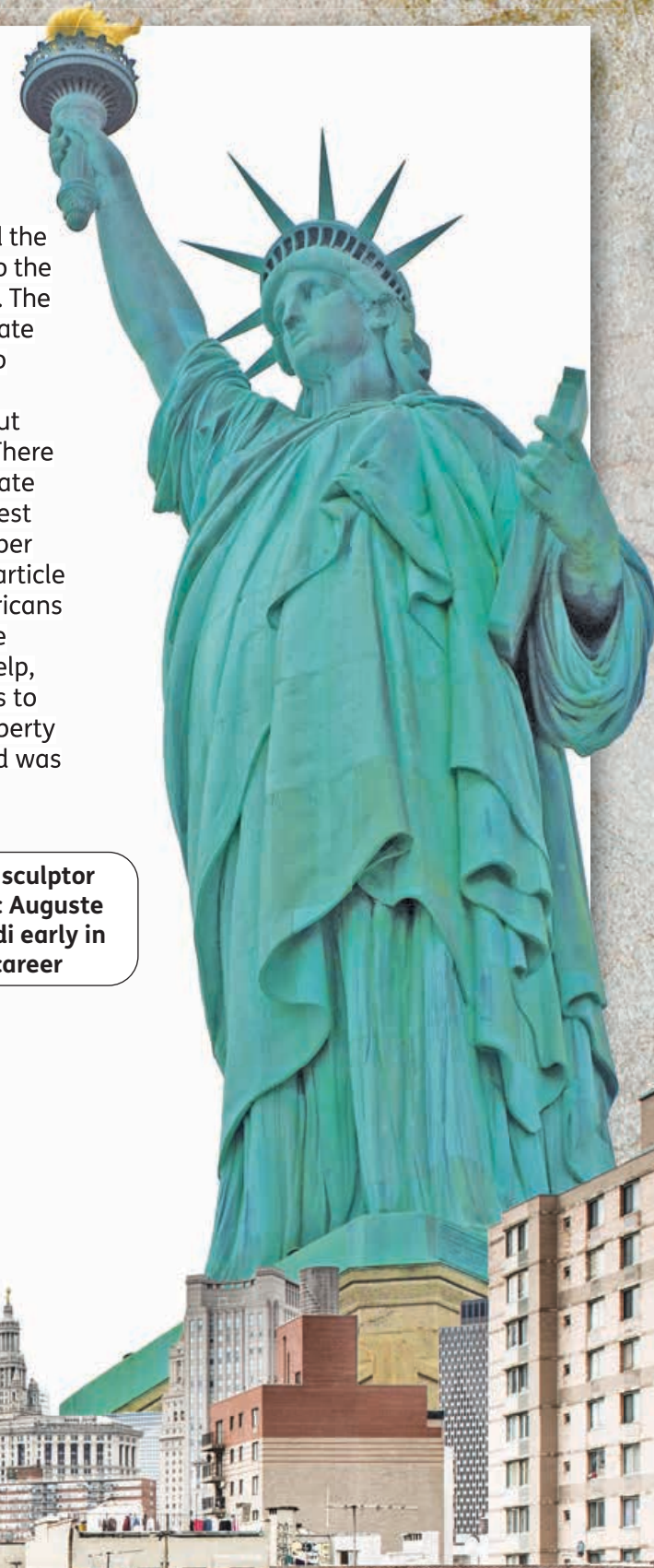
The Statue of Liberty has stood in New York Harbor since 1886. It has been a symbol of hope and peace for millions of new Americans. The Statue of Liberty was a gift of friendship from the people of France to the United States. It was created to honor American freedom and democracy. Edouard de Laboulaye, a French politician, came up with the idea of the statue. He hoped that creating a symbol to represent American democracy would inspire the people of France to create a democracy in their own country.

French sculptor Auguste Bartholdi was fascinated with the idea and agreed to design the statue. He traveled to the United States to gain support for the statue and determine where it would be located. He decided that the best place for the statue would be Bedloe's Island. It's a small area of land located in New York Harbor.

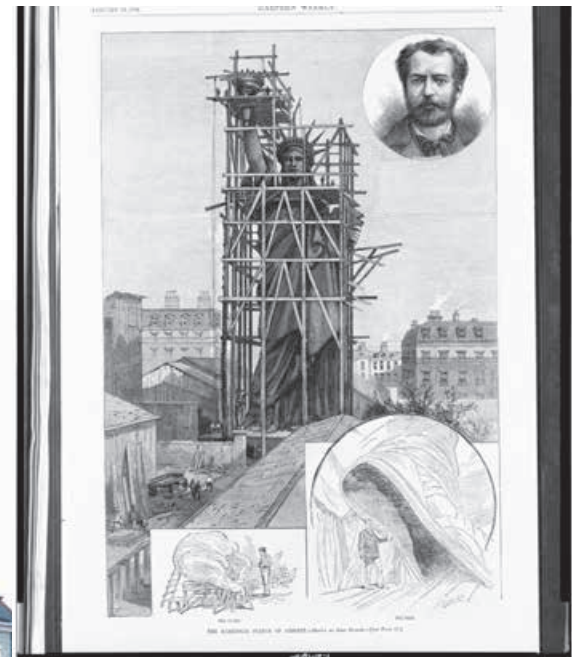
Upon his return to France, Bartholdi hired

structural engineer Gustave Eiffel, the designer of the Eiffel Tower. Bartholdi wanted Eiffel to help him create the immense statue. The two men finished the project in Paris. It was officially given to the American people there on July 4, 1884. The statue was then broken into 350 separate pieces and shipped across the ocean to America in 214 crates.

The United States was excited about the statue, but there was a problem. There weren't enough funds available to create a pedestal, or base, for the statue to rest on. Joseph Pulitzer, a famous newspaper owner in New York City, published an article in his newspaper. It encouraged Americans to donate funds for the project. People from all over the country wanted to help, and they donated the necessary funds to complete the project. The Statue of Liberty was assembled on Bedloe's Island and was



officially dedicated on October 28, 1886. Between 1892 and 1924, about 22 million immigrants entered the United States on ships landing in New York Harbor. Each of these immigrants was greeted by the Statue of Liberty. The statue soon became a symbol of freedom, not just for new immigrants, but for all Americans. The Statue of Liberty is over 300 feet tall. Details on the statue serve as symbols of freedom. Lady Liberty holds a stone tablet in one hand inscribed with the date of American independence from Great Britain: July 4, 1776. In her other hand, she holds a torch to light a path to freedom. Originally, the statue, which is made of copper, was the same color as a penny. Over time, the statue turned green as the copper reacted to the environment. Many people from around the world visit the Statue of Liberty each year.



Construction of the Statue of Liberty, showing the statue in scaffolding, drawn by John Durkin



French sculptor Frederic Auguste Bartholdi early in his career



Bartholdi "Statue of Liberty," erected on Bedloe's Island in New York Harbor

The White House

The White House is the home of the president of the United States. It is located at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. The Oval Office, where the president conducts meetings and some business, is in the White House.

George Washington chose the site for the White House in 1791. Even though he chose the site for the building, Washington never actually lived in the White House. It took eight years to build, and John Adams and his wife Abigail were the first to move into it in 1800.

In 1812, a war broke out between the United States and England. British soldiers marched on Washington D.C. They set fire to the White House in 1814. The building had to be rebuilt, and several U.S. presidents made additions and renovations to the White House over the years.

Every U.S. president since John Adams has lived in the White House during their presidency. It is more than just the president's house, however. The White House is used to entertain leaders and special guests from the U.S. and foreign countries. Special parties and events are hosted on the grounds. It is also a museum of American history. You can even take tours of parts of the White House. Inside the house and on the grounds, there are six levels, 132 rooms, a single-lane bowling alley, a movie theater, a swimming pool, a tennis court, a running track, and more.

The White House has become an important symbol of America and our government. Some people even refer to the executive branch of our government as "The White House."



The First Presidential Mansion, Lithograph, 1853



The White House as it looked following the fire of Aug. 24, 1814



Political Symbols

The United States has many symbols to represent different parts of our government and country. Uncle Sam is a symbol that represents the United States of America. No one knows exactly how the character of Uncle Sam came into being, but many people believe he is based on a man named Samuel Wilson who lived in the United States early in the 19th century.

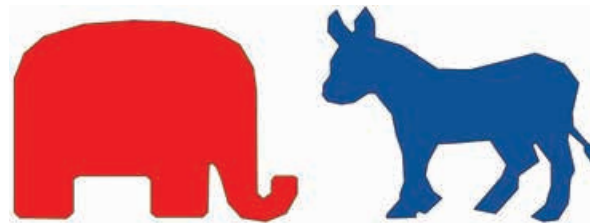
According to legend, Wilson was a beef supplier for the U.S. Army during the War of 1812. When Wilson shipped the beef out in barrels from his company in New York, he labeled them "U.S." for the United States. One of Wilson's employees joked that U.S. stood for "Uncle Sam" Wilson. Soon, army men were talking about "Uncle Sam's" beef. This led to the idea that Uncle Sam stood for anything related to the U.S. government. The Uncle Sam character, an older man wearing a star-spangled suit, is the product of many artists and cartoonists over the years.

What about symbols in our government? Well, the United States has two main political parties: Democrats and Republicans. Each party, or group, uses a symbol to represent themselves. Democrats use the

donkey as their symbol, while Republicans use the elephant. Why did they pick these animals?

The donkey can be traced back to Democrat Andrew Jackson's campaign in 1828. His opponents called him a donkey, and he started using this strong-willed animal on his campaign posters. Later, newspapers and comics featured the donkey. This animal then became an accepted symbol for the entire Democratic Party.

What about the elephant? In 1874, a cartoonist used the elephant to represent the Republican vote. The political party adopted the animal because they considered it to be strong and dignified.



Political parties symbols: Donkey, Democratic Party, Elephant, Republican Party



War poster with the famous phrase "I want you for U. S. Army" depicting Uncle Sam

National Celebrations

In the United States, we have special holidays to honor and celebrate Americans who have served and worked to improve our country. Two such holidays include Veterans Day and Labor Day.

Veterans Day was originally called "Armistice Day." When World War I officially ended, Armistice Day was created to honor veterans. Unfortunately, the United States has been in more wars since then, including World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and others. The U.S. Congress later changed the name of the holiday to Veterans Day. This is to honor all veterans of all wars. Americans continue to fight in wars to help other countries and to preserve our freedom. We remember and honor all veterans of the armed forces including the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard every year on Veterans Day.

Labor Day sounds like a day when everyone would go to work, but it actually means quite the opposite. Labor Day is a holiday that was created for working people to take a day off. Historians are not certain who actually came up with

the idea for Labor Day. Some believe that it was Peter McGuire. He was the first secretary of the American Federation of Labor. Others say the idea belonged to Matthew Maguire. He was the secretary of the Central Labor Union.

New York's Central Labor Union chose to make the idea a reality by organizing the first Labor Day on Sept. 5, 1882, in New York City. The holiday was created to honor American workers who used their strength and skills to make life better for the entire country. The first Labor Day was celebrated with a parade, speeches, and a picnic for workers and their families. In 1894, Labor Day became a national holiday. People now celebrate it on the first Monday in September.

Memorial Day is observed each year on the last Monday in May. This day is set aside to honor the nation's armed services personnel who were killed in wartime. It is traditionally a day of parades, ceremonies, and speeches. Originally called Decoration Day, Memorial Day often involves decorating the graves of loved ones with flowers and flags.



Coast Guard Academy Cadet band members march in the Veterans Day Parade up 5th Avenue, Nov. 11, 2009.



Peter J. McGuire



The IBEW union electricians walk in Peoria Labor Day Parade

Name _____

Mount Rushmore

Mount Rushmore stands in the beautiful Black Hills of southwest South Dakota. The Black Hills have been a sacred place for many groups of people throughout history, including the Lakota Sioux tribe. The environment of the Black Hills is rich in natural resources. The Lakota Sioux respected the land and used its abundant resources for survival long before the creation of Mount Rushmore.

Mount Rushmore celebrates the ideals of leadership, courage, and strength. Mount Rushmore honors four of our nation's leaders. Large carvings of presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln are on permanent display at Mount Rushmore.

Each president was selected to represent different phases of American history. Washington was chosen to represent the founding of America. Jefferson represents the growth of the United States. Lincoln represents the reunification of the country following the Civil War. Roosevelt represents the development of the United States during the 20th century.

The monument was the idea of Doane Robinson. He was a South Dakota state historian. He wrote to American sculptor Gutzon Borglum to explain his idea. Robinson and Borglum worked together to gain funding and support for the project. In 1925, Congress and the South Dakota legislature approved the project. They authorized the creation of the monument despite Sioux protests that this monument would be built on their sacred land.

Construction began in 1927. The granite carvings were created by drilling into the face of the hills and using explosives to blast through the mountain rock. The work was difficult and dangerous. Workers climbed hundreds of steps each day just to reach the site. Men held onto ropes to do most of the dangerous work. Borglum's original design included full body carvings of each president and engravings that commemorated important events in American history. These ideas were abandoned due to a lack of funds and the difficulty of the work.

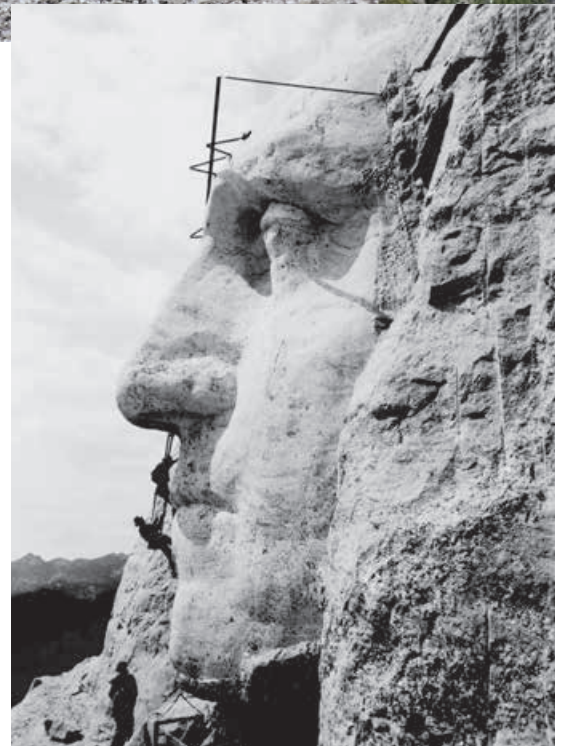
Mount Rushmore took much longer



Mount Rushmore, South Dakota

to complete than expected. A great deal of time was spent waiting for the government to fund the project. The nation was in the middle of the Great Depression during most of the construction. The government had difficulty providing the money workers needed to finish the carvings.

In March 1941, Gutzon Borglum died before the project was completed. His son Lincoln completed the project in October 1941. The Sioux did not want the monument built on their ancestral lands, but their protests were ignored. To preserve their culture, the Sioux began construction of the Crazy Horse Memorial in 1948. This monument commemorates the courageous actions of the Oglala Lakota warrior Crazy Horse. He fought against illegal white settlement.



Construction of George Washington's likeness at Mount Rushmore, c. 1932

The Pledge of Allegiance

When we say the Pledge of Allegiance, we make promises to support the United States of America. A **pledge** is a promise. **Allegiance** is another word for loyalty. By reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, U.S. citizens promise to remain loyal and faithful to our nation. The pledge is a reminder that every American, regardless of their race, religion, or color, should be treated fairly under the laws of the nation.

The first version of the Pledge of Allegiance wasn't created until 1892, more than 100 years after the United States gained independence from Great Britain. The reason for creating the pledge was to help teach children and new citizens to be loyal to their

country. Francis Bellamy, a Baptist minister from New York, wrote the first version of the Pledge of Allegiance. People first spoke the pledge at a special ceremony to honor the 400th anniversary of Columbus Day in 1892. Several revisions to the pledge have been made over the years, but the ideas remain the same.

The pledge we use today was first incorporated in 1954. Analyze the words of the pledge and identify what promises we are making. What do these promises mean to you?

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."



A family pledging allegiance to the American flag