

The Star-Spangled Banner - Francis Scott Key - 1814



“Blest with vict’ry and peace, may the heav’n-rescued land Praise the Pow’r that hath made and preserv’d us as 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!”

Editors Note: In August of 1814, (War of 1812) the British Army burned down Washington D.C. and headed through Maryland on their way toward Fort McHenry. The British captured Americans along the way, one of whom was an older man, Dr. William Beane. Francis Scott Key, lawyer and poet and Colonel John S. Skinner, government’s prisoner of war exchange agent were sent to request the release of Dr. William Beane. The attack on Fort McHenry started shortly after they arrived. They were detained on ship and later released after the battle. For 25 hours, 16 British War ships pounded Fort McHenry all day and all night. Early the next morning, Francis Scott Key wrote the famous words to the Star-Spangled Banner after seeing the American flag still flying high above the Fort. God does work in mysterious ways. Had Dr. Beane not been captured by British forces, Francis Scott Key would not have left his wife and kids, possibly risking his life to request the release of his friend. And if Francis Scott Key had not experienced the attack on Fort McHenry from the perspective being a prisoner on board a British ship, he would not have been inspired to write the words the poem that has become our National Anthem.

The Star-Spangled Banner, Francis Scott Key

Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn’s early light,
What so proudly we hail’d at the twilight’s last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro’ the perilous fight,

O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly streaming?

And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof thro' 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 thro' 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:

'T is the star-spangled banner: O, long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

Flag draped from the roof of the Pentagon

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 wash'd 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 lov'd homes and the war's desolation;
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n-rescued land

Praise the Pow'r that hath made and preserv'd us as 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! ¹

Endnotes:

1. The Star Spangled Banner, by Francis Scott Key, <http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/lyrics/spangle.htm>
Photo, courtesy of the Library of Congress, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov>

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