The United States Flag
a Symbol of our Country

Lesson Overview:
In this activity, students will learn what a “symbol” is and about an important national symbol: the American flag. Students will compare and contrast images of American flags from the post-Revolutionary War era to the present flag and compare details (i.e., the stars and stripes). This activity may be extended to learn “You’re a Grand Old Flag” or the “Star-Spangled Banner” as our national anthem and/or other national symbols.

Objectives:
Students will be able to:
- Identify the American flag as a national symbol
- Analyze details of this symbol
- Compare four different versions of the American flag to understand why this symbol has changed over time

Standards:
K - C2.0.1: Identify our country’s flag as an important symbol of the United States.
1 - C2.0.2: Identify important symbols of the United States of America (e.g., Statue of Liberty, Uncle Sam, White House, Bald Eagle)

Time Required:
1-2 class periods

Recommended Grade Level(s):
K-1

Topic(s):
Citizenship

Era:
Colonial America to present.
Preparation:

Materials:
- Current Classroom Map of United States
- Current classroom U.S. Flag
- Displayable symbols for locations/items familiar to your students. (ie. Golden arches for McDonald's, star/happy face ball for Walmart, bullseye for Target, etc.)
- The American Flag a Symbol of Our Country Worksheet (one for each student)
- The American Flag a Symbol of Our Country Analysis Worksheet (one for each student)
- Whiteboard or Chalkboard

Images of:
- General map of British Colonies from the Library of Congress
  http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3710.ar071300
- The Star Spangled Banner from the Smithsonian
  http://americanhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/images/3400_09.jpg
- The 36 Star American Flag from the Library of Congress
  http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pga.02834
- The 48 star American Flag from the Library of Congress
  http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/npcc.27444
- Birth of the American Flag
  http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/hec.18419
- the Union Jack (British Flag)
  http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3g12162
## Resources:

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**Procedure:**

**Activities**

**Step 1:** Show students each familiar environmental symbol(s). Ask them what it represents or stands for. Discuss the idea of what a “symbol” is. *"A thing that represents or stands for something else, esp. a material object representing something abstract."*

**Step 2:** Display the 4 versions of the U.S. flags. Ask students to tell what the 4 items are. Ask what they are “symbols” of. *(our country United States.)* Expect questions as to why they are different. Make a 4 circle Venn Diagram on the board to compare and contrast the flags. Lead the students to find:

- All flags have stars.
- All flags have stripes

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• All flags are red, white, blue.
• Count the stripes and place on the diagram appropriately.
• Count the stars and place on the diagram appropriately.

Lead students to ask the question why all have the same number of stripes but different numbers of stars.

**Step 3:** Show the current map of the United States. Count the states on the current map.
Show the map of the 13 colonies. Show a picture of the Union Jack (British Flag.)
Explain briefly how the United States became a country with the Pilgrims coming over on the Mayflower and the King taxing them, so they became their own country and wanted their own symbol.
Show image of The Birth of the American Flag.
Explain the characteristics of the U.S. flag.
• Stripes represent 13 original colonies that fought to become their own country.
• Stars represent the states that had achieved statehood at the time.

**Step 4:** Look at each flag starting with the Star Spangled Banner and ask how many states there were when that flag was made. Continue for each successive flag. Emphasize our current flag has 50 stars, but only 13 stripes.

**Step 5:** Do *The American Flag a Symbol of Our Country* worksheet

**Extension Activities:**
• List places you see flags.
• Write about how seeing the flag makes you feel.
• Interview an adult and ask how they feel about the flag/What the flag means to them.
• Listen to/learn the Star Spangled Banner.
• Learn song You’re a Grand Old Flag.
• Read and Discuss *The Pledge of Allegiance* book
  Print.

**Evaluation:**
Use *The American Flag a Symbol of Our Country Analysis* Worksheet.
Sample Environmental Symbols

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The American Flag a Symbol of Our Country

How many stars does the flag have?

What does our flag look like? Color all of the parts the correct colors.

How many stripes does the flag have?

What do the stars stand for?

What do the stripes stand for?

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What does our flag look like? Draw in all the parts you remember on this rectangle.

How many stars does the flag have? How many stripes does the flag have?

What do the stars stand for? What do the stripes stand for?

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