

COMPARING STATE FLAGS

What does a flag represent?

Level: Intermediate (grades 3-5)



The United States is made up of fifty different states. Each state has a flag that uses unique colors and symbols to tell important facts about the state and the people who live there.

What facts does Alaska's flag tell you?

If you looked at a flag from another state, what facts would it tell you?

Summary

Students learn about Alaska's state flag and the meaning and symbolism behind the design. Students select, research and present the meaning and symbolism of a different state flag.

Estimated Time

90 minutes + homework time of 20 minutes
(30 minutes for Alaska's flag, 60 minutes for student reports, estimated at 2 minutes per student)

In this activity students will focus on the following:
Alaska Performance Standards at Benchmark 2
READING

5. Locate evidence in the text and from related experiences to support the understanding of a main idea
9. Differentiate between fact and opinion

Alaska Content Standards

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

- A.1. Apply elements of effective speaking
- A.3. Demonstrate skills in volume, intonation, and clarity in speaking

HISTORY

- C1&2. Use available technologies to explore a variety of information sources
- C3. Arrange information in useable forms (comparison chart)

Activities

Step One: Study Alaska's flag

- Discuss with the students which important facts or main ideas they should know about a flag. Make an organizing grid to record the information. (See State Flag Comparison Chart for an example.) Make a large chart or overhead as a demonstration while the students make a small one (8.5" x 11").
- Review the vocabulary that will be found in their reading. (See Vocabulary.)
- Read pages 7-12 of the *Eight Stars of Gold* exhibit catalog as a large group or individually.
- As a class exercise, fill in the State Flag Comparison Chart section for Alaska based on the information that was read in the text. (See State Flag Comparison Chart #2 for possible answers.)

Step Two: Investigate another state flag

- Each student selects (or is assigned) a different state flag to research.
- Review with students and discuss good sources for finding the information they need to add to their comparison chart. (Possible answers: Internet, library books about individual states, encyclopedia listings by state, books about flags.) A highly recommended resource is Netstate: www.netstate.com/states/index.
- Tell students they will be making a short 2-minute report to the class about what they have learned. Review the six categories of a good oral report with the students. (See Oral Presentation Scoring Guide)

- Students use class time or research as homework to fill in their State Flag Comparison Chart.

Step Three: Present state flags

- Each student prepares and gives a short 2-minute oral report using the six categories on the Oral Presentation Scoring Guide as a model.
- Each student makes a copy of the state flag he/she investigated and displays it in the classroom or school hallway.
- The class discusses what they like or don't like about the different state flags.
- **OPTION:** Students can use simple design rules and evaluate each state's flag, possibly creating a different design for their selected state. A good website for design rules for evaluating flags: www.nave.org/gfbf/gfbf-1.htm

Assessments

- Copy and distribute copies of the Oral Presentation Scoring Guide for students to use during oral presentations. Have students rate themselves to identify strengths and weaknesses. Encourage them to aim for a score of 5 in all of the areas.
- Have the students create a comparison chart for another topic they are studying to demonstrate that they can categorize and organize main ideas.

Extension

- Revise the Oral Presentation Guide to match your class' needs. Enlarge the guide and post it in the classroom for reference

Materials

- Exhibit catalog *Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag* by India Spartz, Alaska State Museum, 2001. Pages 7-12
 - Chart paper and markers
 - Paper, pens and pencils
 - State Flag Comparison Chart (sample)
 - Oral Presentation Scoring Guide (sample)
- Optional:* Creating a Classroom Flag Lesson and Design Rules for Evaluating Flags website: www.nave.org/gfbf/gfbf-1.htm

Resources

American flags and state flags:
www.imagesoft.net/flags/usstate1.html

Animated images of state flags:
www.atlasgeo.net/flags/anglais/html

A great website, with all of the facts about the states:
www.netstate.com

Flag. Eyewitness Book Series. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1989. ISBN 0-394-822255-2. The Eyewitness series provides clear information and photography to beautifully illustrate the topic. In this book, students will discover the story of flags and banners close up – their history, their meanings, and how they are used.

Flags. Easy-Read Fact Book. New York, A Franklin Watts Library Edition, 1985. ISBN 0-531-100008-1. This easy-to-read book provides simple overviews and clear illustrations about the main topics in the study of flags.

Vocabulary

conspicuous constellation n. An easy-to-see group of fixed stars

emblem n. A visible symbol of an idea

narrative n. Writing in a story form

'Twilit Twenties' n. The 1920s – a period of time when things were dark (in the sense that Alaska wasn't a state and people had very limited ability to make laws for themselves) but were starting to get brighter—referring to the time just before dawn

territory n. A part of a country that does not have full rights

territorial governor n. The person appointed by the President of the U.S. to govern or rule a territory

territorial seal n. An official symbol of a territory; Alaska's was designed by Governor John Kinkead and redesigned by Governor Walter Clark. It showed the northern lights, icebergs, Alaska Natives, mining, fishing, agriculture, fur seals and a railroad.

American Legion n. A community-service organization; members must have had active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces; chartered in 1919 by the U.S. Congress. Website: www.legion.org

symbol n. An object used to represent something abstract

symbolism n. Represented by symbols

unanimous adj. In complete agreement

SCORING GUIDE FOR STATE FLAG PRESENTATIONS

Indicators (What should be visible or obvious?)	Try again	This will work	Wow! This is great!
Is the information about the flag interesting, well organized and personalized?	The information about is so boring that the audience goes to sleep.	Clearly presents interesting and important information about the flag. The audience listens and has a few questions.	The information about the flag is so interesting and clear that the audience felt they would like to move to that state. Many questions are asked.
Is a credible/ believable source of information used in the research?	Gives no source.	Uses at least one credible/ believable source.	Uses 2 or more credible/ believable sources. Compares which sources were more believable and why.
Do you explain the flag design and your opinions about it?	Gives no explanation about flag design and its strengths.	Presents simple explanations about the flag design.	Gives detailed descriptions of flag design and clearly states personal opinions about the strength of the design.