The United States Flag

Pre-reading

Questions:
• What do you know about the history of the American Flag?
• Where do see the United States Flag flown?

Definitions:
• Unity – being or acting as one
• Congress – the branch of the United States (U.S.) government that is elected to make laws
• Interpret – to explain or understand the meaning of something
• Separate – to set apart, remove, or divide
• Ideals – standards for thinking or acting considered to be worthy of honor or respect

Reading

For more than 200 years, the American Flag has been a symbol of U.S. history and unity. On June 14, 1777 the Continental Congress, our nation’s first Congress, voted to establish an official flag for the new nation. Congress ordered the flag be made of thirteen red and white stripes, and thirteen white stars on a blue background. The thirteen stripes and stars represented the thirteen colonies. The stars were placed in a circle so that no colony would be viewed as above, or better than, another. It is reported that George Washington said, “Let the thirteen stars in a circle stand as a new constellation in the heavens.”

Today, the flag still has the thirteen horizontal stripes. There are seven red stripes and six white stripes. These stripes represent the original thirteen colonies. The amount of stars has grown in number. By 1960, there were fifty stars on the flag. The fifty stars represent the fifty states of the Union.

There are many interpretations of what the colors on the flag represent. However, there is no official meaning for the colors of the flag. According to one legend, George Washington believed the stars and color blue were taken from the sky. He thought the red was chosen from the British colors, and the white stripes represented separation from the home country.

Others believe the color red represents blood shed to keep our nation free. White represents purity of our nation’s ideals. And, blue represents the midnight sky or courage. No one knows for certain why the Continental Congress chose those colors. Members left no records about their color selection.

Throughout history, the American flag has been a symbol of inspiration for many people. It has traveled to many exciting destinations. In 1909, Robert Peary placed a flag at the North Pole. In 1963, Barry Bishop placed the flag on top of Mount Everest. On July 24, 1969, the American flag was planted in space when Neil Armstrong placed it on the moon.

In the United States, the flag flies outside post offices, libraries and schools. It flies over the White House and Capitol building in Washington D.C. It flies near many government buildings. In all of the fifty states, the same United States flag is flown. Flag Day is a national celebration observed every year on June 14th to honor the flag. Many people display flags outside of their home on that day. Many towns and cities also display flags along their main streets.

Source: www.pbs.org and www.ushistory.org websites

Level 7.5
Understanding
1. What do the colors of the flag represent? ______________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________
2. Where are you most likely to see flags flown? ________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________
3. When did the Continental Congress vote to have an official flag created? __________
   ________________________________________________________________________________
4. By what year had the 50th state become a state? ________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________
5. What do the stripes represent? ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________
6. What does the word **observe** mean in this reading? ____________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________
7. How many stars were on the first flag? ________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________

Writing
Compare your previous knowledge of the United States Flag with the information presented in the reading. What did you already know? What was new information?

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