

# Parent Guide

**TITLE:** Hometown History

**SUMMARY:** This activity is a field trip that takes adults and children to historic places to learn through asking questions and seeking answers through observation and using experts.

**RATIONALE:** An important part of learning history is to experience it outside of the classroom and the textbook. Visiting historical sites helps children formulate important historical questions from using a number of different resources that will help give history a deeper meaning. The kind of learning that happens at historical sites often allows children to work differently from how they work in a classroom. For example, they can talk to on-site experts and use their senses to directly observe historical objects. All communities have an important history, and visiting local resources is a great way for children to connect what they learn in school to places that they are familiar with, and this helps bring history to life.

**OBJECTIVES:** Your child will be better able to observe details and ask questions. This activity will help him or her build an understanding of a specific historical place and time period, and also spark curiosity about history and ways to creatively solve problems.

**TIME:** 40 minutes of Internet research and planning, 90 minutes at the trip site, plus travel time

**AGE GROUP:** K–4

**TARGET VOCABULARY:**

- **historic site:** a place where an actual historic event took place, such as a historic house, a state park, or a national park

*(continued)*

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## MATERIALS:

- Computer with Internet
- Printer (*optional*)
- Clipboard (*optional*)
- Camera (*optional*)
- Notepad (*optional*)
- Posterboard (*optional*)

## PREPARATION:

- Read the book *The Flag Maker* with your child to begin building an understanding of the War of 1812 and the role of Fort McHenry in the story of the Star-Spangled Banner. The story will also help children think about the real people whose lives connected to historical sites like Fort McHenry.
- Visit the Web site for Fort McHenry [www.nps.gov/fomc](http://www.nps.gov/fomc). This fort will be the comparison for visits to any other forts. It will also help the children know what to expect at a historical site like a fort.

**LOCATION:** Home and local fort/other historic site in the child's community

## TIPS:

- The activity will best connect with *The Flag Maker* if you are able to visit a fort or a historic site that is related to the early 1800s. If there aren't any sites like that available, the trip can still be valuable, but will not connect directly to the book.
- A historic site is a place where an actual historic event took place, such as a historic house, state park, or national park. A historic event doesn't necessarily involve a famous event. It could also be that people from long ago used the place in some way, like living in a house, working in a building, or planting fields for farming.

# Hometown History

## Be a history detective

Historic sites are great places to learn about the history of your community. Is there a fort or another historic site near you? Take a field trip to see if you can learn more about forts or find out what was happening in your area around the time of the War of 1812.

The flag that is now known as the Star-Spangled Banner was made by Mary Pickersgill's flag shop in Baltimore, Maryland in 1813. The Battle of Baltimore, during the War of 1812, was fought while this flag was flying over Fort McHenry. During this battle, Francis Scott Key was looking at the flag flying over Fort McHenry and thought of the words that we now sing as the national anthem of the United States. For more information, visit: <http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner>.



Illustration of Caroline Pickersgill sewing the Star-Spangled Banner, from *The Flag Maker*.



Illustration from *The Flag Maker* of Fort McHenry during the Battle of Baltimore.

Fort McHenry was built between 1799 and 1802. The fort is located in Baltimore, which was an important city during the War of 1812. During the War of 1812, the people of Baltimore were certain that the British would attack the city. Everything was made ready at Fort McHenry to defend Baltimore, including having a flag created that was large enough for the British to see from a distance. This flag became known as the Star-Spangled Banner. The fort was also used as a prison and a war hospital during the Civil War and World War I. It is now part of the National Park Service. For more information, visit:

<http://www.nps.gov/fomc/historyculture/index.htm>.

## Ready, set, go!

Investigate your local area, think up some questions, and go explore

# Hometown History

## Ready, set, go!

**Investigate your local area, think up some questions, and go explore**

1. First, you should find out what forts or other **historic sites** are near you. Start by checking these Web sites:
  - <http://www.nps.gov/findapark/index.htm> Many forts and other **historic sites** are a part of the National Park Service. Some of these sites even have “Junior Ranger” programs, so you could become a Junior Ranger by doing activities to learn about the site, talking to a Park Ranger about your answers, and getting a special badge.
  - <http://www.preservationnation.org/travel-and-sites/sites/index.html> The National Trust for Historic Preservation is an organization that helps people protect and enjoy historic places. As you learn about the sites, find out what time period they are most related to. For example, a house that George Washington lived in would be most related to 1732 to 1799, since those are the years he was alive. Try to find at least one site that is related to the early 1800s, when the War of 1812 occurred and “The Star Spangled Banner” was written.
2. Work with your parents or teachers to make sure you can actually go to the sites. Some might be too far away, or closed during the time you want to visit. Together, pick the site that will work best, considering how interested you are in the site, how easy it is to visit, and what time period it relates to.
3. Before you go, take a look at the Question Keeper sheets. Pick either the “fort” sheet or the “other **historic sites**” sheet. Try to think of other questions that you would like to find answers to, and add those at the bottom of the sheet.
4. Take your Question Keeper sheet, your pencil, and your camera and head to the fort or other **historic site**. While you’re out, here are some suggestions for how to find the answers to your questions:
  - Look around. Take or draw pictures of what you see.
  - Talk to experts at the site and listen to their answers.
  - Read signs, exhibits, or paper hand-outs that are at the site.After you get back from your trip, you can also visit the Web site of the **historic site** again, to answer any last questions.
5. Now, share what you’ve learned with someone else! Tell your family about your adventure over dinner, write about it in your diary, or make a poster with some pictures and captions to hang in your classroom. If you went to a fort or a **historic site** related to the early 1800s, think about how the site you visited might connect to the story of the Star-Spangled Banner.

# Question Keeper for visiting a fort

Here are some ideas for questions you might want to answer during your trip to a fort. Feel free to add questions at the bottom. And don't be surprised if you come up with more questions while you're at the site!

When was it built? \_\_\_\_\_

Why was it built? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any objects inside or around the fort that help tell its story? If "yes," what are they?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Compare the fort you visit to what you know about Fort McHenry. Sort these words into this chart for comparing.

Older	Newer	Bigger	Smaller	More Famous	Less Famous
Near Water	Far from Water		Mostly Wood	Mostly Stone	Mostly Metal

Fort McHenry	(My Fort) _____

## More Questions!

**Who ...?** Write a question about the people who built the fort, lived in the fort, worked in the fort, or work in the fort today.

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**When ...?** Write a question about the specific times and time periods, like the time it took to build the fort, when the fort was used, when the fort was closed, or the times of day when people worked at the fort in the past.

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Why ...?** Write a question about the reasons why different things happened here, like opening, closing, battles, or becoming a historical site for people to visit.

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

# Question Keeper for visiting other historic sites

Here are some ideas for questions you might want to answer during your trip to a **historic site**. Feel free to add questions at the bottom. And don't be surprised if you come up with more questions while you're at the site!

Who lived in this area in the early 1800s? \_\_\_\_\_

How many people lived in this area in the early 1800s? \_\_\_\_\_

Had this state been granted statehood yet in the early 1800s? \_\_\_\_\_

What important event happened here? \_\_\_\_\_

Why was it built? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any objects inside or around the **historic site** that help tell its story? If "yes," what are they?

Compare what you can learn about the time period relates to the **historic site** to what you know about your community today. Sort these words into this chart for comparing.

Bigger    Smaller    Has More Trees    Has Fewer Trees  
Has More People    Has Fewer People

My community during _____ (time period)	My community today

## More Questions!

**Who ...?** Write a question about the people who built the site, lived at or around the site, worked at the site, or work at the site today.

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**When ...?** Write a question about the specific times and time periods, like the time it took to build the site, the time the site was used for its original purpose, the time the site stopped being used for its original purpose, or the times of day when people worked at the site in the past.

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Why ...?** Write a question about the reasons why different things happened here, like people moving to the site, people moving away from the site, or becoming a historical site for people to visit.

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

# Teacher Guide

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**RATIONALE:** An important part of learning history is to experience it outside of the classroom and the textbook. Visiting historical sites helps students formulate important historical questions from using a number of different resources that will help give history a deeper meaning. On-site learning often allows students to gain meaning from such different resources, including on-site experts and direct observation of historical objects. All communities have an important history, and visiting local resources is a great way for students to connect what they learn in school to places that they are familiar with, and this helps bring history to life.

**OBJECTIVES:** The students will be better able to

- ask and seek answers to historical questions.
- use their senses to collect information.
- draw conclusions based on historical information.

**TIME:** 40 minutes of Internet research and planning, 90 minutes at the trip site, plus travel time

**AGE GROUP:** K–4

**TARGET VOCABULARY:**

- **historic site:** a place where an actual historic event took place, such as a historic house, a state park, or a national park

**MATERIALS:**

- Computer with Internet
- Printer (*optional*)
- Clipboard (*optional*)
- Camera (*optional*)
- Notepad (*optional*)
- Posterboard (*optional*)

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# Teacher Guide

## PREPARATION:

- Students should read the book *The Flag Maker* to begin building an understanding of the War of 1812 and an emotional connection to the themes of pride and patriotism presented in the book. Reading this book will also help students to understand that historic sites are often important because of their relation to people.
- Visit the Web site for Fort McHenry, [www.nps.gov/fomc](http://www.nps.gov/fomc). This fort will be the comparison for visits to any other forts. It will also help the children know what to expect at a historic site like a fort.

**LOCATION:** Classroom and local fort/other historic site in the student's community

## STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA:

- Demonstrates knowledge of content
- Investigates a variety of questions
- *(if applicable)* Connects to the story of the Star-Spangled Banner

## STANDARDS:

### NCHS History Standards

#### K-4 Historical Thinking Standards

- 2A: Examine local architecture and landscape to compare changes in function and appearance over time.
- 4A: Formulate historical questions
- 4B: Obtain historical data from a variety of sources

#### K-4 History Content Standards

- 3E: The student understands the ideas that were significant in the development of the state and that helped forge its unique identity.
- 4E: The student understands national symbols through which American values and principles are expressed.

### ISTS Educational Technology Standards for Students (NETS.S)

Standard 3: Research and Information Fluency: Students apply digital tools to gather, evaluate, and use information

### 21st-Century Skills

Initiative and Self-Direction