

History-Social Science Framework Resource Collection

Featuring the Library of Congress's Digital Archives and More



GRADE 1 STANDARD 1.3

What are some important symbols of the United States? Why are they important?

THE HISTORY-SOCIAL SCIENCE FRAMEWORK

First-grade students deepen their understanding of national identity and cultural literacy by learning about national and state symbols (Standard 1.3). Students learn to recite the Pledge of Allegiance and sing songs that express American ideals (e.g., “You’re a Grand Old Flag”). As students participate in shared inquiry, they begin to understand the significance of national holidays and the achievements of the people associated with them. They also learn to identify and understand American symbols, landmarks, and essential documents, such as the flag, bald eagle, Statue of Liberty, U.S. Constitution, and Declaration of Independence, and know the people, ideas, and events associated with them. Teachers should focus on how these symbols provide a sense of identity for Americans and a sense of community across time and space. Informational texts and literature such as Deborah Kent’s *Lincoln Memorial*, Ann McGovern’s *The Pilgrims’ First Thanksgiving*, Lucille Recht Penner’s *The Statue of Liberty*, and Patricia Ryon Quiri’s *The National Anthem* may be used to

answer questions such as What are some important symbols of the United States? and Why are they important? Students may create a class “big book” of important national symbols by writing informational or opinion pieces about these symbols. Teachers may also read to students *The Wall* by Eve Bunting, which helps them to understand the symbolic nature of monuments and how they represent civic values.

• • •
Note: All images are hyperlinked. Citations are included at the end.

• • •

Lincoln Memorial



ABRAHAM LINCOLN was the nation's sixteenth President, from 1861-1865. He became President at a moment when the nation battled over the issue of slavery. As the leader of the newly-formed "free soil" Republican Party, Lincoln sought to limit the expansion of slavery. Although his election in 1860 precipitated the secession of the southern slave states, President Lincoln determined to make the Union whole again. As he observed in [his first inaugural address](#), "in view of the constitution and the law, the Union is unbroken."

In one of Lincoln's most quoted articulations of the nation's values, [he spoke at a battlefield near Gettysburg](#), Pennsylvania in 1863. He began by reminding those present that "our fathers brought forth, on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." He spoke of the nation's unfinished work in realizing that proposition and sacrificing, even one's own life, to the greater good. To Lincoln, and his many admirers since then, that greater good remains a "government of the people, by the people, for the people."



LINCOLN MEMORIAL

Dedicated in 1922, the Lincoln Memorial's architect, Henry Bacon, modeled the building after the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, noting that its recognition as a symbol of democracy in the western world reflected the values that guided Lincoln's own political career.

Supported by thirty-six “Doric” columns (the number of states in the Union at the time of Lincoln’s death), the Memorial contains two chambers on either side of the awe-inspiring statue at the center. Alongside inscriptions of his [Gettysburg](#) and [Second Inaugural](#) addresses are two [sixty-foot-long murals](#) depicting “Emancipation,” and “Unity,” the two central themes of his presidency. Located at one end of the Reflecting Pool in the heart of the nation’s capital, the Lincoln Memorial has provided the backdrop for many important moments in American history, most notably for Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.’s [“I Have a Dream Speech.”](#)



(Aerial View)

Public monuments such as Lincoln’s reinforce a nation’s identity by emphasizing shared history. Its grandeur and prominent location in the nation’s capital emphasize the values embodied in the Memorial that Lincoln has come to represent to the United States.



“I have a dream . . .”

The [caretakers of the Lincoln Memorial](#) regard the former President as “perhaps the most revered figure in American history.” From his humble origins on a small farm in Kentucky to his tireless energy to provide the country with leadership at a moment when it was at its most fragile and ultimately giving his life, “his story was the story of the United States of America.”

Declaration of Independence



“We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal...”

“We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” Few words in American history, and perhaps all of human history, are as recognizable and oft-quoted as the preamble to the Declaration of Independence. It articulated some of the most important principles on which the new nation’s government was founded and formed the core of our national identity.

During the hottest months of a Philadelphia summer in 1776, delegates representing the thirteen colonies as part of the Second Continental Congress convened to debate a response to Great Britain’s increasingly repressive measures against their economic and political well-being. A number of representatives, most notably Richard Henry Lee of Virginia, began to press the Congress to declare independence.

Anticipating unanimous consent when they returned from a recess in early June, [Congress appointed a committee](#) composed of John Adams (MA), Roger Sherman (CT), Benjamin Franklin (PA), Robert R. Livingston (NY), and Thomas Jefferson (VA) to “draft a statement presenting to the world the colonies’ case for independence.” The members of the committee acknowledged Jefferson’s unmatched skill with a quill and pressed onto him the bulk of the writing assignment. After two days of debate and revision when they reconvened in early July, twelve of the thirteen colonies approved the declaration (New York abstained), and it was officially adopted on July 4, 1776.

Jefferson’s declaration was influenced by the [Enlightenment](#) and in particular, the [English philosopher John Locke](#)’s idea that a government was essentially a contract between the people it represented and its leaders. That government existed to protect “life, liberty and property” and derived its power from the consent of the governed. Reflecting on the momentous achievement of 1776, [Jefferson later wrote](#) the actions of Congress restored “the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion,” promising to all Americans the “blessings and security of self-government.”

Although the Declaration of Independence expressed values many Americans consider to be fundamental to the nation’s identity, in 1776, it had a long way to go to accurately reflect those blessings. As such, it has often been used by underrepresented groups in the United States to hold the government accountable to its ideals, which only applied to white men at the time of signing. In 1848, for example, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton drafted the [Declaration of Sentiments](#) which began, in part, “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal” (emphasis added). Modeled on the 1776 edition, Mott and Stanton include a list of grievances to demonstrate that the United States did not have the full consent of the governed. Similarly, in 1852, the abolitionist Frederick Douglass delivered one of his most famous speeches, [“The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro,”](#) during which he asked his audience “What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us?” Those great principles he warned demanded an end to slavery. Outside the United States, the Declaration provided the inspiration or language for [other newly-independent nations](#) including Venezuela, Liberia, Czechoslovakia, and Vietnam.

Rosie the Riveter



“Rosie the Riveter” has come to represent much more than the creators of her original likeness intended. She has long-outlived the war she was recruited to help win and her “We Can Do It” encouragement continues to spread the message of female empowerment. Americans called on Rosie following the United States’ entry into World War II. As American men volunteered or were drafted into the armed forces and, at the same time, the demand for industrial output grew, it created an opportunity for women to find employment in jobs once held only by men.

Mainstream society did not immediately embrace the plan for women occupying jobs previously held by men. However, in response to the reluctance to see women giving up their supporting roles in the home, the federal government created a propaganda campaign to promote the importance of women’s work to the war effort, promising that they would not become any less feminine. Headlines heralded “[The more WOMEN at work the sooner we WIN!](#)” and featured young, attractive (but tough) women. These war-time Rosies aimed to assure an uncertain public. Some employers of women workers even offered classes on [how to apply makeup!](#)

Despite Rosie’s depiction [only as a white woman](#) during the war, tens of thousands of African American women also joined the fight (for their country and their economic independence) and sometimes [moved across the country](#) to the new ship-building yards in California. The war did not dramatically alter the culture of racial segregation and discrimination completely as non-white women often filled the lower-paying, unskilled jobs (once occupied by white women) in offices and factories. But many women such as [Annie Tabor](#) (pictured here) had the opportunity to earn more money than ever before.

More than [seven million women](#) joined the workforce as a consequence of the U.S. entry into World War II. In some industries, such as aircraft manufacturing, they represented up to sixty-five percent of the total workforce (up from a mere one percent before the war). By 1945, women represented thirty-seven percent of [the American workforce](#). In addition to the riveters of the war, another [350,000 women enlisted](#) in the armed forces and served at home and abroad in the Army, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, and Navy.



After the war, the federal government embarked on an equally vigorous campaign to convince women to return back to their domestic duties exclusively. However, the opportunities many women experienced left them unwilling to be satisfied with previous gender expectations. As the great niece of renowned feminist Susan B. Anthony noted after the war, women had “[proven their abilities](#)” and were within their rights to expect full equality.

Every bit as much as the iconic “[Uncle Sam](#)” imagery, Rosie the Riveter has come to represent a unity of purpose during times of war, the contributions all Americans make for a greater good, and a powerful symbol of brave women.

Yosemite National Park



Famed naturalist [John Muir once wrote](#) to a friend about Yosemite Valley, “It is by far the grandest of all the special temples of Nature I was ever permitted to enter.” [Writer and historian Wallace Stegner called national parks](#) “the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst.” One of the crown jewels in the U.S. National Park System is Yosemite National Park in central California. Covering over a thousand square miles, Yosemite Valley, with its iconic “Half Dome” and the towering El Capitan, is recognized around the world as a natural wonder.

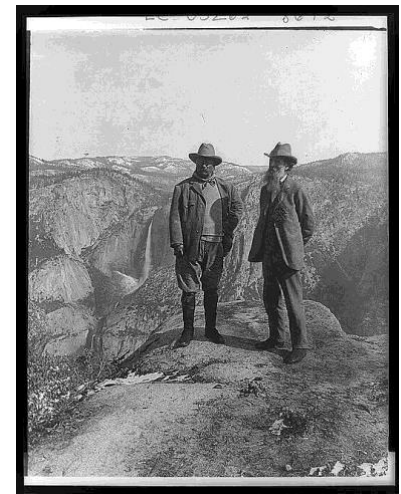
From the earliest inhabitants to those who came and conquered, the continent’s natural beauty has never failed to impress. The Sierra Nevada range, Death Valley, hundreds of miles of coastline, and the majestic Redwood forests has inspired artists

from Georgia O’Keeffe to Ansel Adams to Henry David Thoreau to try and convey the majesty and emotions of those grand temples of which Muir spoke so lovingly. Europe’s earliest explorers commented on both the “parklike” appearance of its eastern woodlands (a consequence, they failed to comprehend, of the native inhabitants’ culture of “[tending the wild](#)”) and as the historian [Edward Johnson noted in 1653](#), its “remote, rocky, barren, bushy, wild-woody wilderness.” Whether nature was viewed as an obstacle, an opportunity, or a religious experience, it has been central to American identity.



Even before federal officials declared the United States had reached the western edge

of its “frontier” in 1890, efforts were under way to protect its natural beauty. After much publicity by prominent citizens and journalists



including Horace Greeley and Frederick Law Olmsted, President Abraham Lincoln signed [a bill creating the Yosemite Grant](#) in 1864, the first federally-protected

park that created a model for the eventual creation in 1872 of the “first” National Park, Yellowstone. When [Theodore Roosevelt](#) became President of the United States following the assassination of William McKinley in 1901, he came to office with strong feelings about preserving America’s wilderness that had proved so invaluable in forging American independence and vigor. Roosevelt joined many other Progressive Era (1890-1920) reformers in advocating for the conservation of the nation’s natural beauty, efforts which lead in part to the formation of the National Park Service in 1916.

The various forms of activism to protect the environment beginning in the early twentieth century have since developed into the modern and recognizable environmental protection movement of the twenty-first century. The worldwide concern with the effects of human-caused climate change keeps the nation’s natural beauty at the center of these movements.

Statue of Liberty

A symbol of freedom and democracy, the Statue of Liberty—officially titled “Liberty Enlightening the World”—was a gift from France to the U.S. It was given to commemorate the alliance between the two nations during the American Revolution. But the significance of “Lady Liberty” has long meant more than the friendship between two nations.

Modeled after classical goddesses of “libertas,” [the statue](#) stands over three hundred feet tall from its base. At its unveiling in 1886, it was the tallest structure in New York. The exterior is made from a thin layer of copper and the green “patina” coating is from the natural oxidation of the copper. At her feet lies the broken remnants of a chain and shackle [representing the abolition of slavery](#). The torch

currently held aloft by Liberty was installed in 1986 and is covered in a thin layer of 24-carat gold that reflects the sun’s rays. (The original torch is on display in the museum at the base of the statue.) It is a symbol of enlightenment meant to show her followers the path to freedom. The tablet Liberty holds in her other hand has the inscription “July IV, MDCCLXXVI” carved into it—the date of American Independence, July 4, 1776. In 1903, a line from Emma Lazarus’s poem, “The New Colossus,” was engraved on a bronze plaque at the base of the Statue: “Give me your tired, your poor/Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” Immigrants arriving from Europe were greeted by the statue on their way to the Ellis Island immigrant processing center ([pictured in the background of this image](#)).

As a colossal symbol of our commitment to liberty, the statue has also served as [the site of numerous protests](#) as far back as its first unveiling ceremony when suffragists decried the representation of liberty as a woman when American women were still barred from voting. Similarly, African Americans such as the intellectual and activists W.E.B. DuBois, ridiculed the notion of democracy and freedom Liberty meant to convey at the same time they experienced constant discrimination and violence at the hands of white Americans. During the upheaval of the 1970s, women liberationists and Vietnam War protestors staged protests around Liberty Island to contrast ideals with reality. [More recently](#), Therese Patricia Okoumou brought attention to America’s epitome of promise of freedom and opportunity in renewed conflicts over immigration.



Citations

(Sources are listed as they appear in the text.)

Highsmith, Carol M. [Lincoln Memorial statue by Daniel Chester French, Washington, D.C.](#) United States Washington D.C, None. [Between 1980 and 2006].

[Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C.](#) United States Washington D.C, None. [Between 1980 and 2006].

Harris & Ewing. [Lincoln Memorial, Under construction.](#) Library of Congress. Prints & Photographs Division. 1914.

O'Halloran, Thomas J. Aerial view of marchers, from the [Lincoln Memorial](#) to the Washington Monument, at the March on Washington, 1963 . *U.S. News & World Report Magazine*. Library of Congress. Prints & Photographs Division. August 28, 1963.

United States, John Dunlap, Peter Force, David Ridgely, and Printed Ephemera Collection. [In Congress, July 4, a declaration by the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled.](#) [Philadelphia: Printed by John Dunlap, 1776].

Highsmith, Carol M. [Rosie the Riveter mural](#) on an abandoned building in Sacramento, California, [muralist] Unknown. 2012.

United States Office of War Information, Rosener, Ann, photographer. [Women in war. Supercharger plant workers. Plant foremen point to 20-year-old Annie Tabor as one of their best lathe operators, despite her lack of previous industrial experience. Employed by a large Midwest supercharger plant, this young woman machines parts of aircraft engines. Like many other young Negro girls, she had known only.](#) Milwaukee Milwaukee County United States Wisconsin, 1942. Oct.

H. [Henry] G. [Greenwood] Peabody. [Overhanging Rock, Glacier Point \[Half Dome, Yosemite National Park\].](#) 1901.

Watkins, Carleton E. [Field and mountains, including Half Dome, Yosemite National Park, California.](#) Ca. 1860.

Underwood & Underwood. [Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir on Glacier Point, Yosemite Valley, California, in 1903.](#) 1903.

Highsmith, Carol M. [The Statue of Liberty on Liberty Island, New Jersey.](#) [photograph] 2017; [statue] 1886.

[The Statue's shackles and feet.](#) National Park Service, Statue of Liberty National Monument. No date.

Additional Resources

[Abraham Lincoln Papers](#)

[Audio recording of Stars & Stripes](#)

[Carleton E. Watkins \[one of the West's earliest and most influential photographers\]](#)

[Conservation in the Progressive Era](#)

[Declaration of Independence](#)

[Environmental Protection \[legislation, printed material, images\]](#)

[Lincoln Memorial](#)

[The Evolution of the Conservation Movement, 1850-1920](#)

[Topics in Chronicling America - The Statue of Liberty](#)