TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS OF THE PLEDGE ★ 1892-2017

Dear Educator:

Americans in 2017 mark a significant occasion in the history of the United States: the 125th anniversary of the writing of the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. This milestone offers educators a unique opportunity to teach school children about how and when the Pledge was written, and why the historic oath has become the most widely recited verse in American literature, enduring 125 years of social, political, and cultural change.

The Pledge of Allegiance was written by Francis Bellamy for the National Public School Celebration of Columbus Day in 1892. As a member of the editorial staff of *The Youth's Companion* magazine in Boston, Massachusetts, Francis Bellamy chaired a national campaign to arouse patriotism and civic consciousness in school children, as the country prepared to observe the 400th anniversary of America's discovery by Christopher Columbus. The historic oath first appeared in print in the September 8, 1892, edition of the magazine.

This four-page TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE is designed to provide educators with background information on the Pledge of Allegiance and ideas for classroom study of the Pledge, patriotism, and democracy. Included in this material is a chronology of the Pledge; a biographical sketch of Francis Bellamy; suggested topics for classroom discussion; age-appropriate classroom activities; and excerpts from a published article written by Francis Bellamy on how he came to author the now-famous Pledge.

We encourage you to reproduce the TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE and utilize its contents in any manner that helps school children learn about the history and meaning of the Pledge. When excerpting materials from this publication, please reference the National Bellamy Award Organization as the information source. Should you have any questions or need additional information, feel free to contact us.

courtesy of

NATIONAL BELLAMY AWARD ORGANIZATION

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CHRONOLOGY OF THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

1892 **The original Pledge of Allegiance, as written by Francis Bellamy, contained 23 words: "I pledge allegiance to my Flag and (to) the Republic for which it stands – one Nation indivisible – with liberty and justice for all."**

1923 **At the First National Flag Conference in Washington, D.C., the words "the Flag of the United States" were substituted for "my Flag."**

1924 **The Second National Flag Conference, meeting in Washington, D.C., added the words "of America" after "Flag of the United States."**

1942 **The U.S. Congress incorporated the Pledge as law into the official Flag Code of the United States.**

1945 **The patriotic oath was officially named the "Pledge of Allegiance" by an act of the U.S. Congress.**

1954 **On Flag Day, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed an act of Congress adding the words "under God" between the words "Nation" and "indivisible."**

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Facts about Pledge Author Francis Bellamy

Francis Bellamy was born in Mount Morris, New York, on May 18, 1855. The son of a Baptist minister, he was raised in Rome, New York, and graduated from Rome Free Academy in 1872. He graduated from the University of Rochester in 1876, entered the Rochester Theological Seminary, and completed his training for the ministry.

In 1879, he was ordained in Little Falls, New York, where he served as a Baptist minister. He then served two parishes in Boston, Massachusetts, before leaving the ministry.

Bellamy resigned his pastorate in 1891 to accept a position as advertising editor on the staff of *The Youth's Companion* magazine in Boston. He subsequently was named chairman of the 1892 National Public School Celebration of Columbus Day to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. The goal of the plan was to conduct patriotic ceremonies in schools across the United States.

Bellamy received the cooperation of the U.S. Congress, state governors, educational organizations, civic leaders, and the news media to encourage participation and promote the plan. Ultimately, he gained approval for a Presidential Proclamation for Columbus Day 1892 from President Benjamin Harrison.

After leaving *The Youth's Companion* in 1896, Bellamy worked for several publications and also did freelance writing. In 1905, his career began to focus on advertising. He joined the Erickson Advertising Company in New York City in 1916 and remained there until he retired in 1923 to Tampa, Florida. Within two years, he came out of retirement to work in advertising for the Tampa Electric Company and then for the Tampa Gas Company.

Bellamy died in Tampa, Florida, on August 28, 1931. He is buried in the Rome Cemetery in Rome, New York.

Topics for Classroom Discussion

- **What prompted the writing of the Pledge of Allegiance?**
- **How is the Pledge of Allegiance related to the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus?**
- **How does reciting the Pledge of Allegiance demonstrate patriotism?**
- **What is the definition of patriotism?**
- **Why do Americans hold their hands over their hearts when reciting the Pledge of Allegiance?**
- **In what other ways do Americans show their patriotism?**
- **What do the stars and stripes on the American flag represent?**
- **Why is freedom so important to Americans?**
- **What does the American flag symbolize?**
- **Why is patriotism important?**

Classroom Activities (Grades K-3)

- **Have students think of other words that have similar meanings to the words in the Pledge.**
- **Organize a "Red, White, and Blue Day," during which students sing patriotic songs and recite poems.**
- **Have students make an American flag from materials other than paper (e.g., colored macaroni, bottle caps, wood).**
- **Create a "classroom democracy," whereby the majority vote of students determines which stories will be read on a given day, which games will be played, and which snacks will be eaten.**

Classroom Activities (Grades 4 & Older)

- **Have students review the original text of the Pledge of Allegiance and discuss the changes that have been made over the years.**
- **Ask students to write their own Pledge of Allegiance, incorporating their thoughts and beliefs into a personal oath.**
- **Have students list the freedoms enjoyed by Americans that are not granted to citizens of non-democratic countries.**
- **Encourage students to engage in role-playing, whereby some students would play the role of Americans, and others would play the role of citizens of non-democratic countries.**
- **Have students discuss how patriotism, responsible citizenship, community service, and civic involvement are connected.**

ONE NATION ~ INDIVISIBLE

In an article published in June 1924, Francis Bellamy describes how he came to write the original Pledge of Allegiance. Below are excerpts from that article.

It was a warm evening in August 1892 in my office in Boston, that I shut myself in my room alone to formulate the actual pledge. Beginning with the new word "allegiance," I first decided that "pledge" was a better word than "vow" or "swear"; and that the first person singular should be used, and that "my" flag was preferable to "the." When those first words "I pledge allegiance to my flag" looked up at me from the scratch paper, the start appeared promising. Then: should it be "country," "nation," or "Republic"? "Republic" won because it distinguished the form of government chosen by the fathers and established by the Revolution. The true reason for allegiance to the flag is the "Republic for which it stands."

Now how should the vista be widened so as to teach the national fundamentals? I laid down my pencil and tried to pass our history in review. It took in the sayings of Washington, the arguments of Hamilton, the Webster-Hayne debate, the speeches of Seward and Lincoln, the Civil War. After many attempts, all that pictured struggle reduced itself to three words, "One Nation, indivisible." To reach that compact brevity, conveying the facts of a single nationality and of an indivisibility both of states and of common interests, was the most arduous phase of the task.

But what of the present and future of this indivisible Nation here presented for allegiance? What were the old and fought-out issues which always will be issues to be fought for? Especially, what were the basic national doctrines bearing upon the acute questions already agitating the public mind? Here was a temptation to repeat the historic slogan of the French Revolution, imported by Jefferson, "liberty, equality, fraternity."

But that was rather quickly rejected, as fraternity was too remote of realization, and equality was a dubious word. What doctrines, then, would everybody agree upon as the basis of Americanism? "Liberty and justice" were surely basic, were undebatable, and were all that any one Nation could handle. If these were exercised "for all" they involved the spirit of equality and fraternity. So that final line came with a cheering rush. As a clincher, it seemed to assemble the past and to promise the future. That, I remember, is how the sequence of the ideas grew and how the words were found.

I pledge allegiance to my Flag and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

- Francis Bellamy

---------- ABOUT THE NATIONAL BELLAMY AWARD ORGANIZATION ----------

The National Bellamy Award Organization was established in 1942 by Dr. Margarette S. Miller of Portsmouth, Virginia, to honor outstanding high schools throughout the nation that have promoted the ideals embodied in the Pledge of Allegiance. At the time of her death in 1984, Dr. Miller was regarded as the country's leading authority on the history of the Pledge.

Dr. Miller's first book, *I Pledge Allegiance* (Christopher Publishing House, Boston, 1946) is an historical account detailing the events that led to the creation of the Pledge. Her second book, *Twenty-Three Words* (Printcraft Press, Portsmouth, Virginia, 1976) is a biography of Pledge author Francis Bellamy.

Over a period of almost four decades, the National Bellamy Award was presented to deserving schools that incorporated citizenship training and civic responsibility into their curricula. The National Bellamy Award became a symbol of an accomplished student body, distinguished alumni, a proficient school faculty and administration, and a harmonious relationship between the school and its community.

The National Bellamy Award Organization also worked cooperatively with Members of the U.S. Congress, the White House, the National Archives, the U.S. Postal Service, state governments, and private charitable and community organizations as the country prepared to observe the 1992 Pledge of Allegiance Centennial Year.

Today, the non-profit National Bellamy Award Organization continues to promote the ideals that are espoused in the Pledge of Allegiance, and encourages schools to teach young people about the significance of responsible citizenship, community service, and the impact the historic oath has had on the social and cultural fabric of the United States.