

Lesson 7

Proudly We Sing: The National Anthem



Key Terms

anthems
bombardment
national march
symbol
“The Star-Spangled Banner”
under arms

What You Will Learn to Do

- Demonstrate courtesies during the playing of the National Anthem

Linked Core Abilities

- The emblem on a flag symbolizing unity, such as the blue rectangle and stars on the U.S. flag

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Explain the history of the national anthem
- Describe cadet courtesies when the national anthem is played
- Explain the history of the official national march
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Introduction

When you hear the national anthem, do you know what to do? National **anthems** are usually songs already in a culture that become so popular that the people claim them as a **symbol** for themselves and their nation. The United States adopted “The Star-Spangled Banner” this way. In fact, it took Congress 117 years to ratify what the American people had decided in 1814. In addition to presenting the history of “**The Star-Spangled Banner**,” this lesson explains how you should pay your respect to it, indoors or outdoors.

Key Note Terms

anthems – songs of gladness, praise, devotion, or patriotism

symbol – something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention, especially a material object used to represent something invisible

“**The Star-Spangled Banner**” – the national anthem of the United States, written by Francis Scott Key

National anthems

National anthems are hymns or songs expressing patriotic sentiment and either governmentally authorized as an official national hymn or holding that position in popular feeling. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, most European countries followed Britain’s example. Some national anthems were written especially for the purpose; others were adapted from existing tunes. The sentiments of national anthems vary, from prayers for the monarch to allusions to nationally important battles or uprisings.

History of Our National Anthem

Francis Scott Key wrote “The Star-Spangled Banner” as a result of a mission he was on during the War of 1812. Key was one of two people chosen to deliver official release papers for an American prisoner of war being held on a British ship in the harbor of Baltimore, Maryland.

The British agreed to release their prisoner only if the Americans did not immediately return to shore. The British were preparing to attack Fort McHenry, and they did not want Key and his companions to warn the American troops. The two Americans complied and returned to their boat to wait. At dusk, when the **bombardment** began, the British told the waiting Americans to take one last look at their flag because by morning it would be gone.

The bombardment continued throughout the night. At dawn, fog onshore hid Fort McHenry from view. Finally, the fog cleared, and the American flag could be seen. Inspired by the sight of his country’s flag standing in defiance to the enemy, Francis Scott Key wrote the words to “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

The next day, the commander of Fort McHenry printed and distributed the poem Key had written throughout Baltimore. That night, an actor sang the poem to the tune of a British drinking song. A few days later, the Baltimore newspaper printed the poem with directions that it be sung. In less than one week “The Star-Spangled Banner” had spread as far as New Orleans. Soon the whole country had taken it to heart; however, it was not until 117 years later, in 1931, that Congress passed an act making “The Star-Spangled Banner” the national anthem of the United States (36 USC 10, Sec. 170).

Key Note Term

bombardment – to attack with bombs, explosive shells, or missiles; to attack persistently

“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 watched were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bomb 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 mist 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 on the stream;
'Til the Star-Spangled Banner—O long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

O thus be it ever when free men shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation;
Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven rescued land
Praise the Power that has 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.

When we sing the national anthem

The national anthem is performed and sung at a variety of events. Aside from official government functions, our national anthem is usually sung at the start of sporting events, sometimes at church events, and at funerals for government workers. In the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedies, the singing New York policeman Daniel Rodriguez captured America's hearts and spirits with his rendition of the national anthem. He sang this not only at official government functions but also many times on television and at nongovernmental events.

Figure 1.7.1: The proper way to show respect to the flag while in uniform

Courtesy of George Shelley/Corbis Images.



Courtesies to the National Anthem

A national anthem is a symbol of the people, their land, and their institutions. When we salute during the playing of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” we are saluting the nation. Servicemen and women follow specific procedures in showing their respect to the U.S. anthem and to the anthems of friendly foreign nations.

Additionally, the armed forces give this same respect to the bugle call “To the Colors.” The military uses “To the Colors” when a band is not available or during bad weather.

When Outdoors in Uniform

When you are outdoors in uniform and you hear the national anthem or “To the Colors,” face the flag (if the flag is not visible, face the source of the music), stand at attention, and render the hand salute. Begin your salute on the first note of the music and hold the salute until the last note.

When Outdoors in Civilian Clothes

When you are outdoors in civilian clothes and you hear the national anthem or “To the Colors,” face the flag (if the flag is not visible, again face the source of the music), stand at attention, and place your right hand over your heart. A male must remove his hat and hold it in his right hand over his heart. A woman does not remove her hat, but she must place her right hand over her heart.

During Indoor Ceremonies

If you are attending an indoor ceremony and you hear the national anthem or “To the Colors,” stand, face the flag, and assume the position of attention. If the flag is not visible, face the source of the music or to the front and assume the position of attention. Do not salute unless you are **under arms**.

When in a Private Vehicle

On a military base, at the first note of the national anthem, all vehicles must come to a complete stop. If the driver is in uniform, that person must step out of the

Key Note Term

under arms – to carry or be furnished with, or to have attached to the person, a weapon or the equipment pertaining directly to a weapon, such as a pistol belt or pistol holster



Figure 1.7.2: The proper way to show respect to the flag while outdoors in civilian clothes

Courtesy of AP/Wide World Photos.

vehicle and take the appropriate actions for being outdoors and in uniform. If the driver is a civilian or is a service member who is not in uniform, that person must step out of the vehicle and take the appropriate actions for being outdoors and in civilian clothes. All other occupants sit quietly inside the vehicle until the last note of music is played.

The olympic anthem

Not only do countries adopt national anthems. The Greek poem “Ancient Eternal and Immortal Spirit,” with music by Spyros Samaras, was performed for the first time at the first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896. Thereafter, a variety of musical offerings provided the backgrounds to the opening ceremonies until 1960. At the 55th session of the International Olympic Committee in Tokyo, the committee decided unanimously to adopt “Ancient Eternal and Immortal Spirit” as the official Olympic Games anthem.

The National March: “The Stars and Stripes Forever”

The composition by John Philip Sousa entitled “The Stars and Stripes Forever” is the **national march**.

In late 1896, Sousa and his wife took a much-deserved vacation to Europe. While there, Sousa received word that the manager of the Sousa Band, David Blakely, had died suddenly. The band was scheduled to begin another cross-country tour soon, and Sousa knew he must return to America at once to take over the band’s business affairs. Sousa tells the rest of the story in his autobiography *Marching Along: Recollections of Men, Women and Music* (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1994): “Here came one of the most vivid incidents of my career. As the vessel (the *Teutonic*) steamed out of the harbor, I was pacing on the deck, absorbed in thoughts of my manager’s death and the many duties and decisions which awaited me in New York. Suddenly, I began to sense a rhythmic beat of a band playing within my brain. Throughout the whole tense voyage, that imaginary band continued to unfold the same themes, echoing and re-echoing the most distinct melody. I did not transfer a note of that music to paper while I was on the steamer, but when we reached shore,

Key Note Term

national march – “The Stars and Stripes Forever” as recognized in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations

I set down the measures that my brain-band had been playing for me, and not a note of it has ever changed.” The march was an immediate success, and Sousa’s Band played it at almost every concert until his death over 25 years later. (<http://www.dws.org/sousa/starsstripes.htm>)

“The composition by John Philip Sousa entitled ‘The Stars and Stripes Forever’ is hereby designated as the national march of the United States of America.” (36 USC 10, Sec. 188)

Conclusion

“The Star-Spangled Banner,” the national anthem of the United States, is symbolic of the struggles and successes of this country. It is still as inspirational today as when it first swept throughout the country in 1814. Either as a JROTC cadet in uniform or as a private citizen out of uniform, render “The Star-Spangled Banner” the courtesies and respect it deserves. Remember, “To the Colors” receives the same respect as the national anthem. “The Stars and Stripes Forever” demonstrates the strength and the power of patriotic music in the development of a national spirit.

In Lesson 8, you will learn about American military traditions, customs, and courtesies. Through these actions, you develop pride in the military service and establish strong bonds of professional and personal friendships—patterns of behavior that enhance the military way of life.

Lesson Review

1. Who wrote “The Star-Spangled Banner” and why was it written?
2. When in a private vehicle on a military base, what should you do when you hear “The Star-Spangled Banner”?
3. What famous person wrote “The Stars and Stripes Forever”?
4. Define the term *under arms*.