

The National Anthem



The Star-Spangled Banner was written in 1814 by Francis Scott Key. He wrote it as a poem first, not a song.

Have you ever written a poem? _____

Would you like someone to turn it into a song? _____

From 1812-1815, Britain and the United States were at war for a second time. It would become known as the War of 1812.

Key was a lawyer who was serving in the Georgetown Light Artillery during the war. He had travelled to Baltimore, Maryland to negotiate the release of Dr. William Beane, who had been taken as a prisoner on a British ship.

While he was there, the British navy began attacking Fort McHenry, just across the river from Baltimore. While still on board the ship, Key watched the battle from a distance.

Francis Scott Key waited anxiously on the boat all night long to see which side would win. In the morning, as the sun rose, he could see the American flag flying. That meant that the Americans had won the battle.

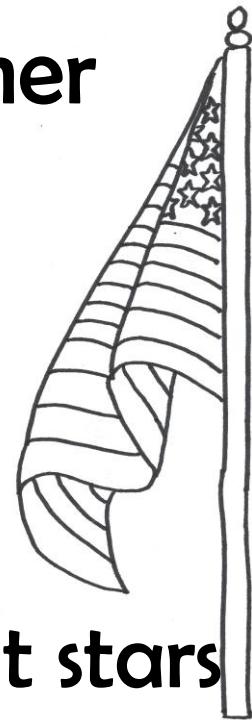
Have you ever had to wait anxiously for a very important announcement? _____

Key was inspired to write a poem about it this incredible moment. It was originally called, "Defence of Fort M'Henry."

The poem would later be set to the music of a song written 30 years earlier, "To Anacreon in Heaven," by John Stafford Smith. For the first century and a half, the USA did not have an official national anthem. "Hail Columbia" and "My Country 'Tis of Thee" were popular unofficial anthems. In 1931 President Herbert Hoover made "The Star-Spangled Banner" the official national anthem on March 3rd.

The Star-Spangled Banner

O! 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
through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watch'd,
were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare,
the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night
that our flag was still there;
O! say does that star-spangled
banner yet wave,
O'er the land of the free,
and the home of the brave?



The Star-Spangled Banner All Verses

O! 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 through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;
O! 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, O! 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, shall 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.

O! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their lov'd home and the war's desolation,
Blest with vict'ry 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.