

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
Through 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 Writing of the Poem

It is the War of 1812. The USA and Great Britain are fighting each other over trade and shipping.

On September 13, 1814, the lawyer, Francis Scott Key was asked by President James Madison to board a British warship. This ship was located in Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. His mission was to get the American prisoner, *William Beanes*, released.

However, the British had plans that evening to bombard Fort McHenry –a fort that guards the city of Baltimore. They decided to hold Francis Scott Key and William Beanes captive on the ship. The British and United States battled through the night. Francis Scott Key could only hear the roar of guns and bombs. It was so smoky from that battle that he couldn't see the coastline, and didn't know if the American flag was still waving over the fort.

In the morning, when the smoke cleared, he saw the American flag 'gallantly streaming' in the air. He knew that the United States won the battle! He was so inspired that he took out an envelope and started writing a poem about the events. This poem was the Star Spangled Banner.

The flag that he saw is now preserved at the Smithsonian Institute in the American History Museum in Washington, DC. It had 15 stars and 15 stripes, and was over 50 feet long.

Want more information on the Star-Spangled Banner? Visit this link:
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/ssb/>

TEST REVIEW

1. What war was being fought at the time the Star Spangled Banner was written?
2. Who was fighting this war?
3. Why did President James Madison want Francis Scott Key to board a British warship?
4. What happened to Francis Scott Key that night?
5. What fort did the British try to capture? What city did it protect?
6. What did Francis Scott Key see on top of the fort the next morning to show that America won the battle?

7. What words did Francis Scott Key write about in the poem that described the battle that took place that night? (Refer to the words of the song).

8. What words in the poem did he use to describe the American flag?

9. Describe the events that took place that inspired Francis Scott Key to write the poem.