

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Each Youth Concert will begin with the singing of our National Anthem, *The Star Spangled Banner*. The words are provided below, and it would be great if all your students could learn them by heart and sing along with the orchestra and other students. If they don't know the words, we encourage them all to clap along.

To make the text of the song a little easier for your students to understand, here's a brief history to put the words in perspective.

The words to *The Star Spangled Banner* were written in Baltimore, Maryland 1814 during the War of 1812 by the American attorney and poet Francis Scott Key. Key was being held on a ship from where he could see the British and Americans battling for the possession of Fort McHenry. As the battle raged, the combination of a very dark night and air thick with cannon smoke made it impossible for Key to see the Fort. But by dawn the following morning the air had cleared enough for Key to see the American flag still flying over Fort McHenry which he knew meant the Americans had defeated the British. Francis Scott Key was so moved by the sight of the flag he immediately wrote down his thoughts which became the first verse of this famous song.

Francis Scott Key finished the other verses as soon as he got back home and the entire poem was published, first as a handbill and then in a Baltimore newspaper. *The Star Spangled Banner* soon was set to the music of a popular song. It wasn't until March 3, 1931 that an act of Congress officially made it our National Anthem.

The Star Spangled Banner

Oh say can you see, by the dawn's early light
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming.

And the rockets red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say does that Star Spangled Banner yet wave,
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?