



# Merit Badge Class

American Heritage



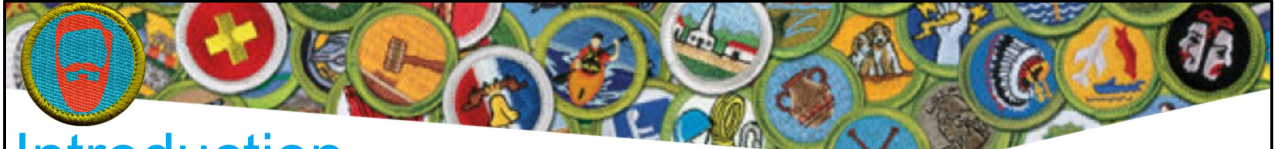
Mister Merit Badge

Every Scout swears to an oath that includes duty to his country. A better understanding of American heritage, the ways in which the past has lead to our present nation, is key to truly knowing what it means to be an American.



What is the Declaration of Independence?

The declaration is not divided into formal sections; but it is often discussed as consisting of five parts: introduction, preamble, indictment of King George III, denunciation of the British people, and conclusion.



## Introduction

In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

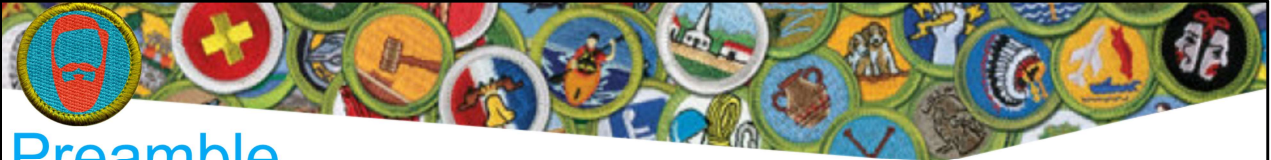
The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

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Asserts as a matter of Natural Law the ability of a people to assume political independence; acknowledges that the grounds for such independence must be reasonable, and therefore explicable, and ought to be explained.



## Preamble

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

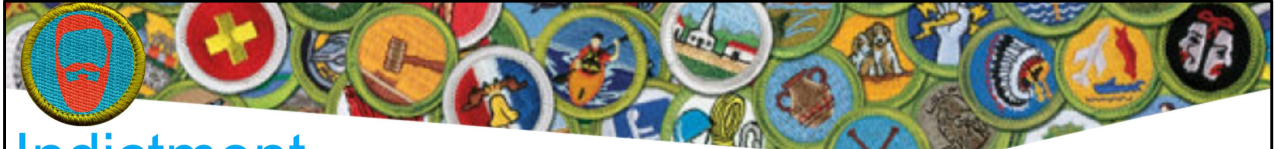
Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

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Outlines a general philosophy of government that justifies revolution when government harms natural rights.





## Indictment

Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

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A bill of particulars documenting the king's "repeated injuries and usurpations" of the Americans' rights and liberties.



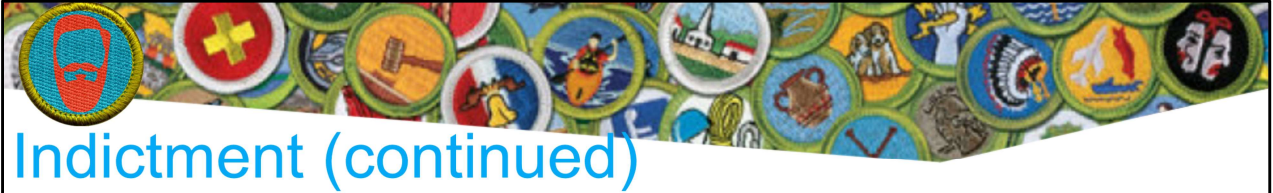
## Indictment (continued)

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness of his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected, whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.



## Indictment (continued)

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

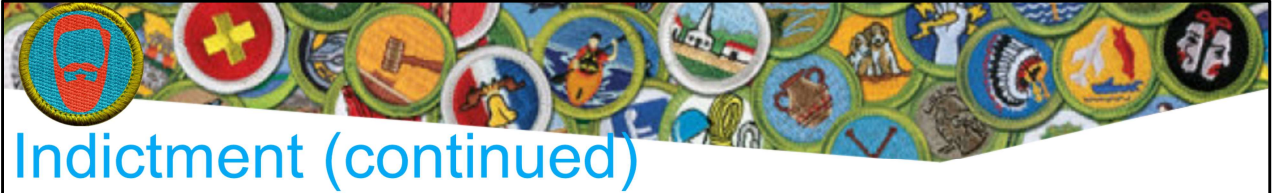
He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:



## Indictment (continued)

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

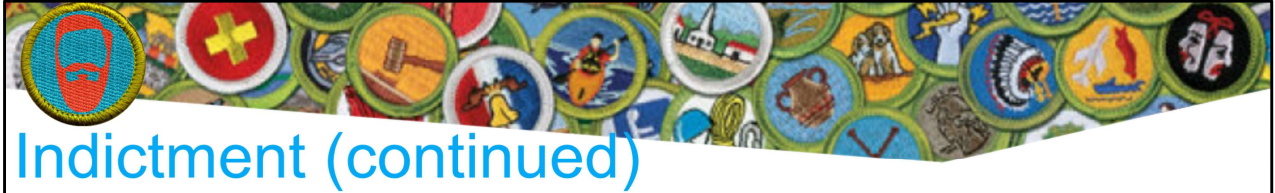
For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:



## Indictment (continued)

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & Perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.





## Indictment (continued)

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

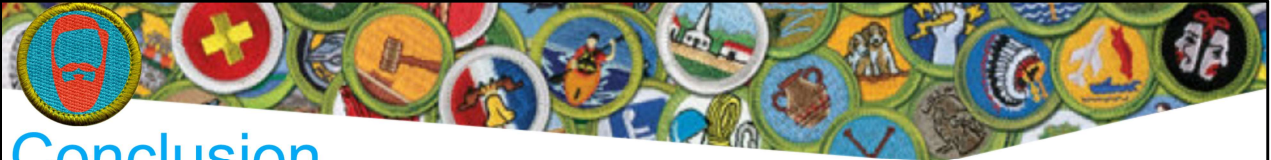
In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.



## Denunciation

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

This section essentially finishes the case for independence. The conditions that justified revolution have been shown.



## Conclusion

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these united Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

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The signers assert that there exist conditions under which people must change their government, that the British have produced such conditions and, by necessity, the colonies must throw off political ties with the British Crown and become independent states. The conclusion contains, at its core, the Lee Resolution that had been passed on July 2.

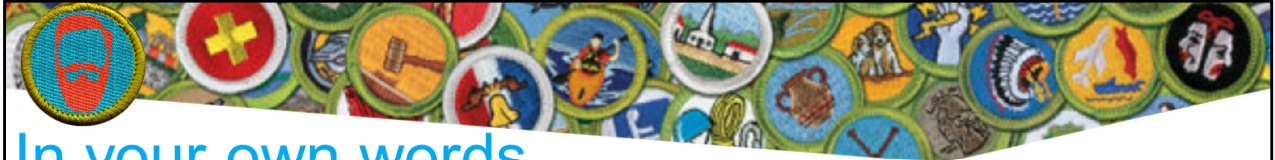


## Signatures

**Delaware:** George Read, Caesar Rodney, Thomas McKean  
**Pennsylvania:** Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, John Morton, George Clymer, James Smith, George Taylor, James Wilson, George Ross  
**New Jersey:** Richard Stockton, John Witherspoon, Francis Hopkinson, John Hart, Abraham Clark  
**Georgia:** Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, George Walton  
**Connecticut:** Roger Sherman, Samuel Huntington, William Williams, Oliver Wolcott  
**Massachusetts:** Samuel Adams, John Adams, John Hancock, Robert Treat Paine, Elbridge Gerry  
**Maryland:** Samuel Chase, William Paca, Thomas Stone, Charles Carroll of Carrollton  
**South Carolina:** Edward Rutledge, Thomas Heyward Jr., Thomas Lynch Jr., Arthur Middleton  
**New Hampshire:** Josiah Bartlett, William Whipple, Matthew Thornton  
**Virginia:** George Wythe, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Nelson Jr., Francis Lightfoot Lee, Carter Braxton  
**New York:** William Floyd, Philip Livingston, Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris  
**North Carolina:** William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, John Penn  
**Rhode Island:** Stephen Hopkins, William Ellery

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The first and most famous signature on the engrossed copy was that of John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress. Two future presidents (Thomas Jefferson and John Adams) and a father and great-grandfather of two other presidents (Benjamin Harrison V) were among the signatories. Edward Rutledge (age 26) was the youngest signer, and Benjamin Franklin (age 70) was the oldest signer. The fifty-six signers of the Declaration represented the 13 colonies, listed in the order of statehood.



## In your own words...

### Preamble

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.





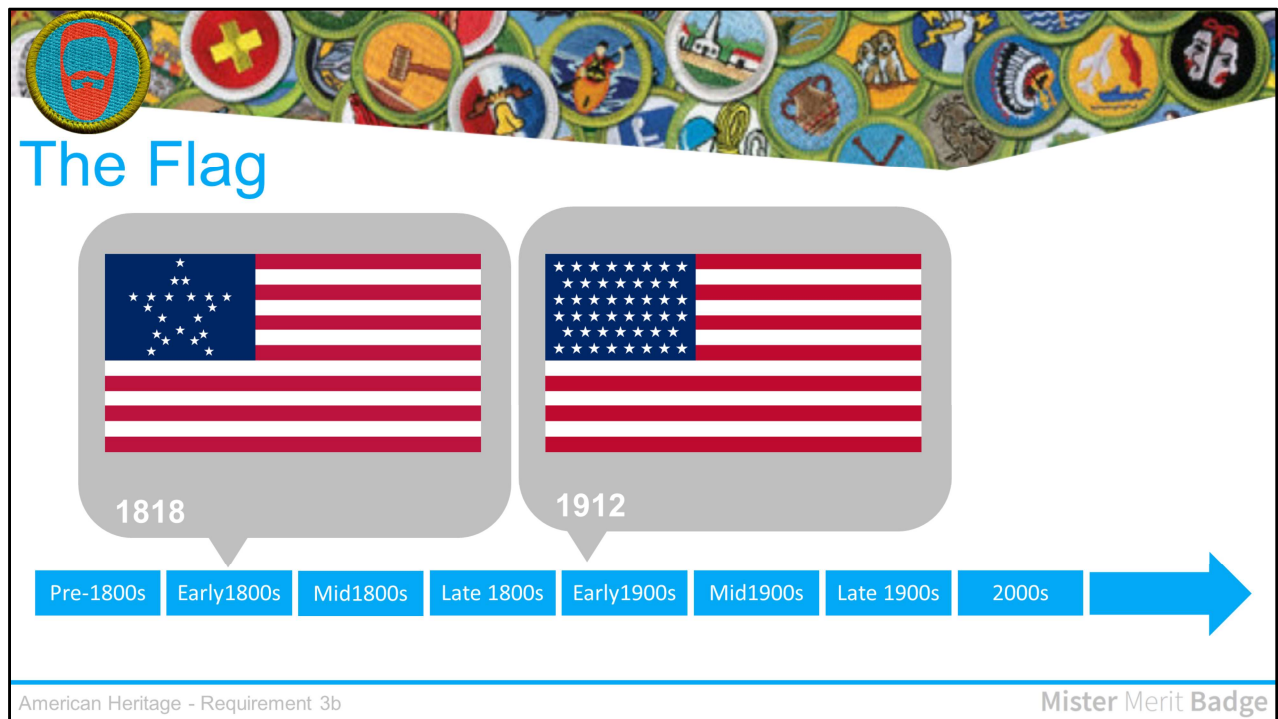
Select a topic that is currently in the news. Describe to your counselor what is happening. Explain how today's events are related to or affected by the events and values of America's past.



**1776** - The is considered to be the first national flag of the United States of America and previously, that of the United Colonies of North America – until 1777. This flag consisted of alternating thirteen red and white stripes with the British Union Flag

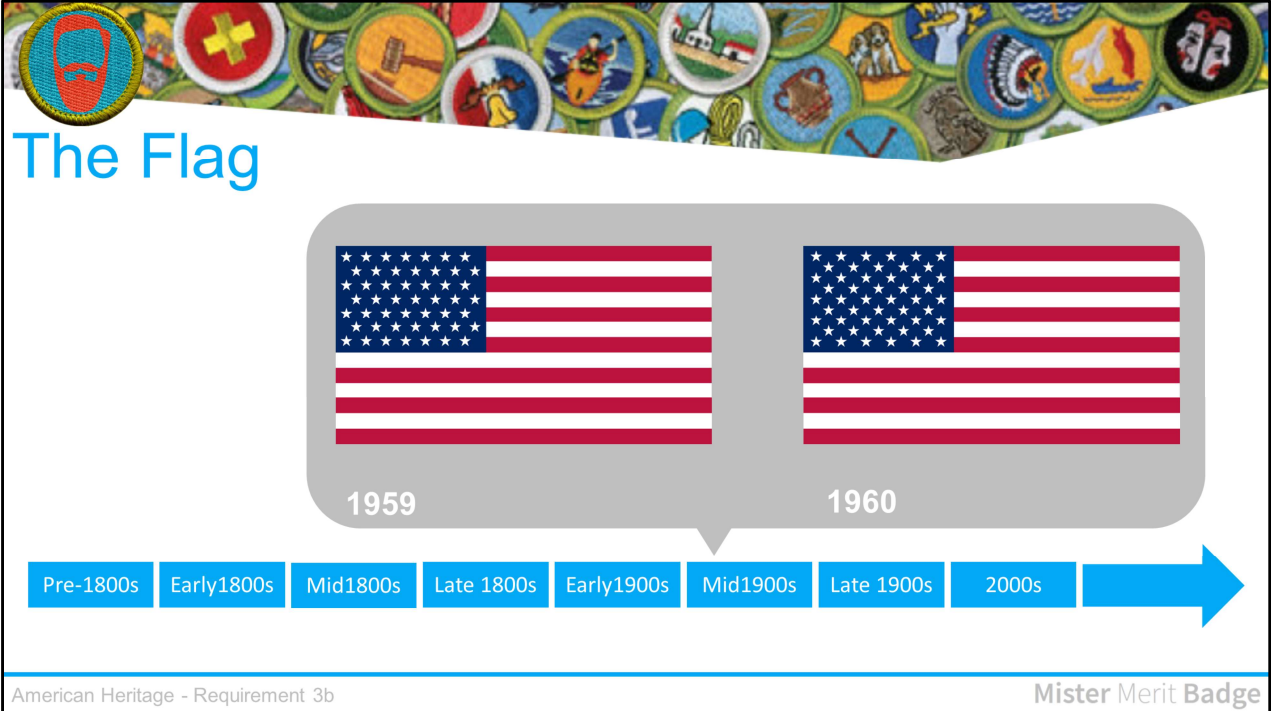
**1777** - The Betsy Ross flag is an early design of the flag of the United States attributed to Betsy Ross, using the common motifs of alternating red and white striped field with five-pointed stars in a blue canton. The flag features 13 stars to represent the original 13 colonies.

**1795** - The Star Spangled Banner: This Flag became the Official United States Flag on May 1st, 1795. Two stars were added for the admission of Vermont (the 14th state in 1791) and Kentucky (the 15th State on 1792, and was to last for 23 years. Note there are 15 stripes.



**1818** - Realizing that the addition of a new star and new stripe for each new State was impractical, Congress passed the Flag Act of 1818 which returned the flag design to 13 stripes and specified 20 stars for the 20 states

**1912** - The U.S. flag grew to 48 stars with the addition of New Mexico (January 1912) and Arizona (February 1912). Executive Order of President Taft dated June 1912 established the proportions of the flag and provided for arrangement of the stars in six horizontal rows of eight each, a single point of each star to be upward. This flag was official for 47 years, longer than any other flag before it.



### 1959

On January 3rd, 1959 Alaska was formally granted statehood placing the 49th star on our Flag. Executive Order of President Eisenhower dated January 3, 1959 - provided for the arrangement of the stars in seven rows of seven stars each, staggered horizontally and vertically.

### 1960

Executive Order of President Eisenhower dated August 21, 1959 provided for the arrangement of the stars in nine rows of stars staggered horizontally and eleven rows of stars staggered vertically. This is the current flag of the United States. Hawaii was admitted as the 50th state on August 21st, 1959. The 27th flag of the United States became the official flag on July 4th, 1960.



## The Pledge

**1887**  
We give our heads and hearts to God and our country; one country, one language, one flag!

**1892**  
I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the Republic for which it stands; one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

**1924**  
I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands; one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

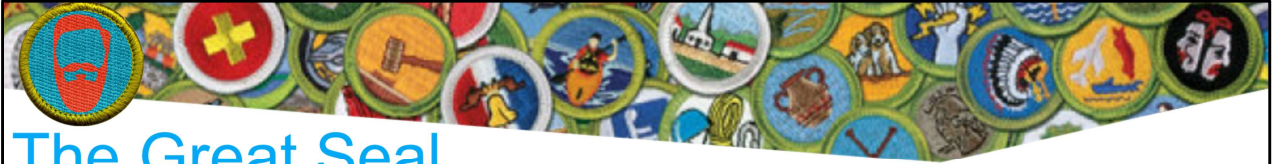
**1954**  
I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands; one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

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The Pledge of Allegiance of the United States was originally composed by Colonel George Balch in 1887, later revised by Francis Bellamy in 1892 and formally adopted by Congress as the pledge in 1942. The official name of The Pledge of Allegiance was adopted in 1945. The last change in language came on Flag Day 1954 when the words "under God" were added.





## The Great Seal



First committee's seal proposal 1776



Second committee's seal proposal 1780



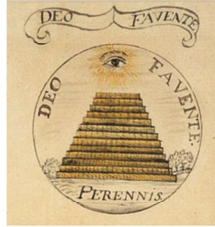
The Great Seal of the United States is used to authenticate certain documents issued by the federal government of the United States. The front of the Great Seal is used as the national coat of arms of the United States. It is officially used on documents such as United States passports, military insignia, embassy placards, and various flags. As a coat of arms, the design has official colors; the physical Great Seal itself, as affixed to paper, is monochrome.



# The Great Seal



Third committee's seal proposal 1782




Final seal proposal by Charles Thompson 1782



**Front:** The most prominent feature is the American bald eagle supporting the shield which is composed of 13 red and white stripes, representing the original States, and a blue top which unites the shield and represents Congress. The motto, E Pluribus Unum (Out of many, one), alludes to this union. The olive branch and 13 arrows denote the power of peace and war, which is exclusively vested in Congress. The constellation of stars denotes a new State taking its place and rank among other sovereign powers.

**Back:** The pyramid signifies strength and duration: The eye over it and the motto, Annuit Coeptis (He [God] has favored our undertakings). The date underneath is that of the Declaration of Independence, and the words under it, Novus Ordo Seclorum (A new order of the ages), signify the beginning of the new American era in 1776.



## The National Anthem

O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,  
 What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,  
 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 in 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 washed 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.

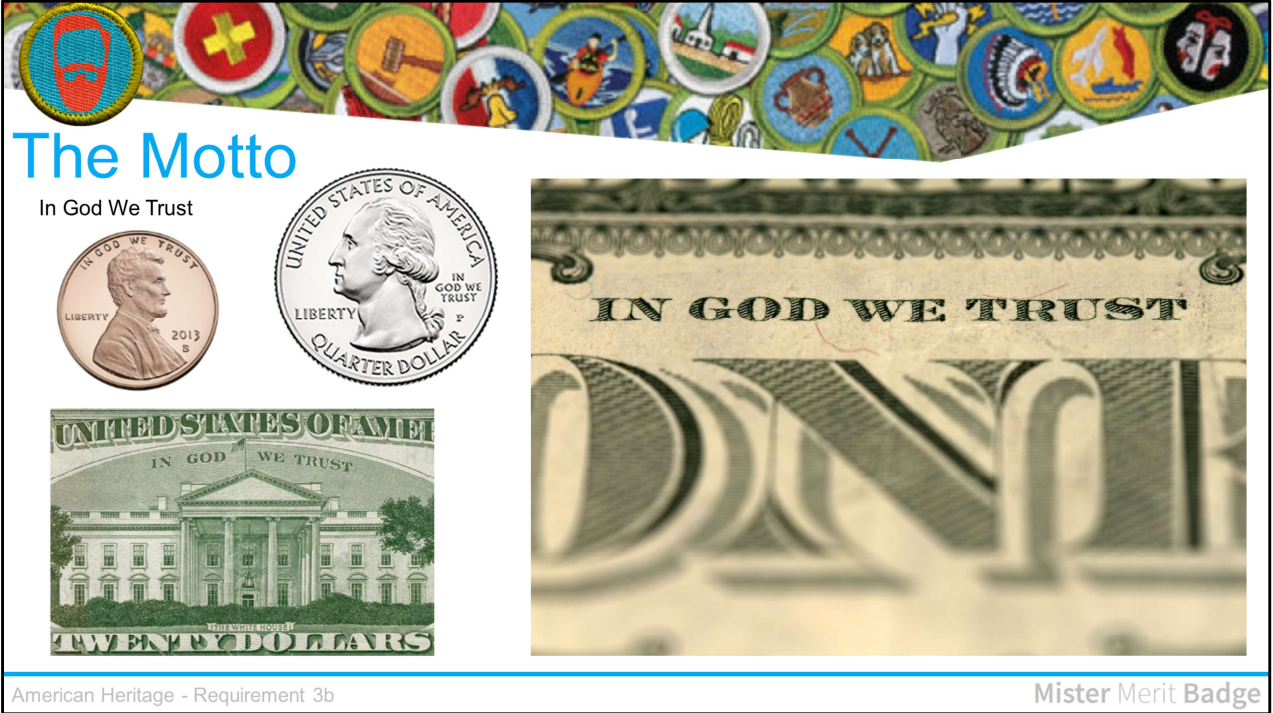
O thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand  
 Between their loved homes and the war's desolation.  
 Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the Heav'n rescued land  
 Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!  
 Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
 And this be our motto: 'In God is our trust.'  
 And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave  
 O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

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**"The Star-Spangled Banner"** is the national anthem of the United States of America. The lyrics come from "Defense of Fort McHenry", a poem written on September 13, 1814 by the 35-year-old lawyer and amateur poet Francis Scott Key after witnessing the bombardment of Fort McHenry by British ships of the Royal Navy in Baltimore Harbor during the War of 1812. Key was inspired by the large American flag, the Star-Spangled Banner, flying triumphantly above the fort during the American victory.





The motto comes from National anthem

The motto was used for the first time on the copper two-cent piece in 1864.

On July 30, 1956 a law was passed making the phrase our national motto.

The motto was first used on paper money in 1957,





## The Battle of San Jacinto

The Battle of San Jacinto, fought on April 21, 1836, in present-day Harris County, Texas, was the decisive battle of the Texas Revolution. Led by General Sam Houston, the Texian Army engaged and defeated General Antonio López de Santa Anna's Mexican army in a fight that lasted just 18 minutes.



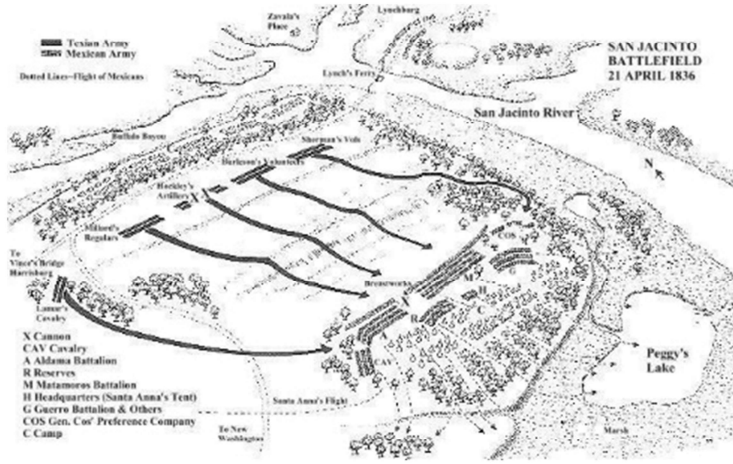
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Research an event of historical importance that took place in or near your area. If possible, visit the place. Tell your counselor about the event and how it affected local history. Describe how the area looked then and what it now looks like.



# The Battle of San Jacinto



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## The Battle of San Jacinto



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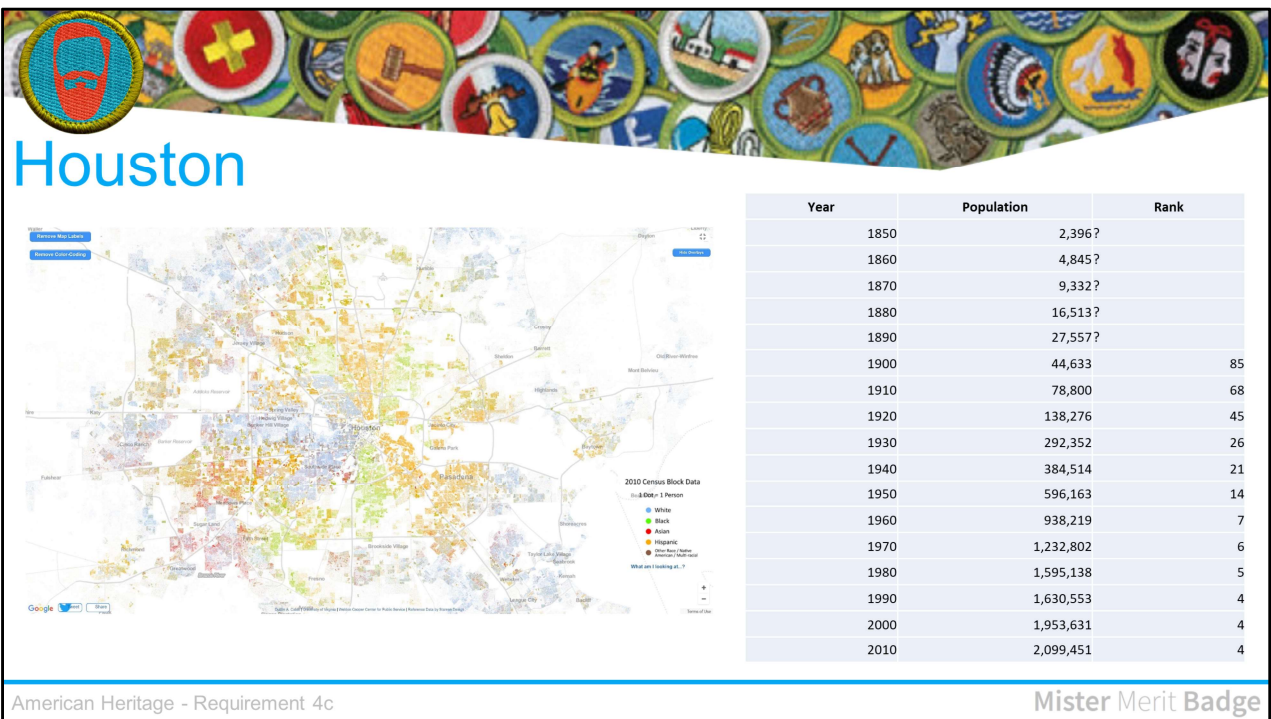
**Why:** To create a city with easy access to the Galveston port, and act as the capital of the republic of Texas.



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Photo: 1854 Houston's main street






The 2000 census found the Houston metropolitan statistical area has no racial or ethnic majority





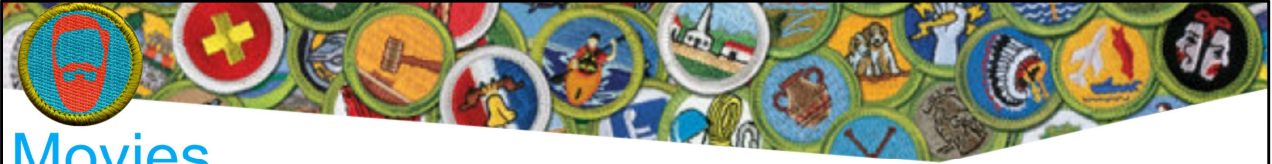
## American history in movies



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Watch two motion pictures (with the approval and permission of your counselor and parent) that are set in some period of American history. Describe to your counselor how accurate each film is with regard to the historical events depicted and also with regard to the way the characters are portrayed.



American Heritage - Requirement 5a

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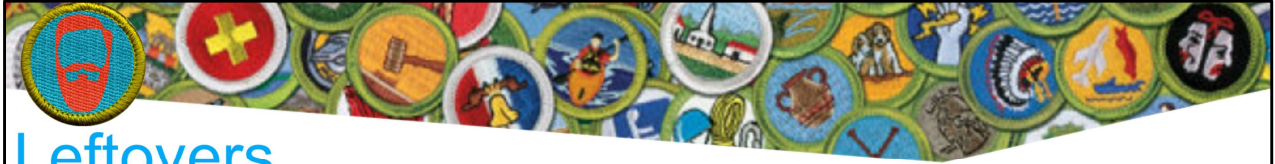


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Discuss with your counselor the career opportunities in American heritage. Pick one that interests you and explain how to prepare for this career. Discuss what education and training are required for this career.

**Ideas:** Teacher / Professor, Museum Staff / Curator, National Park Service / Park Ranger, Historic Preservation, Archivist, Lawyer, Journalist, Public Service, Economist, Military Service, Historic Interpreter, Librarian



# Leftovers

## Requirements not covered in class:

Requirement 2

Requirement 3c





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