

# Secrets of Our Symbols: A Time-Traveling Adventure!

**Lesson Goal:** Today, Cora, we're going on a super exciting mission! We'll become time-traveling detectives to discover the secrets behind some of America's most famous symbols, especially those that were important during the American Revolution when our country was just starting. We'll find out what they mean and why they still matter.

**Time:** 50 minutes

## Introduction: What's a Symbol? (5 minutes)

Hi Cora! Have you ever seen a picture or an object that instantly makes you think of something else? For example, a heart shape often makes us think of love. That's what a symbol is! It's something that stands for an idea, a place, or a group of people. Countries have symbols too, to show what they believe in and what their story is.

Today, we're going to look at symbols from the time of the American Revolution. Imagine the colonists wanting to show they were a brand new, independent country. What kind of pictures or objects do you think they would have used?

## Activity 1: Symbol Spotlight - Meet the National Icons! (15 minutes)

Let's meet some of our nation's star symbols! I'll describe each one (or we can look at pictures if you have them handy), and we'll talk a little about it.

- **The American Flag (especially the early 'Stars and Stripes'):**

Description: Imagine a flag with red and white stripes, and a blue corner with white stars. The first flags had 13 stars and 13 stripes.

Discussion: "Look at these stars and stripes! What do you think they represented back then? The 13 stripes stood for the original 13 colonies fighting for freedom. The stars also represented those colonies, and as new states joined, new stars were added! What do you think the colors red, white, and blue might stand for? (Often said: red for valor and hardiness, white for purity and innocence, and blue for vigilance, perseverance, and justice.) This flag was a powerful sign of unity and independence during the Revolution."

- **The Liberty Bell:**

Description: A large bronze bell, famous for having a crack in it. It has writing on it.

Discussion: "This is the Liberty Bell. It has a big crack, doesn't it? But that doesn't stop it from being important! It was rung to announce important news, including (legend says) the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence. Its inscription says, 'Proclaim LIBERTY Throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants Thereof.' What does 'liberty' mean to you? Why was it so important during the Revolution?"

- **The Bald Eagle:**

Description: A large, powerful bird with a white head and tail, and a sharp, hooked yellow beak.

Discussion: "Meet the Bald Eagle! Why do you think this majestic bird was chosen as a national symbol? Bald eagles are known for their strength, long life, and majestic looks. They are also unique to North America. It represents freedom and power. It was chosen after the Revolution, in 1782, to be on the Great Seal of the United States."

- **Optional - The Great Seal of the United States (if time allows and Cora is interested):**

Description: A circular design with a Bald Eagle in the center, holding an olive branch in one talon and arrows in the other. Above the eagle are stars, and there's a banner in its beak with Latin words.

Discussion: "This is like the country's official stamp. It has the Bald Eagle on it, holding an olive branch (for peace) and arrows (for strength/defense). Notice the motto 'E Pluribus Unum' – it's Latin for 'Out of Many, One.' What do you think that means for a new country made up of different states and people?"

## **Activity 2: Symbol Sleuth - What's Their Story? (15 minutes)**

Now that we've met our symbols, let's dig a little deeper into their connection with the American Revolution.

Let's pick one or two symbols we just discussed. Why was it SO important during the fight for independence?

- Example for the Flag: "Imagine you're a soldier in the Continental Army. Seeing the Stars and Stripes flying would remind you what you're fighting for - a new nation, separate from England. It would give you courage and a sense of belonging."
- Example for the Liberty Bell: "Hearing the Liberty Bell ring out news about independence would have been so exciting! It was like a shout of freedom for everyone to hear."

Discuss with Cora: "Which symbol do you think was the most powerful for people during the American Revolution and why?"

## **Activity 3: Your Symbol Story! (10 minutes)**

Now it's your turn to be creative, Cora! I want you to pick ONE of the national symbols we talked about.

On your paper, I want you to:

1. Draw the symbol.
2. Next to it, write or draw something that symbol makes YOU think of, or a value it represents that is important to you. For example, if you pick the eagle, maybe it makes you think of being brave or flying high towards your dreams. If you pick the flag, maybe it makes you think of teamwork because all the states (stars) work together.

This is all about what these symbols mean to YOU personally, connecting to their big ideas like freedom, unity, or strength.

## **Wrap-up: Symbol Superstars! (5 minutes)**

Great job, Cora! You've been an amazing symbol detective today!

Let's quickly review: Can you name one symbol we learned about and tell me one thing that makes it important, especially from the time of the American Revolution?

(Cora shares her drawing and her thoughts.)

These symbols are more than just pictures; they are like keys to understanding our country's history and the ideas it was built on. Even though they are old, their messages of freedom, courage, and

unity are still important for us today! Awesome work!