

Flags are Symbolic

Grade Level: 4-8

Lesson Overview

Students will learn that flags represent important facts concerning the country, state, and county they represent. They will learn about the flags of the United States, Illinois and Chicago. They will create a flag that represents themselves.

Student Objectives

1. Identify the meaning of symbols used on flags of our nation, state and cities.
2. Realize the history behind these flags.
3. Create a flag that represents their life.

Materials

- ✓ Flags are Symbolic information sheet
- ✓ Flags are Symbolic worksheet
- ✓ paper and art supplies to create own flag

Vocabulary

- **Daughters of the American Revolution** – non-profit, women’s organization for the descendants of individuals who aided in achieving American independence.
- **General Assembly** – legislative branch of the government of the state of Illinois, known as the House and Senate, created by the first constitution adopted in 1818.
- **state seal** – seal or symbol that represents a state.

Background Information

Flags contain facets of the country, state, or county that these entities consider important. Many have both historical and current symbols represented. Flags are flown with pride showing the importance placed on tradition and unity.

Procedure

1. Ask your students what purpose flags have in the world. Where do they see them? Do they mean anything?
2. Discuss the American Flag and the meaning behind the stars and stripes. Talk about the history of the flag and important times in history that the flag has flown,

such as the first walk on the moon, the rising of the flag over Iwo Jima, and so forth.

3. Ask if the students have seen flags that represent other things than our nation. List these flags on the board. Ask what they know about these flags.
4. Then have students read Flags are Symbolic Information Sheet together or independently and complete Flags are Symbolic Worksheet. Illinois State Flag Information Sheet may be shown as students work.

Additional Resources

- <https://youtu.be/3R43ww5fHWg> History of National Flags
- <https://youtu.be/XXkoXAYRDDM> Symbols used on USA flag origin theories.
- https://youtu.be/cL_7aFoWISg What do the colors on American flag mean?
- <https://youtu.be/uXPjEIJnyoM> Meaning of stars and stripes on the Chicago flag

Standards

Illinois Social Science Standards

SS.G.1.4. Construct and interpret maps of Illinois and the United States using various media.

SS.CV.3.4. Identify core civic virtues (such as honesty, mutual respect, cooperation, and attentiveness to multiple perspectives) and democratic principles (such as equality, freedom, liberty, respect for individual rights) that guide our state and nation.

Illinois English Language Arts Standard

CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

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These mAGic lessons are designed to bring agriculture to life in your classroom. They address the Illinois Learning Standards in math, science, English language arts and social studies.

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Flags are Symbolic Information Sheet

Flags tell stories by their design, or with symbols used that represent important people, places, or events. Countries, states, and cities have official flags to express pride in their heritage.

As you know, the American flag has thirteen horizontal stripes, seven red alternating with 6 white. The stripes represent the original 13 colonies; the stars represent the 50 states of the Union. The colors of the flag are symbolic as well: red symbolizes hardiness and valor, white symbolizes purity and innocence and blue represents vigilance, perseverance, and justice. Betsy Ross made the first flag in 1776. On June 14, 1777, in order to establish an official flag for the new nation, the Continental Congress passed the first Flag Act: "Resolved, that the flag of the United States be made of 13 stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be 13 stars, white in a blue field, representing a new Constellation." Between 1777 and 1960, Congress passed several acts that changed the shape, design, and arrangement of the flag and allowed for additional stars and stripes to be added to reflect the admission of each new state. The last change was the addition of a star for the state of Alaska.

Did you ever wonder what that flag was that flew by the American Flag at your City Hall? Most likely it is the flag of the state or of the city that you live in. If you lived in Chicago, you would see the flags of Illinois and of Chicago, both being flown with pride.



Lucy Derwent, who won a contest sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1913, created the Illinois flag. Ms. Derwent won \$25.00 for winning the contest. The General Assembly approved the flag on July 6, 1915. In 1969, that same governmental body voted to add the word Illinois to the flag, so that people not familiar with the seal would still recognize it as the banner of Illinois.

The Chicago flag has a history dating back to 1915 when Mayor William Hale Thompson appointed a commission to look into creating a flag for the city. They had a public competition and out of 1,000 entries, chose a design by Wallace Rice. The original flag had 2 red six-pointed stars and 2 blue stripes and 3 white stripes. The chart below shows what these represented. The flag was changed in 1933 and 1939, as the following sheet explains. The current flag has the stars placed in historical order, beginning with the first star, which represents Fort Dearborn.

The original Chicago Flag of April 4, 1917 had 2 red stars with 6 points and 5 stripes.

- The first star represented the Chicago Fire.
- The six points of the first star represented Religion, Education, Esthetics, Justice, Beneficence and Civic Pride.
- The second star represented the World's Fair of 1898.
- The six points of the second star represented Chicago history: Chicago owned by France 1693, Chicago owned by Great Britain 1763, Chicago owned by Virginia 1778, Chicago part of Northwest Territory 1798, Chicago Indian Territory 1802, and Illinois Statehood 1818.
- The top blue stripe represented Lake Michigan and the North Branch of the Chicago River.
- The bottom blue stripe represented the Great Canal and the South Branch of the Chicago River.
- The top white stripe represented the North side neighborhoods.
- The middle white stripe represented the Western neighborhoods.
- The bottom white stripe represented the Southern neighborhoods.

An additional red six-pointed star was added to the Flag of Chicago in 1933 by Mayor Edward Joseph Kelly.

- The red star represented the World's Fair of 1933.
- The six points of the star represented the World's 3rd largest city, City's Latin Motto, I Will Motto, Great Central Market, Wonder City, and Convention City.

An additional red six-pointed star was added in 1939 on recommendation of the Fort Dearborn Memorial Commission.

- The red star represented the Fort Dearborn Massacre.
- The six points of the star represented Transportation, Labor, Commerce, Finance, Populousness (heavily populated), and Salubrity (healthful and invigorating).
- As you notice flags flying in your area, remember that they are flown with pride and that each tells a story. Looking into the symbols on those flags could tell you a lot about the history of the area and its people.

Name _____

Flags are Symbolic



1. Why is the word sovereignty upside down on the flag of Illinois?
2. The symbol used on the Illinois flag was originally from what flag?
3. What is the significance of the years 1818 and 1868 that are on the rock?
4. On a separate paper, draw the Chicago flag and label what each symbol represents.
5. Design a flag that represents you. For some ideas for your flag, you can use symbols that represent your favorite activities, hobbies, sports, books, your family, friends, and where you live. Write about your flag. Explain what each of the shapes, colors, and images represents on your flag.

Flags are Symbolic ANSWER KEY

1. Why is the word sovereignty upside down on the flag of Illinois?
The word sovereignty is upside down to decrease the readability, which shows the rank of the nation over the state.
2. The symbol used on the Illinois flag was originally from what flag?
The symbol used was the seal of the Northwest Territory.
3. What is the significance of the years 1818 and 1868 that are on the rock?
The year 1818 was the year Illinois became a state and 1868 was the year the flag had been changed.
4. On a separate paper, draw the Chicago flag and label what each symbol represents.
The 3 white stripes represent neighborhoods of Chicago. Blue stripes represent Lake Michigan, the North and South Branch of the Chicago River and the Great Canal. Chicago Fire is represented by first of the red stars, the points of which represent religion, education, esthetics, justice, beneficence, and civic pride. The second star, the 1893 star, represents the historical ownership of the area: France 1693, Great Britain 1763, Virginia 1778, Northwest Territory 1798, Indian Territory 1802, and Illinois Statehood 1818. The 3rd star is in honor of the ongoing World's Fair. The points of this star represent World's Third Largest City, City's Latin Motto, I will Motto, Great Central Market, Wonder City, and Convention City. Lastly, another star was added in 1939 on the recommendation of the Fort Dearborn Memorial Commission to represent the Fort Dearborn Massacre. The points on this star signify transportation, labor, commerce, finance, populousness (heavily populated), and salubrity (healthful and invigorating). The stars are placed in historical order on the current flag, beginning with the first star, which represents Fort Dearborn.
5. Design a flag that represents you. For some ideas for your flag, you can use symbols that represent your favorite activities, hobbies, sports, books, your family, friends, and where you live. Write about your flag. Explain what each of the shapes, colors, and images represents on your flag.
Accept any flags that fill the required criteria.