These student activities will help you maximize the benefits of your markable Nystrom wall charts or desk charts: **Our Flag** and **Symbols of Our Country**. The activities will help your students become better citizens by understanding the meaning behind the flag and other symbols of our country.

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**The Story of Our Flag**

The first flag to represent all the colonies appeared in 1775 and actually had the British flag in its upper left corner. During the Revolutionary War, however, the Continental Congress declared that the flag of the United States would have red and white stripes representing the 13 colonies and 13 white stars on a blue rectangle.

The Continental Congress left no record for why it chose the colors red, white, and blue for the flag. However, when designing the Great Seal of the United States, it chose the same colors and explained what they stand for:

- **red**—courage and hardiness
- **white**—purity and innocence
- **blue**—vigilance, perseverance, and justice

According to legend, in 1776 George Washington visited Betsy Ross in Philadelphia and asked her to design the United States flag. Betsy Ross was an official flagmaker for the Pennsylvania Navy, but no proof of George Washington’s visit exists. Most scholars agree that it was Francis Hopkinson, a delegate to the Continental Congress, and not Betsy Ross, who designed the first flag of the United States.

As new states became a part of the country, debates took place over how the flag should look. When Vermont and Kentucky became states in 1791 and 1792, two new stars and two new stripes were added to the flag. Now the flag had 15 stripes, and many thought adding a new stripe for every new state would look too crowded. In 1818 Congress declared that there should only be 13 stripes—representing the 13 original colonies.

Because Congress did not say how the stars should be displayed, flag makers used different designs. In 1912, 1959, and 1960 presidential orders fixed the positions of the stars as states were added to the country. The 50-star flag was issued in 1960.
Math  **Count the Stars and Stripes**

Have students look closely at the flag. Then say:

- Each star on the flag represents a state. Let’s count the stars to see how many states there are.
  - Have students take turns numbering the stars on the chart.
- The stripes represent the original colonies.
- How many red stripes are there?  (7)
- How many white stripes are there?  (6)
- How many stripes are there all together?  (13) Have students number them.
- Why does the flag have 13 stripes?  (One stripe for each of the 13 original colonies.)

**Geography  Identify Colonies and States**

On a markable U.S. wall map or desk map, have students name and number the 13 colonies (New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia). Also have them name and number all 50 states.

**Music  Sing About Our Country**

Teach your class songs about our country, such as “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “America,” or “This Land Is Your Land.” Use the chart or a U.S. map to discuss the meanings of the songs.

**Art  Make a Flag**

Explain that our flag is a symbol. Its stars, stripes, and colors tell people something about our country. Discuss what a flag for your class might include. Have students choose symbols and draw a class flag.

**Language Arts  Discover the Meaning**

Write the Pledge of Allegiance on chart paper. As the class recites the pledge, point to each word. Afterward, review the pledge word by word, asking students to raise their hands for any unfamiliar words. List these words and their meanings on the board.

- pledge — promise
- allegiance — loyalty
- united — all together
- republic — a nation where leaders are chosen by the people
- indivisible — cannot divide or break apart
- liberty — freedom
- justice — being fair

Then have students say the pledge in their own words.

**Literature Links**

Your students might enjoy these books and others about the United States:

- **The Flag We Love**  by Pam Muñoz Ryan
- **American Too**  by Elisa Bartone and Ted Lewin
- **Ghosts of the White House**  by Cheryl Harness
- **A Picnic in October**  by Eve Bunting

**Web Sites**

Your students might enjoy exploring these Web sites:

- **Our Government**  (bensguide.gpo.gov)
  - Click on the grade level to discover pictures and text that describe how our government works.
- **The White House**  (www.whitehousekids.gov)
  - Tour the White House with the First Family’s pets.
- **Historic Flags**  (www.usflag.org)
  - Discover how our flag looked at different times throughout our nation’s history.

**Reciting the Pledge**

If you don’t already have a class procedure for saying the Pledge of Allegiance, establish one. You might have the student of the week pull down the Our Flag wall chart or distribute the Our Flag desk charts before saying the pledge.
Symbols of Our Country Activities

History Symbols of Our Country
List the names of the chart symbols on the board. Use Quick Facts to tell the class about each one. Then have students identify and label the symbols on the chart.

Geography Where in the United States?
Tell students the locations for the symbols as they write them on the wall or desk charts. Then help students find and mark or point to the locations for each symbol on a U.S. wall map or a U.S. political map in their atlas.

Washington, D.C.
- White House
- United States Capitol
- Supreme Court
- Lincoln Memorial
- Constitution of the United States*
- Washington Monument

Philadelphia, PA
- Liberty Bell

New York City, NY
- Statue of Liberty

Every State except Hawaii
- Bald Eagle
- American flag
- Great Seal (It’s on the $1 bill.)

Critical Thinking Name the Symbol
Use the chart to play a guessing game. Have students make up clues about a symbol on the chart and ask their classmates to identify and label the answer. For example:
- Point to the symbol that welcomes people to the United States. (Statue of Liberty)

Art Make a Symbols Poster
Have students find pictures of these and other symbols of the United States or your own state. Make a class poster of the symbols.

Quick Facts
White House—home to every President except George Washington, first used in 1800.

United States Capitol—building where the Senate and the House of Representatives meet, opened in 1800, located on Capitol Hill.

Supreme Court—building where the nine Supreme Court justices meet, opened in 1935.

American Flag—also known as “the Stars and Stripes,” represents the United States.

George Washington—our first President, also president of the Constitutional Convention, and a Revolutionary War general.

Abraham Lincoln—see entry for Lincoln Memorial below.

Bald Eagle—the national bird, unique to North America.

Great Seal—designed by Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson, approved in 1782. The eagle holds an olive branch representing peace and arrows representing war.

Constitution of the United States—written in 1787. It defines the powers of the government and rights of the American people.

Washington Monument—555 feet tall, opened in 1888, honors the first President.

Lincoln Memorial—opened in 1922; honors the 16th President, Abraham Lincoln.

Liberty Bell—originally made in England. Shortly after its arrival in Philadelphia in 1753, it broke when it was rung. It was recast and rung at the adoption of the Constitution.

Statue of Liberty—made of copper, given to the American people by the people of France to symbolize friendship and liberty, opened in 1886.

* The Constitution is displayed in the National Archives Building.
If your students are capable of doing basic research—online or from books—have them work in small groups to research the answer to one of the following questions. Or you might have each student work with a student from an upper grade to find the answer. Have students present their findings to the class.

Our Flag

United States Flag
- How many flags of the United States have there been? How has the flag changed? Draw pictures to show the changes. Put them on a timeline.
- If a new state was added to the country now, how many stars would be on the flag? How would you arrange the 51 stars on the flag?
- What are the rules for displaying the flag?

Pledge of Allegiance
- Who wrote the Pledge of Allegiance? When was it written?
- Have the words to the pledge always been the same? How have they changed?

Symbols of Our Country

White House
- Why is the White House called the White House?
- Who lives in the White House today?
- Which Presidents did not live in the White House? Why?
- How many rooms are in the White House?

United States Capitol
- Who works in the Capitol?
- Find a picture of your state capitol. Does it look anything like the national Capitol?
- What's the difference between capital and capitol?

Supreme Court
- Who works in the Supreme Court?
- Has the Supreme Court always worked in this building? Where did it work before then?
- The Supreme Court building is 385 feet long, 304 feet wide, and four stories tall. Is it bigger or smaller than your school?

George Washington
- Why is he called the “Father of our Country”?
- What did he do before he became President?

Bald Eagle
- Is a bald eagle really bald?
- Where do bald eagles live?
- If you had to pick a new national bird for our country, what would it be?

Great Seal
- What is the eagle holding? Why?
- How many stars are on the seal? How many stripes on the shield? How many arrows? How many leaves?
- What does E Pluribus Unum mean?
- Look at a dollar bill. Find the Great Seal. Who is on the other side?

Constitution of the United States
- What is the Constitution?
- Has the Constitution changed since it was first written? How has it changed?
- Look at the new state quarters. They show when states ratified the Constitution and became states. Line up your quarters by year. Which states became states first?

Washington Monument
- How tall is the monument? How many steps are inside?
- The Washington Monument is an obelisk. What is an obelisk? Draw one as a monument.

Lincoln Memorial
- Whose statue is inside the memorial? How big is it?
- How many columns are on the outside of the building? What do they stand for?

Liberty Bell
- Why is it called the Liberty Bell?
- Why does the bell have a crack in it?
- Does it still ring?

Statue of Liberty
- Who gave the United States the Statue of Liberty? Why?
- How tall is the Statue of Liberty?
- The nose of the statue is 4’6” long. How does that compare to your height?
- What is the statue holding? What do they represent?