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Date _____

The Star-Spangled Banner

By Mary L. Bushong

When the opening strains of the American national anthem begin, people come to their feet and put their hands over their hearts. It's a difficult melody, but the lyrics paint a picture of the struggle for freedom. That is the power of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

You might think that the words to the anthem were written by a great writer. Instead, they were written by a young lawyer and amateur poet in a moment of inspiration.

During the War of 1812, Americans raided and burned the town of York (now Toronto) and Fort York in Upper Canada. In response, the British burned Washington, D.C.

After the attack on Washington, D.C., the people of Baltimore, Maryland, were afraid they would be next. During the summer of 1813, the commander of Fort McHenry had a huge flag made. He wanted it to be so big that "the British would have no trouble seeing it from a distance."

After the attack on Washington in the summer of 1814, Francis Scott Key got word that a beloved elderly doctor, William Beanes, was being held prisoner aboard the British flagship *Tonnant*. Many people feared the old man would be hanged. Key and Col. John Skinner sailed out to the British fleet under a flag of truce to arrange the doctor's release.

At first, the British officers refused to release the elderly doctor. Finally, they relented, but refused to allow the Americans to leave until after the planned attack.

To keep the British from coming too close to shore with their ships, the Americans had sunk 22 ships to make a barrier near the fort. Early in the morning on September 13, 1814, the British began to bombard the fort. The attack continued for 25 hours. During that time, they fired 1,500 bomb shells, each weighing 220 pounds. The shells sometimes exploded before hitting their targets. Smaller specialized ships shot the new Congreve rockets. Their distinctive red flame zigzagged as the rockets shot across the night sky.

For a time in the evening they stopped, but they started again at 1:00 A.M. The three Americans watched the battle tensely. As long as the noise continued, they knew the fort had not surrendered. Just before dawn, the British abandoned the attack and retreated. Key, Skinner, and Beanes did not know what was happening. When dawn came, they were overjoyed to see the big flag still flying!

Key was inspired to write a poem about the flag. He pulled a letter from his pocket and began to write on the back. He finished at his hotel later that day. His brother-in-law had it printed and distributed copies with the title "Defense of Fort McHenry." Within a week, the poem was printed in the Baltimore newspaper. After the verses was a note that it could be sung to the tune of "Anacreon in Heaven." A month later, it was sung in public under the name, "The Star-Spangled Banner."

The poem became a very popular patriotic song. Then on March 3, 1931, the song was officially adopted as the national anthem for the United States of America.

"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?

The Star Spangled Banner



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*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.
O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?
On the shore, dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines on the stream:
'Tis the star-spangled banner! O long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.
And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
A home and a country should leave us no more?
Their blood has wiped out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave:
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.
Oh! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven-rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation.
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust."*

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And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave

O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

The Star-Spangled Banner

Questions

- _____ 1. British soldiers burned Washington, D.C., because:
- A. They felt like it.
 - B. They wanted to plunder the city.
 - C. They wanted to destroy the economy.
 - D. Americans had burned York first.
- _____ 2. Why do you think the commander of Fort McHenry ordered a very large flag?
- A. He wanted everyone to know he was loyal to America.
 - B. He wanted the British to know who the fort belong to.
 - C. He wanted to make the other fort commanders jealous.
 - D. He had extra money in his budget.
- _____ 3. The name of Key's poem was originally called *Stars and Bars Forever*.
- A. false
 - B. true
- _____ 4. Why were some people afraid for Dr. Beanes?
- A. They thought they might be next.
 - B. He was taken prisoner by the French.
 - C. He might be hanged.
 - D. He was likely to give secrets to the British.
- _____ 5. What did the Americans use to keep British ships from Fort McHenry?
- A. chains
 - B. mines
 - C. sunken ships
 - D. sunken trees
- _____ 6. Key wrote the poem on the back of what?
- A. a legal document
 - B. a bill
 - C. a letter
 - D. a poster
- _____ 7. Why was Key so glad to see the fort's flag at dawn?
- A. The Americans had held the fort.
 - B. The Americans had given up.
 - C. The British had given up the war.
 - D. It was valuable.

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The Bold Style of a Cappella

Do you sing alone? Have you ever sung in the shower? Your voice sounds louder, smoother, and more in tune in the shower. While most voices sound pretty good in the shower, it takes skill and practice to sing well outside of the walls of your bathroom. Confident singers often choose to sing *a cappella*. This means that you do not have instruments playing with you. *A cappella* is Italian. It means "chapel." Some *a cappella* singers prefer to sing alone, while some like to sing with others. Barbershop quartets sing this way. A quartet means that four people sing. They each sing a different note. The Dapper Dans is a barbershop quartet. They sing at Disneyland, Disney World, and other Disney resorts. Men, women, and children sing *a cappella*. A singer giving a solo *a cappella* performance shows off a strong, skilled voice. An *a cappella* group skillfully blends their voices to create beautiful harmonies. Groups can be as small as a duet, with two people singing together, or as large as a choir, with many people singing different parts of the same music together. Singing *a cappella* takes practice. Maybe some of these singers practice in the shower!

The Bold Style of a Cappella

Questions

- _____ 1. How many people sing in a quartet?
- A. two
 - B. one
 - C. four
 - D. three
- _____ 2. What is the main topic of this paragraph?
- A. Disneyland
 - B. singing *a cappella*
 - C. shower products
 - D. hair styles
- _____ 3. Where do the Dapper Dans perform?
- A. Disneyland and other Disney resorts
 - B. Washington, D.C.
 - C. the Metropolitan Museum
 - D. Hawaii
4. *A cappella* is from what language?

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bridge to the sound box below the strings. In a piano, the strings transmit the sound through a bridge to a large, flat wooden soundboard behind the strings. The soundboard amplifies the sound.

There are other similarities between a piano and stringed instruments. For example, piano strings are tuned by turning tuning pegs to tighten or loosen the strings just like the tuning pegs on a guitar handle.

In addition to the eighty-eight keys, a person playing the piano also has foot pedals to control the sound. The right pedal, known as the damper pedal, is the one used most often. Using this pedal holds the dampers away from the strings. This allows each note to continue sounding and blend in with the other notes. The left pedal, known as the soft pedal, is used to play the piano quietly.

From the outside, a piano looks like a unique type of instrument, and it is unique in the way it works. But once you get past the whippens and the hammers and all of those other little parts, a piano is actually another stringed instrument similar to a violin or a guitar.

How Does a Piano Work?

Questions

_____ 1. Pianos have _____.

- A. strings
- B. whippens
- C. dampers
- D. all of the above

_____ 2. Pianos have _____.

- A. hammers
- B. spoons
- C. pedals
- D. all of the above

_____ 3. The shortest string in a piano produces _____.

- A. no sound
- B. the highest note
- C. the loudest note
- D. the lowest note

_____ 4. Tuning a piano is similar to tuning a _____.

- A. trumpet
- B. clarinet
- C. electronic keyboard
- D. guitar

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_____ 5. The sounds produced in a piano are amplified by the _____.

- A. strings
- B. soundboard
- C. amplifier
- D. speakers

_____ 6. How many keys does a piano have?

- A. seventy-seven
- B. one hundred
- C. eighty-seven
- D. eighty-eight

7. Why can a piano be considered a stringed instrument?

8. What are two uses of the foot pedals on a piano?
