

Philip F. Haxel, Sr. Patriotism Award  
2009 Essay Contest  
**Baton of Patriotism Winners**

CHURCH CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, HARFORD COUNTY  
Justin Brooks, Grade 3

“Old Glory”  
An Important Symbol of American Culture

Over two hundred years ago, and two centuries before I was born, the Continental Congress authorized the American Flag on June 14, 1777. No one can really account for the designer of the first Stars and Stripes or who made it. It has been said that Congressman Francis Hopkins, signer of the Declaration of Independence, designed the original Flag and historians believe that Betsy Ross, a Philadelphia seamstress, made the first Flag.

Until the Executive Order of June 12, 1912 neither the order of the stars nor the proportions of the Flag was determined. Flags dating before 1912 show an unusual arrangement of stars and stripes and odd proportions. The final design was left up to the flag maker.

Finally, on June 14, 1777, Congress made a resolution: “The Flag of the United States shall be 13 horizontal stripes, 7 red alternating with 6 white, and in the upper corner near the staff, a rectangular blue field, containing 13 five-pointed white stars. The stripes symbolize the 13 colonies that originally constituted the United States of America. The stars represent the states of the Union. The colors red, white and blue also have a meaning.

Red represents hardiness and valor; white means purity and innocence; and blue, vigilance, perseverance and justice. Because of its stars, stripes, and colors, the American Flag is frequently called “the Star-Spangled Banner,” “the Stars and Stripes,” or “Red White and Blue.” But my personal favorite is “Old Glory.”

In my opinion, the American Flag is a symbol of patriotism, freedom, respect, and honor. Because of its importance, in 1942, Congress established a uniform code for display of the national Flag. The rules included:

1. The Flag is usually displayed from sunrise to sunset in the open.
2. It should be raised briskly and lowered ceremoniously.
3. It is displayed daily, weather permitting, and especially on certain holidays, on or near main administration buildings of all public institutions.
4. It is also displayed in or near every polling place on election days and in or near every school during school days.

My great-grandfather, Edward Reeves, was a member of the U. S. Army 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, Japan, from 1947-1950. His division later became well-known as the “Buffalo Soldiers.”

I am so proud that my great-grandfather bravely served our country overseas. For me and my family, the American Flag is a reminder of the long road to freedom for African-Americans. It also symbolizes the opportunity and promise of a flourishing future for all Black Americans because our forefathers paved the way for equality. Because of this, I am able to attend Church Creek Elementary School with children of all races, colors, and creeds. I can truly say, "I am proud to be an American."

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CARNEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, BALTIMORE COUNTY  
Erica Connelly, Grade 5

### My U. S. Flag

The U. S. Flag has always been an important symbol of our country. For over two hundred years, it has flown over places of peace and places of war. You can see it in happy places like schools and parks, but you can also see it in sad places like "Ground Zero" in New York where so many Americans were killed. Our Flag waves in these places to remind Americans of who we are and what we stand for.

If I were to meet some kids from another country and they were to ask me about our U. S. Flag, I would have lots to tell them. I would say that our Flag became official on June 14, 1777 when the first Flag Act was passed. I would also tell them that Betsy Ross sewed the first Flag together. At first we only had 13 stripes and 13 stars, but more stars were added for each new state. Now our Flag design shows 13 stripes, seven of them are red and six of them are white. When they asked what the stripes are for, I would tell them they represent the original 13 colonies. Next, I would tell them that each of the stars was from each of the 50 states.

If one of my new friends would ask why our Flag is red, white, and blue, I would tell what they mean in a symbolic way. I'd say that red symbolizes strength and bravery. White symbolizes purity and innocence. Blue shows that we are always on the lookout for the enemy. It also represents perseverance, which means if we are attacked, we will always survive and come back. We will never give up our freedoms. Last, blue also symbolizes justice. This means we will always go after anyone who hurts our country.

After I am finished explaining about my Flag, I would point to it as it billowed in the wind, and we would see all that it is. Then my face would smile with pride of being an American.

Our Flag flies everywhere in our country and anywhere in the world where we are helping others. It is there to remind us that we stand for justice and freedom for all!

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JOHN RUHRAH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, BALTIMORE CITY  
Nikolaos Kamos, Grade 5

“The American Flag: An Outstanding Symbol of Our Country”

The American Flag has been an important symbol of our country because it stands for our freedom, our dignity, and the true meaning of being an American. The red color represents bravery and strength. The patriots like Paul Revere fought with bravery in the American Revolution to gain our freedom from Britain. White represents purity, innocence, and freedom. Blue stands for justice, vigilance, and perseverance.

The stripes stand for the thirteen colonies and the patriots. The stars on the Flag represent the fifty states that make up America today. It was decided by the Continental Congress on June 14, 1777, that the first Flag of the United States have thirteen stars and thirteen stripes to symbolize the original colonies. Stars were added as we annexed more states.

The Flag has inspired our soldiers in many wars. During the War of 1812, Francis Scott Key was on one of the boats in the Baltimore harbor. He was looking at Fort McHenry after many explosions. He felt very proud and joyful to be an American when he saw that our Flag still stood. Francis Scott Key wrote the “Star-Spangled Banner” in 1814 to help people remember the battle. His poem became what is today our National Anthem. Soldiers still raise the Flag in battle to keep their spirits up and remind them that they are fighting for freedom and democracy.

Being an American means having patriotic spirit. I am very proud to be an American and I can say that I do have that patriotic spirit inside me. I am free wherever I go. I can choose any job that I want and vote for our president, governor and mayor. When I see the Flag outside my school, I am reminded of being able to do these things. It is heartwarming to see our Flag still wave over “the land of the free and the home of the brave.”

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ONLINE WINNER  
CHADDON HOMESCHOOL - LITTLESTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA  
Clare E. Chaddon, Grade 3

The Flag of the Land of Freedom

A symbol is something that stands for something else. The U. S. Flag is a symbol for many different things.

The U. S. Flag was a symbol of courage for Francis Scott Key during the War of 1812 at Fort McHenry in Baltimore. When he saw the Flag still flying, he wrote the Star-Spangled Banner. The U. S. Flag was a symbol of unity for President Lincoln during the

Civil War when he refused to remove the southern states' stars from the Flag. The U. S. Flag was a symbol of hope after September 11, 2001 when America was attacked in New York City, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania.

When we display the U. S. Flag, it is a symbol of American pride. The Star-Spangled Banner Flag is displayed at the National Museum of American History in Washington, D. C. The U. S. Flag is displayed in many places, including schools, hospitals, houses, government buildings and at parades. The U. S. Flag is also on the moon! When I lowered the Flag at Sunset Beach, New Jersey, the U. S. Flag was a symbol of honor in memory of people who died serving in the military. When my Pop-Pop died, my family was given a U. S. Flag as a symbol of thankfulness for his service in the Army.

I like to be an American because I am free! I love the U. S. Flag because it is a symbol of courage, unity, hope, pride, honor, remembrance, thankfulness, and freedom.

Resources:

[Our American Flag](#), by Mary Firestone

National Museum of American History, Washington, D. C., *The Star-Spangled Banner Exhibit*