The Pledge of Allegiance

Pre-reading

Questions:

• What does the Pledge of Allegiance mean to you?

Definitions:

• Pledge – a serious promise
• Allegiance – loyalty or dedication to a belief or country
• Recitation – written material to be read aloud from memory
• Loyalty – being faithful or devoted
• Devotion – giving attention, time, or help for a purpose

Reading

The original Pledge of Allegiance was written over 100 years ago. It was published in Boston, Massachusetts as “The Pledge to my Flag” on September 8, 1892. It appeared in a youth magazine called the “Youth’s Companion”. Who wrote it? No one knows for sure. Some believe Francis Bellamy, editor of the “Youth’s Companion” wrote it.

The 22 word recitation was written for school children to use during the national Columbus Day celebration. October 11, 1892 marked the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus’ discovery of America. East coast leaders had planned many activities throughout the nation’s 44 states to celebrate the big day!

On October 11, 1892 more than 12 million school children across the United States recited the pledge for the first time. The Pledge to my Flag read:

I Pledge allegiance to my Flag, And to the Republic for which it stands:
one Nation, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.

Reciting the Pledge to the Flag quickly became a daily routine in America’s public schools.

This original version of the pledge was used for 25 years before some changes were made. On Flag Day, June 14, 1923 the word “my” in my Flag was changed to “the”. The following year, the words “of the United States of America” were added after the word Flag.

On June 22, 1942 the pledge became official. United States Congress included the Pledge to the Flag in the United States Flag Code. This was the first official approval given to words that had been recited by school children for 50 years. One year after receiving this official approval, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that school children could not be forced to recite the Pledge as part of their daily routine.

In 1945 the Pledge to the Flag received its official title as “The Pledge of Allegiance.” The last change in the Pledge of Allegiance happened on Flag Day, June 14, 1954 when President Dwight D. Eisenhower added the words “under God”.

The pledge was first written as a 22 word recitation for a Columbus Day celebration. It is now a 31 word profession of devotion to a flag and way of life. When you say the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America, you:

• Promise your loyalty to the Flag itself.
• Promise your loyalty to your own and the other 49 states.
• Promise your loyalty to the Government that unites us all;
  o Recognizing that we are one Nation,
  o That we should not be divided or alone,
  o And understanding that the right to liberty and justice belongs to all of us.
Understanding

1. What was the original title of the Pledge of Allegiance? ___________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

2. In what year were the words “of the United States of America” added to the pledge? __________

_________________________________________________________________________________

3. Why was the pledge written? __________________________________________________________

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4. When you say the Pledge of Allegiance, you are promising loyalty to what? _______________

_________________________________________________________________________________

5. How many states made up the Union when the original pledge was written? _______________

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6. What does the word profession mean in this reading? _________________________________

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7. How many years has the current Pledge of Allegiance existed? _________________________

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Writing

Option A: In your own words, summarize what you learned about the Pledge of Allegiance.

Option B: What does the Pledge of Allegiance mean to you?

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