

State Seal and Flag

Learn about the symbolism in our state flag as you assemble a puzzle of our state flag.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. identify the Kansas state flag
2. recognize the term symbol
3. identify the images on the flag and what they symbolize

MATERIALS FROM TRUNK

Objects

Flag Puzzle

Fabric Panel

Kansas flag

Worksheet #7, state seal

OTHER MATERIALS

- A United States flag or a picture of one.

TEACHER PREPARATION

- Lay out the puzzle pieces. There are nineteen pieces to the puzzle.
- Hang the grey fabric panel where the entire class can see it.
- Hang the Kansas flag where it can be used as a reference.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1927 the Kansas legislature adopted an official state flag. The Kansas state flag is a rectangle of dark-blue silk with the state seal at its center. Above the seal is a sunflower and a twisted bar of blue and gold. In 1961 the word "KANSAS" was added in gold, block lettering below the seal.

The Great Seal of the State of Kansas was established by a joint resolution adopted by the Kansas legislature May 25, 1861. The motto, "Ad astra per aspera," means "to the stars through difficulties" and was adopted as part of the state's Great Seal. The motto refers to the difficulties Kansas went through (Bleeding Kansas) to become one of the stars on the U.S. flag. The seal is described in the resolution as follows:

"The east is represented by a rising sun on the right hand corner of the seal; to the left of it, commerce is represented by a river and a steamboat; in the foreground, agriculture is represented as the basis of the future prosperity of the State, by a settler's

cabin and a man plowing with a pair of horses; beyond this, is a herd of buffalo, retreating, pursued by two Indians on horseback; around the top is the motto: 'Ad Astra per Aspera' - and beneath a cluster of thirty-four stars; the circle is surrounded by the words 'Great Seal of the State of Kansas, January 29, 1861.'"

The history of the state is written in its seal and flag. Thirty-four stars on the state seal signify Kansas as the thirty-fourth state admitted to the Union. Rolling hills identify the terrain near Fort Riley, and a steamboat represents a form of river transportation used on the Kansas River to deliver supplies to Manhattan and Fort Riley. American Indians hunting bison, teams of oxen and a pair of prairie schooners suggest early settlers and the advance of the frontier, while plowed fields before a log cabin represent agriculture. The bar of twisted blue and gold represents the Louisiana Purchase, a piece of land which included most of Kansas. The sunflower, which appears as if it were "torn from its stalk," is the official state flower. It is said that the "open frankness of the sunflower is indicative of the fearlessness with which Kansas meets her problems and solves them."

The flag was first displayed in 1927 at Fort Riley by Governor Ben Paulen in the presence of troops from Fort Riley and the Kansas National Guard.

There are few formal guidelines for the state flag; however, custom and some state laws dictate certain procedures. State law provides that the flag is to be used "on every and all occasions, when the state is officially represented." The colors to be used on the seal are: "Stars, silver; hills, purple; sun, deep yellow, glory, light yellow; sky, yellow and orange from hills half way to motto, upper half, azure; grass, green; river, light blue; boat, white; house, dark brown; ground, brown; wagons, white; near horse, white; off horse, bay; buffalo, dark, almost black; motto, white; scroll, light brown."

The state flag is generally displayed with the U.S. flag. In any display of flags, the U.S. flag occupies the higher, or most honored, position. It is followed by the state flag and then by any city or society flags. The state flag should be the same size or smaller than the U.S. flag with which it is displayed.

VOCABULARY

American Indians People that were in America before the coming of the Europeans.

Buffalo A word commonly used to refer to the American bison. The true buffalo is found only in Asia. In this trunk the word "buffalo" used to refer to the state animal of Kansas. Buffalo were hunted by American Indians. They supplied many of the materials Indians needed to survive.

California	Far western state that was the destination of many pioneers who crossed Kansas from the 1840s to the 1860s.
Flag	A banner that usually represents a country or a state.
Kansas River	River that flows in eastern Kansas into the Missouri River. Starts where the Republican River and Smoky Hill River join near Junction City.
Log House	A style of home used by some of the early settlers of Kansas especially in eastern Kansas.
Louisiana Purchase	Land bought by the United States from France in 1803. Includes most of Kansas except the southwest corner.
Missouri River	One of the major rivers in the United States. It forms the northeast edge of Kansas.
Motto	A phrase that says something about the state.
Pioneers	A person who goes before others and prepares the way.
Plow	Farming tool that is used to prepare the soil for planting seeds.
Oregon	A state in the northwest part of the United States, it was the destination of pioneers on the Oregon-California Trail in the 1840s through 1860s.
Oxen	Large cattle used to pull wagons.
River Boat	Steamboats used for river travel in the 1800s.
Santa Fe	Destination of traders traveling west on the Santa Fe Trail.
Symbol	Something that stands for something else. Symbols are used to communicate words, emotions, directions, etc.
Wagon	Four-wheeled vehicle pulled by animals that carried goods and people across the country.

ACTIVITY

Explain to students that they are going to learn about the state flag of Kansas. Use the flag puzzle pieces, the fabric panel, and the description in the following sequence to complete the puzzle. As each part of the flag is discussed have a student come to the table where the

puzzle pieces are laid out, locate the piece, and place it in the appropriate location. Use the Kansas flag included in this trunk as a reference to where pieces should go.

- 1) Body of the flag (blue rectangle) – place on fabric panel
- 2) Sunflower – Kansas state flower. Kansas is known as the “Sunflower State.”
- 3) Bar - This bar represents the Louisiana Purchase, land purchased by the United States from France in 1803. The Louisiana Purchase is a large piece of land that included most of what would one day become Kansas. Only the very southwest corner of Kansas was not part of the Louisiana Purchase.
- 4) Seal - Explain that state seal in this puzzle has been cut into in a number of smaller pieces that the class will use to reassemble it like a puzzle. Each piece is a symbol and means something about Kansas.

Ad Astra per Aspera - The state motto of Kansas. A motto is a phrase that provides some basic information to help people understand the state. The motto of Kansas is "Ad Astra per Aspera." It is in an old language called Latin. In English it means "to the stars through difficulties." (Astra means stars.) The stars in our motto are not the stars in the sky. They are the stars on the United States flag. Each star on the U.S. flag represents one state.. “Ad Astra per Aspera” is explaining that it was very difficult for Kansas to become a state, to become one of the stars on the United States flag.

Thirty-four stars – Show the class the U.S. flag and the Kansas flag. How many stars are on the Kansas flag? How many stars are on the United States flag? Why is the number different? There weren't 50 states when Kansas became a state. There were 33 states, and Kansas became the 34th state. How does this number compare to the number of stars on the Kansas flag?

Buffalo – Kansas state animal. The buffalo was an important part of the lives of the American Indians that lived here and the early settlers who arrived in Kansas.

American Indians on horseback - American Indians hunted buffalo. These were the first people to live in the place we now call Kansas. They were here long before Kansas became a state.

River boat – One way many early settlers traveled to Kansas was by riverboat. At the time Kansas became a state, river boats were able to travel to Kansas from the east on the Missouri River and then up the Kansas River as far as Junction City.

Log house - Many early settlers in Kansas built their homes from logs.

Wagons and oxen (2 pieces) - Many early settlers and traders traveled to Kansas by covered wagon. Some stayed, and some continued on to Santa Fe, Oregon, California,

or other places in the west. Oxen pulled many of these wagons.

Horses, plow, and farmer - Many early settlers were farmers. They did not have tractors then. They plowed their fields using horses or oxen.

- 5) Six letters in the word KANSAS - The last thing to be added to the flag is the name of our state. What is the name of our state? Have the class spell Kansas as students place their letters on the flag. Explain that the name Kansas comes from the Kansas Indians who once lived here.
- 6) Explain that the class just created a Kansas flag. Compare the real Kansas flag with the one they just completed.
- 7) Hand out worksheet #7, "State Seal", and have students color the seal using the Kansas flag, or the flag puzzle, as a model.