

# STEPS TO STATEHOOD

*How did a flag help Alaska become a state?*

**Level: Middle School (grades 6-8)**

See "Techniques to Vary Reading" to adapt this activity for younger or older students.



*Governor George A. Parks with the Alaska Flag in Washington, D.C., 1927*

## Summary

Students summarize and sequence the main ideas and supporting details from the exhibit catalog about the story of Alaska's flag and the statehood movement. They may then write a play or perform an animated readers theater with younger students. (See Benny Benson: The Boy Who Designed Alaska's Flag activity.)

## Estimated Time

40 minutes – 240 minutes – varies depending on follow-up options

## In this activity students will focus on the following:

Alaska Performance Standards at Benchmark 3

Reading

- 2 Rehearse and read texts aloud to an audience, in performances such as readers' theater, reading to younger students or peers, or as part of formal presentations including research reports and literature responses
- 3 Restate and summarize information or ideas from a text

Content Standards

History

- B.2 Understand the people and the political, geographic, economic, cultural, social, and environmental events that have shaped the history of the state

## Assessments

- Use the detailed story cards as a trivial pursuit or jeopardy game, where students are challenged to recall information.
- Take the dates off the story cards and ask students to correctly sequence the events.
- Have students select one part of the story and explain how important it was to the overall statehood movement. Students should be able to include details and references to other events.

## Activities

### Step One: Read and take notes

- Tell the students that they will be learning both the main ideas and details about Alaska's flag and how it helped Alaska to become a state.
- Divide the 20 story cards (main ideas) among your students. Tell them to find details about the item on the card they have, using the catalog *Eight Stars of Gold* or other available sources (almanacs, encyclopedias, books about Alaska, etc.) Students can write details directly on their cards, and should note their sources of information at the bottom of the card.

### Step Two: Sequence and Discuss

- Have the students arrange themselves in the correct time sequence of the cards and read aloud the details they have found about each event. Save and use the cards for a 'trivial pursuit-type' game at a later date.
- Option: (Add 10 additional minutes) Print a set of the incomplete story cards for each student and have him/her add details to each story card while listening to their classmates. The teacher can demonstrate how to fill in the details on a large chart or overhead while each student reports.
- (2-3 sessions: 30 minutes each) Have the students use the detailed story cards to help them create a play or reader's theater for a specific audience. For example for primary students or parents, see Benny Benson: The Boy Who Designed Alaska's Flag activity.)
  1. Help the students identify the problems Alaska was facing before statehood (unable to govern, make laws, manage resources, etc.) and what the people decided the best solution would be (i.e. become a state).
  2. Help the students identify the characters/events that played a significant role in solving the problem. (Answers may include William Seward, Governor Parks, Benny Benson, Alaska Flag, poems, song, Territorial Legislature, or Constitutional Convention).

3. Help the students combine and/or skip certain story cards in order to tell the most significant or interesting parts of the story for a live audience.
4. In pairs or small groups, have them draft the play. After each pair or group finishes their part, have them get feedback on their writing from another pair or group. Revisions in writing should follow the feedback sessions. After all the pairs or groups have gotten feedback and finished their revisions, put all the parts of the play together into one reading. Decide who is going to play each character, and how the action will move from one event to another, such as entering and exiting the stage, using signs to note changes in dates, and blackouts in between scenes.
5. Provide time for the students to work in small groups, each group developing one part of the story. Create props, costumes, signs, etc., that help tell the story in a dramatic way. Practice the play or reader's theater so that the language and actions are appropriate and well timed.
6. Put on the play!

## Resources

Exhibit catalog: Spartz, India. *Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag*. Juneau: Alaska State Museum, 2001.

Naske, Clause-M. and Slotnick, Herman E. *Alaska: A History of the 49th State*, Second Edition. University of Oklahoma Press, 1987. ISBN: 0-8061-2573-X

Reader's Theater  
[www.stemnet.nf.ca/CITE/langrt.htm](http://www.stemnet.nf.ca/CITE/langrt.htm)

## Vocabulary

**auspices** n. Sponsorship  
**Bostonian** n. A person from Boston  
**camouflaged** n. Disguising to conceal from the enemy  
**epidemic** n. Spreading rapidly among people, as a disease  
**habitation** n. A dwelling; home  
**hospitalization** n. To put in a hospital  
**Methodist Church** n. A Protestant Christian church, developed by the teachings of John Wesley  
**tuberculosis** n. An infectious disease characterized by small, rounded projections in the lungs

## Materials

- Story cards (2 sets: Main idea cards, teacher set with answers)
- Techniques to Vary the Reading of a Book

# TECHNIQUES TO VARY THE READING OF A BOOK

1. Students are assigned silent reading of the book or a section of the book.
2. The teacher reads the book to the class while they follow along in their own copies of the book.
3. The teacher guides the students through the silent reading of the book by posing questions for each section, having students make predictions, asking students to read to see if their predictions are correct, and then discussing whether their predictions were correct. (Stauffer, 1969)
4. Some students are assigned the silent reading of a section, with an independent activity for follow-up, while the teacher meets with the less mature readers and reads the section to them. The students may join in the reading when they want. The objective is for the less mature readers to enjoy the same story as the rest of the class with as much participation as they can handle at their reading level.
5. Students are assigned partners who share the reading.
6. Students are placed in cooperative groups of three to share the reading.
7. The story is taped and some students listen to the tape while others read it silently.
8. Students are assigned different sections of the book to read orally and are given time to prepare for expressive oral reading of the assigned section.
9. The teacher reads the section orally, while the class "mumble reads" it, which means they read along with the teacher while they underline the words with their fingers. The objective is to see the words and hear them from a fluent reader as well as hear themselves say them.
10. The teacher presents a vocabulary and concept lesson to help the students prepare for the section. The students are given a worksheet that guides them through the assigned reading by asking them key questions for various pages. The teacher circulates, helping individuals as necessary. Mature readers will read the entire story silently and then answer the questions, while the less mature readers will use the questions to help guide their reading. This is a perfect opportunity for the teacher to give more time to the less able readers. A challenge activity is given to those students who finish early.

# STORY CARDS FOR EIGHT STARS OF GOLD: STEPS TO STATEHOOD

**DIRECTIONS:** The 20 story cards list the main ideas for the catalog. Cut out the story cards and give one to each student or pair of students. Have students fill in details about the event on their card by reading the catalog or other sources. Have students line up in the correct sequence and read their detailed cards.

**OPTIONS:** Print out a set of the incomplete story cards for each student to add the details supplied by their classmates; Create a play or Reader's Theatre for an audience using the cards as a script.

1867 Alaska Purchase	1869 William Seward visits Alaska
1884 First Organic Act	1884 District Seal created by Governor Kinkead
1910 Seal of Alaska revised	1912 Second Organic Act
1913 Benny Benson born	1916 Benny in Jesse Lee Home
1925 Jesse Lee Mission Home moves	1926 Governor Parks visits Washington D.C.

<p>1927 Flag Contest held</p>	<p>May 1927 Benny wins flag contest</p>
<p>July 1927 First Alaska flag dedicated</p>	<p>Fall 1927 Poem <i>Alaska's Flag</i> written</p>
<p>1938 <i>Alaska's Flag</i> song</p>	<p>1956 <i>Alaska's Flag</i> becomes official song</p>
<p>1956 Alaska Constitution</p>	<p>1958 Statehood Bill passes</p>
<p>1959-January 3 Alaska becomes 49th state</p>	<p>1972 Benny dies</p>

**TEACHER SET:** Story Cards: Suggested answers and page numbers from exhibit catalog, *Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag*, Alaska State Museum, 2001.

1867

Alaska Purchase  
(page 5)

1869

William Seward visits Alaska. Seward was Secretary of State 1861–69, architect (designer) for the purchase of Alaska from Russia. He predicts Alaska will become a state.  
(page 5)

1884

First Organic Act – allowed for the first time local representation, with a crude civil government and court system set up. The U. S. President had the power to appoint a district governor to oversee Alaska  
(page 5)

1884

District Seal, the official symbol, created by first District Governor Kinkead. The seal showed Northern Lights, icebergs, and Alaska Natives.  
(page 6)

1910

Seal of Alaska is redesigned by Governor Clark showing importance of mining, agriculture, fisheries, fur seals and railroad  
(page 6)

1912

Second Organic Act is effected, improving self-government. Alaska becomes a Territory and is allowed to elect a territorial legislature with limited powers – first step to statehood.  
(page 6-7)

1913

Benny Benson is born in Chignik, in the Aleutians. His mother was Tatiana (Aleut-Russian), and his father's name was John Ben Benson (Swedish fisherman).  
(page 10)

1916

Mother died of pneumonia. 3-year old Benny placed by his father in Jesse Lee Home in Unalaska.  
(page 10)

1925

Governor George Parks is appointed.  
(page 7)  
Jesse Lee Mission Home moves to Seward by steamship. The children see trees, trains, automobiles, horses, and airplanes.  
(page 13)

1926

Governor Parks visits Washington D.C. He notices that Alaska isn't represented in rotunda of Post Office Building.  
(page 7)

<p>1927 Governor Parks calls for a flag contest; American Legion conducts contest, sets rules, judges, deadlines. (page 8)</p>	<p>May 1927 Benny creates flag design. (page 9 &amp;10) Benny Benson's design wins, a "simple but meaningful design," "eight stars of gold on field of blue" " -blue of the forget-me-not flower," etc. (page 9 &amp; 12)</p>
<p>July 1927 First Alaska Flag dedicated at Jesse Lee Mission Home in Seward; Benny awarded his gold watch, and \$1,000 for his education. (page 14)</p>	<p>Fall 1927 Marie Drake writes a poem, <i>Alaska's Flag</i> (page 15)</p>
<p>1938 Elinor Dusenbury writes music to the poem <i>Alaska's Flag</i>, and creates the song that is a morale-booster for the citizens of the territory. (page 15)</p>	<p>1955 Territorial Legislature authorize Constitutional Convention, held in Fairbanks in November. Benny Benson is an invited guest. <i>Alaska's Flag</i> becomes official song. (page 16)</p>
<p>April 1956 Voters approve Constitution for Alaska that would take effect upon statehood. (page 16)</p>	<p>June 1958 Statehood bill passes Congress, June 30, 1958. (page 16)</p>
<p>January 1959 January 3 - Alaska admitted to Union as 49th state. (page 17)</p>	<p>1972 Benny dies of heart attack. He is honored in Alaska with streets, schools and monuments named for him to commemorate his remarkable contribution to the state. (page 11)</p>