State Symbols

Pre-reading
Questions:
- What do you know about state symbols?

Definitions:
- Symbol – an object or picture that represents something
- Various – of many different kinds
- Elements – a part of a whole
- Excerpt – a short section

Reading

Every state has its specific license plate. Every state also has its own state flag and state flower. Many states have other state symbols as well. These symbols describe various elements of the state. Do you know the state symbols of Minnesota? The following descriptions are excerpts from a pamphlet called “Minnesota Fun Facts”.

Minnesota Symbols

State Bird
The common loon is Minnesota’s state bird. Its name comes from a Norwegian word that means “wild, sad cry”. Loons are black and white birds with red eyes and long black bills. Thousands of loons make their home in central and northern Minnesota. (Some people think the mosquito would have been a better choice for the state bird!)

State Flower
The pink and white lady slipper is Minnesota’s state flower. It is one of Minnesota’s rarest wildflowers. Lady slippers thrive in swamps, bogs, and damp woods. They grow slowly, taking 4 to 16 years to produce their first flower. Sometimes they live for 50 years and grow four feet tall. They bloom in late June or early July. Since 1925, this flower has been protected by state law. It is illegal to pick the pink and white lady slipper.

State Tree
The Norway pine is Minnesota’s state tree. It is also known as the red pine because of its reddish brown bark. It is a huge tree! Many grow 60 to 100 feet tall with a three to five feet wide trunk. These trees are popular for Christmas trees when they are small.
Understanding
1. What are the two names of Minnesota’s state tree? ____________________________________________

2. If you were looking for Minnesota’s state flower, where might you find one? ________________

3. Why do you think it is illegal to pick a lady slipper? __________________________________________

4. How many states have a state flag and state flower? _________________________________________

5. Where could you read more about Minnesota state symbols? _________________________________

6. In what season would you see the state flower bloom? _______________________________________

7. What similarity do you notice in the facts describing the Minnesota state tree and state bird? _______

Writing
Option A: Which Minnesota state symbols surprised you the most?

Option B: If you could change any of the symbols, which would you change?

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