

## **LESSON J**

### **THE DELAWARE FLAG**

**Standards:** History Standard Two: Students will gather, examine, and analyze historical data.

History Standard Four: Students will develop historical knowledge of major events and phenomena in world, United States, and Delaware history.

**Objective:** The students will write a description and create a flag to represent their school based on the example of the Delaware Flag.

**Materials:** 1) *Lesson J, Delaware Public Archives, State Seal Resolution, Series Number 1111.2*  
2) Drawing Paper, Crayons or Drawing Pencils  
3) *Lesson J, Delaware Flag Overhead (Courtesy of Delaware Historical and Cultural Affairs)[Image Gallery]*

#### **Procedures:**

- 1) Form the class into groups of two. Discuss the meaning of symbolism by showing students familiar symbols like the Nike swoosh and McDonald's golden arches. and ask the students to brainstorm a list of other examples of symbols - The United States Flag, The Statue of Liberty, The Liberty Bell. One could even use the icons on a computer as being representative of symbols.
- 2) Display the overhead of the Delaware Flag. Ask: Is the Delaware Flag a symbol of the state? (Yes) Point out that the picture on the flag is taken from the State Seal that was created in 1777. Review the events that led up to the State Seal being produced. (See background information)
- 3) Pass out the State Seal Resolution. Give the students several minutes to familiarize themselves with the document. Read the resolution aloud.
- 4) Explain to the students that the State Seal was used as the centerpiece of the Delaware flag when it was adopted as the official state flag on February 20, 1913. Display the flag overhead. Point out the various parts of the flag and how the items on the flag symbolize different areas of importance. The colors, diamond shape and December 7, 1787 date will need to be

pointed out and explained. (See background information)

- 5) Instruct the students that they will create their own flag to represent their school. As a group they must write a description of their flag. Emphasize that they should use symbols to show important elements of their school and be sure to explain the significance of each symbol in the description. The group will then create a drawing of their flag based on the description they wrote.
- 6) Allow students time to complete the written description and the drawing of the school flag. Have groups share their results orally with the class.
- 7) Post the flags on the bulletin board. Review the use of symbolism and instruct the students to look for symbolism in their school, their neighborhood, and their home. To summarize learning, have students complete a 3-2-1. List 3 symbols that appear on the Delaware flag; Explain the meaning of 2 symbols on the Delaware flag; If you could add 1 more symbol to the flag, what would it be and why?

### **DOCUMENT TRANSCRIPTION**

The Committee, appointed to confer with a Committee of the House of Assembly on the subject matter of a device for and making of a Great Seal for the State, and also to fix upon a Seal which shall be held and deemed to be the Great Seal pro tempore until the Great Seal which shall be agreed upon by both Houses be made do now report that they met messrs McKean, Robinson and Cook appointed by the House of Assembly to this Service, and have come to the following Resolution thereupon, viz:  
Resolved, N.C.D. That Mr. McKean be a committee to employ skillful workmen to make a Silver Seal of the Diameter of three inches and of a circular form, and that there be engraved thereon a Sheaf of Wheat, an ear of Indian Corn from the Ox in full Stature in a Shield, with a River dividing the wheat sheaf and ear of Indian corn from that which is to be cut on the nether part of the shield below the river; that the supports be an American Soldier under arms, on the right, and a husbandman with a hoe in his hand on the left; and that a ship be the Crest; and that there shall be an inscription around the same near the edge or extremity thereof in the words following in capital letters: THE GREAT SEAL OF

THE DELAWARE STATE, with the figures 1777,  
which shall, from and after the delivery thereof to the  
President and Commander in Chief be the Great Seal  
and deemed the Arms of this State.

Resolved, N.C.

That the Seal of the County of New Castle  
shall be deemed and held to be the Great

## **BACKGROUND**

Although the Delaware State Flag was not adopted until 1913, the story behind its design began in the colonial era. When Delaware became an independent state in 1776 there was an immediate need to produce what is known as a Great Seal for the State. A Seal is an impression or mark that appears on official documents of the State and is an important means of identifying and authenticating government papers.

On January 17, 1777, a committee appointed to design a Great Seal by the Delaware General Assembly presented their report to the Assembly. In this report the Committee described the new design of the Seal. (See transcription) In addition, it was decided that New Castle County's Seal would serve as the State Seal until the new one was made. In 1847, the new state motto, "Liberty and Independence" was added to the Seal.

When a committee was appointed in 1913 to design the official flag of the State, the members chose the Seal's center section (called the Coat of Arms) as the focal point of the flag. The diamond shape that surrounds the Coat of Arms is derived from Delaware's nickname - the Diamond State. This name has traditionally been attributed to Thomas Jefferson. The date, December 7, 1787, reflects the pride in being the first state to ratify the United States Constitution. The flag's main colors, colonial blue and buff, were chosen to honor General George Washington. The hero of the American Revolution wore a uniform composed of these colors.

## **Additional symbols on the Delaware Flag**

The Wheat Sheaf, adapted from the Sussex County Seal, signifies the agricultural vitality of Delaware.

The Farmer with the hoe represents the central role of farming to the state.

The Ox represents the importance of animal husbandry to the state economy.

The Ship is a symbol of New Castle County's ship building industry and Delaware's extensive coastal commerce.

The Corn, taken from the Kent County Seal, also symbolizes the agricultural basis of Delaware's economy.

The Militiaman with his musket represents the important role of the citizen-soldier to the maintenance of American liberties.

The Water stands for the Delaware River, the main stay of the State's commerce and transportation. (The water is the series of stripes between the ox and the wheat and corn.)

## **DOCUMENT BACKGROUND**

This document is part of the Legislative Papers Collection (Series Number

1111.2) It is the "Report of Committee Respecting a Great Seal" and is dated January 17, 1777. This collection is available on microfilm. In addition, information about the State Flag as well as other state symbols can be found in the General Reference Collection (folder #228).