

## LESSON PLAN

# American Symbols and Celebrations

**Level:** Low Intermediate, Intermediate

**Suggested Length:** 1 class period

### Civics Test Questions

- #52—What do we show loyalty to when we say the Pledge of Allegiance?
- #95—Where is the Statue of Liberty?
- #96—Why does the flag have 13 stripes?
- #97—Why does the flag have 50 stars?
- #98—What is the name of the national anthem?
- #99—When do we celebrate Independence Day?
- #100—Name two national U.S. holidays.

### Key Vocabulary

- symbol, represent, idea, value
- stripes, stars, independence, self-government
- Pledge of Allegiance, loyalty, republic, indivisible, justice
- national anthem, Star-Spangled Banner, Francis Scott Key, battle, War of 1812
- Statue of Liberty, Hudson River, immigrants, Ellis Island
- honor, commemorate, celebrate

## Objectives:

Students will:

- discuss common American symbols
- explain the significance of the stars and stripes on the American flag
- understand the meaning of the Pledge of Allegiance and explain its purpose
- name the title of the national anthem and learn about its history
- identify the location of the Statue of Liberty and learn about its symbolism
- identify July 4 as Independence Day
- name the national U.S. holidays and explain their importance

## Materials:

Wall calendar, U.S. flag, and U.S. wall map

Handouts: **Important Symbols in Our Lives**, **The American Flag**, **Pledge of Allegiance**, **Our National Anthem**, **The Statue of Liberty**, **National U.S. Holidays**, and **Civics Test Questions—American Symbols and Celebrations**

8.5" x 11" visuals

**Intermediate Level American Symbols and Celebrations Lesson Answer Key**



## Lesson Overview and Notes to Teacher:

This lesson explores the meaning and origins of national symbols and holidays as they relate to U.S. history and government. It is not necessary for applicants to explain the origins for the naturalization test, but it is important to understand the context. Instructions for each handout are described below. The **Key Vocabulary** on the first page of the lesson plan is generally more advanced than the words in the vocabulary lists for the reading and writing portion of the test. However, learning these words will help the students develop a deeper understanding of the concepts in the lesson. Consider teaching these key words as part of your introduction paragraph on this handout.

As a warm-up, there is a chart where the students can work in pairs or small groups to brainstorm American symbols and discuss their ideas. The lesson continues with readings about the flag, Pledge of Allegiance, Star-

Spangled Banner, Statue of Liberty, and national holidays. Use the same process for reading each handout with your students. This process is described below in the instructions for *The American Flag* handout. At the end of each reading, students can practice the specific test items covered in that handout. Suggested discussion questions can be used for whole-class and small-group discussion or for writing assignments. Several websites are provided for further research on particular topics. Some background information in the readings, such as the significance of each national holiday and symbolic features of the Statue of Liberty, goes beyond the scope of the test questions. This is provided to give context to the test items. Please assure your students that they will not need to know these details for the test. The final handout is a summary of all the Civics Test items covered in the lesson.

**Important Symbols in Our Lives:** Write the word **symbol** on the board and ask the students what it means. Ask for some examples of symbols, such as flags, religious icons, etc. Explain that this lesson focuses on American symbols and their importance. Together, read the introduction paragraph on the handout. Then review the column headings in the chart. Have the students form small groups of 4-5 people and ask them to brainstorm symbols that represent the United States. They should record brief notes about where they have seen each symbol and what they think of when they see it. Give your students 10-15 minutes to discuss their

ideas and fill in the chart. Circulate and provide guidance where needed. Then bring the class together for a group discussion of their ideas.

For further discussion on familiar American symbols, your students can examine U.S. coins and bills. Consider sharing the 8.5" x 11" visuals with your class. Explain some of the key elements of the Great Seal of the United States: 1) the bald eagle is the national bird; 2) the Latin phrase *E pluribus unum* on the scroll (out of many, one) to signify the idea of "one nation created from 13 separate colonies;" 3) an olive branch as a symbol of peace; and 4) the 13 arrows as a symbol of war.

**The American Flag:** Display an American flag in your classroom. Discuss the stars and stripes on the flag. Ask the students what they think of when they see the flag. Then have the students read the paragraphs on the handout silently. Tell them to underline any new words while they read. When they finish, read the paragraphs aloud while the students listen silently. As you read each phrase or sentence, pause to ask if there are any words they do not know. Explain the new words in simple terms (**self-government=the people govern themselves, etc.**). Using the U.S. map, ask about the connection between the states and the stars. Students sometimes think there are more than 50 states, counting Puerto Rico as a state, for example. Take the opportunity to discuss Puerto Rico's status as a U.S. territory and clear

up any other misconceptions. Explain the significance of the stripes on the flag and ask the class to name the 13 colonies/original states. Have a volunteer show where those states are located on the map. Read the paragraphs out loud again, this time without stopping. As a final step, go back to the beginning of the reading and model each sentence one at a time with the students repeating after you. If you wish, call on volunteers to take turns reading each sentence aloud. Then have the students fill in the answers to the Civics Test items at the bottom of the handout and review them together, modeling the pronunciation of each question and answer. Use the discussion questions at the bottom of the page for further conversation in class.

**Pledge of Allegiance:** Write **Pledge of Allegiance** on the board and ask the students what the words mean (**pledge=promise, allegiance=loyalty, Pledge of Allegiance=a promise to be loyal to the United States**). Discuss the photograph in the handout and ask about the occasions when Americans say the pledge. Review the reading as previously described in the instructions for *The American Flag* handout. Model the words for the pledge and have the students repeat them after you.

**Our National Anthem:** Write **national anthem** on the board. Discuss what this means and model the pronunciation for your students. Ask them about the anthems of their home country and discuss the basic themes of those songs. Explain that our national anthem is about an important battle during the War of 1812. Discuss the meaning of the anthem's title, "The Star-Spangled Banner," and refer to the painting on the handout to explain the origin of the anthem and the meaning of its lyrics. Review the reading as described in the instructions for *The American Flag* handout.

**The Statue of Liberty:** Write **Statue of Liberty** on the board. Help your students with the pronunciation. Talk with your students about immigration in the United States, and consider sharing your own ancestors' origins. Discuss the photographs on the handout with the class and review the reading as previously described in the

**National U.S. Holidays:** As a warm-up for this handout, have the students work in pairs or small groups to list as many national holidays as they can. Discuss their answers together as a class. Your students may list holidays such as Halloween or Mother's Day, so take that opportunity to point out that those holidays are not considered national U.S. holidays. Write **commemorate** on the board and discuss its meaning (**to honor, to remember**). Then discuss the photograph in the handout and

**Civics Test Questions—American Symbols and Celebrations:** The seven Civics Test items in this lesson are listed on this handout. This exercise can be used for

Review the meaning of new vocabulary in each phrase. You may wish to take some time in class to practice the intonation and appropriate pauses for reciting the pledge. Explain that newly naturalized citizens say the pledge as part of the naturalization ceremony but that the students will not need to know the words to the pledge for the naturalization test. Practice the Civics Test item and have the students fill in the answer. Use the discussion questions at the bottom for further conversation in class.

Consider sharing the lyrics of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in the 8.5" x 11" visual and discuss the general meaning of key phrases. There are recordings of the anthem online which you can play in class, if you have the audio capability. Emphasize to your students that, while it is nice to know the lyrics, they do not need to know them for the naturalization test. Review the Civics Test question and answer with the class. Refer your students to <http://americanhistory.si.edu/exhibitions/star-spangled-banner> for additional information on the flag and the origin of the national anthem.

instructions for *The American Flag* handout. You can share the 8.5" x 11" visuals of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island with your class. Point out that more information about the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island can be found at [www.nps.gov/stli/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/stli/index.htm) and [www.nps.gov/elis/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/elis/index.htm).

review the reading as described above. Review the list of the 10 national U.S. holidays in the written exercise and have the students fill in which person or event is commemorated on each holiday. They can work on this in pairs or individually. Have the students practice the Civics Test items. Remind them that they need to name only two holidays for the naturalization test. Refer to the questions at the bottom of the handout for further class discussion or writing assignments.

pair work where the students take turns interviewing each other, or be assigned for homework.

## The Great Seal of the United States



*The obverse side of the Great Seal of the United States.  
Courtesy of the U.S. Congress.*

## Uncle Sam



World War I recruitment poster, "I Want You for U.S. Army" by James Montgomery Flagg.  
Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsc-03521.

## The Star-Spangled Banner

Oh, 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, thro' the perilous fight;  
O'er the ramparts we watched, 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.  
Oh, say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

## The Statue of Liberty



## Liberty Island





## Ellis Island



*Ellis Island.*

*Courtesy of the USCIS Historical Library.*