



Devotion taken from the Carroll & Brooks Sixth Grade Reader of 1911  
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The story of our National Flag seems particularly appropriate in reminding us of the peerless heritage of America and her founding ideals. When men who are paid one thousand times more than they are worth dishonor the flag, and others who are worth ten times the value in character live simple and honest lives and survive on a pittance, yet, love our flag and the nation it represents, it is high time to recall to memory the blood and sacrifice that has purchased our freedoms and perpetuated our national sovereignty. I will first display the gallant poem of Sir Walter Scott, *Breathes There The Man*, followed by the story as published in the Sixth Grade Reader which should be current fare in every school in America. *Jerry L. Ogles*

### **Breathes There The Man**

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my own, my native land!  
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd,  
As home his footsteps he hath turn'd,  
From wandering on a foreign strand!  
If such there breathe, go, mark him well;  
For him no Minstrel raptures swell;  
High though his titles, proud his name,  
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;  
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,  
The wretch, concentr'd all in self,  
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,  
And, doubly dying, shall go down  
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,  
Unwept, unhonour'd, and unsung.

Sir Walter Scott  
(from 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel', Canto sixth)

## The National Flag

A thoughtful mind, when it sees a nation's flag, sees not the flag, but the nation itself. When the French tricolor rolls out to the wind, we see France. When the new-found Italian flag is unfurled, we see unified Italy. When the united crosses of St. Andrew and St. George, on a fiery ground, set forth the banner of old England, we see not the cloth merely; there rises up before the mind the idea of that great monarchy.

This nation has a banner, too; and wherever this flag comes, and men behold it, they see in its sacred emblazonry no ramping lion and no fierce eagle, no embattled castles or insignia of imperial authority; they see the symbols of light. It is the banner of dawn. It means *liberty*; and the galley slave, the poor, oppressed conscript, the trodden-down creature of foreign despotism, sees in the American flag the very promise of God.

If one, then, asks me the meaning of our flag, I say to him: It means just what Concord and Lexington meant, what Bunker Hill meant. It means the whole glorious Revolutionary War. It means all that the Declaration of Independence meant. It means all that the Constitution of our people, organizing for justice, for liberty, and for happiness, meant.

Our flag carries American ideas, American history, and American feelings. Beginning with the colonies, and coming down to our time, in its sacred heraldry, in its glorious insignia, it has gathered and stored chiefly this supreme idea: divine right of liberty in man. Every color means liberty; every thread means liberty; every form of star and beam or stripe of light means liberty-not lawlessness, not license, but organized, institutional liberty-liberty through law, and laws for liberty!

The American flag was the safeguard of liberty. Not an atom of crown was allowed to go into its insignia. Not a symbol of authority in the ruler was permitted to go into it. It was an ordinance of liberty by the people, for the people, of the people. That it meant, that it means, and, by the blessing of God, that it shall mean to the end of time!

Under this banner rode Washington and his armies. Before it Burgoyne laid down his arms. It waved on the highlands at West Point. When Arnold would have surrendered these valuable fortresses and precious legacies, his night was turned into day and his treachery was driven away by the beams of light from this starry banner. It cheered our army, driven out from around New York, and in their painful pilgrimages through New Jersey. In New Jersey, more than in almost any other state, grows the trailing arbutus. May I not think of it as sacred drops of Pilgrim blood that come forth in beauteous flowers on this sandiest-of soils? For this sweet blossom that lays its cheek on the very snow is the true Pilgrim's Mayflower! This banner streamed in light over the soldiers' heads at Valley Forge and at Morristown. It crossed the waters rolling with ice at Trenton, and when its stars gleamed in the cold morning with victory, a new day of hope dawned on the despondency of this nation.

Our states grew up under it. And when our ships began to swarm upon the ocean to carry forth our commerce, and Great Britain arrogantly demanded the right to intrude her search warrants upon American decks, then up went the lightning flag, and every star meant liberty and every stripe streamed defiance.

The gallant fleet of Lake Erie - have you forgotten it? The thunders that echoed to either shore were overshadowed by this broad ensign of our American liberty. Those glorious men that went forth in the old ship Constitution carried this banner to battle and to victory. The old ship is alive yet. Bless the name, bless the ship, bless her historic memory, and bless the old flag that waves over her yet!

How glorious, then, has been its origin! How glorious has been its history! How divine is its meaning!

*Henry Ward Beecher*