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Activity Guide

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I Pledge Allegiance

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ABOUT THE STORY

This nonfiction book reads like a storybook as it describes the history of the Pledge of Allegiance. It discusses how the pledge came to be written back in 1892, its revisions since that time, and its significance to children all over America.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

June Swanson was born in St. Louis, MO in 1931. She received her B.A. degree from Texas University and her M.A. degree from Florida Atlantic University. In addition to authoring children's books, she has worked as an elementary school teacher and a free-lance writer. Ms. Swanson is the author of over 200 articles, short stories, and poems for children and adults. Her other book titles include "The Spice of America", "David Bushnell and His Turtle", and "That's For Shore".

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Rick Hanson is a free-lance advertising illustrator. He has spent much of his adult life living with his family in Minnesota, where he enjoys creating his art as well as fishing.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children to think about their morning routine at school. What activities do they do every day? Encourage them to mention reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Ask them what the pledge and the American flag mean to them. Tell them that by reading this book, they will learn about how the pledge came to be, what changes have been made to it, and what the words in it mean.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- What was the name of the magazine for children popular in the 1880s? (The Youth's Companion)
- What year was the Pledge of Allegiance written? (1892)
- Who is credited with writing the Pledge? (Francis Bellamy)
- How many children across the country recited the Pledge on the first celebrated Columbus Day? (twelve million)
- How was the Pledge of Allegiance first changed in 1923? (I pledge allegiance to The Flag of the United States of America)
- When was it next changed? (1954)

- What year marked the 100th birthday of the Pledge of Allegiance? (1992)
- Is every American student required to recite the Pledge of Allegiance? (no) Why not?

Vocabulary

Be sure students have an understanding of the following terms. Depending on age, simply discuss the terms, or have children look them up in a dictionary.

Pledge, allegiance, republic, nation, indivisible, liberty, freedom, justice, skyscraper, anniversary, celebration, honor, salute, civil war, slaves/slavery, recited, government, congress/congressmen, speech, support

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Art: Red, White, & Blue

Give students black and white outlines of the American Flag. Have them color it in true to the actual flag. Display around the room.

Social Studies: Flags Around the World

Visit your local library and gather books that show flags from countries all over the world. Show the children pictures and have them compare/contrast the flags. Divide the class into small groups. Give each group a specific country and have them research how that country's flag was created. Share findings with rest of class.

Social Studies/Art: A Pictorial History of the Flag

Like the Pledge of Allegiance, the American flag has also gone through many changes. Have students use encyclopedias and books to research the many variations of the American flag. Divide the class into small groups and give each a poster board. Have each group replicate a different flag from American history, complete with name and a brief description. Assemble the finished products chronologically and present to another class or at a school assembly for Flag Day.

Language Arts: Read and Respond

After reading and discussing the book, have students write a response that tells what the American flag means to them. Ask them if they've noticed an increase in the number of American flags hung since September 11, 2001. Why do they think this is?

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Flags

This activity could supplement the social studies activity above. Have students research a flag from another country. Print out a picture and a history of how it came to be. Design presentations and posters for the rest of the class.

Francis Bellamy

Have children search for biographical information on the author of the Pledge of Allegiance. Write short reports using the information they find.