LESSON #1–Tuesday (First Week in October)

Designing a Family Flag

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON: Students will learn how to use various symbols by making their own family flag to display at home as a service project.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE INSTRUCTOR:

Advance Preparation: You may wish to make your own personal family flag to display so the students will have some ideas for creating their own flag. As part of this lesson, explain the meanings of various symbols (information is included). The students may want to copy some of the symbols used in the days of the Middle Ages, the Crusades, and knights and ladies. Although the symbols of the Medieval cults should be highly discouraged, there can be special meanings of ancestry in the authentic symbols of heraldry. The encyclopedia explains *heraldry* this way:

> "In ancient times, direct communication between a ruler and the people was often impossible. The rulers used special officials, called *heralds*, to deliver messages and orders, and to announce important events to the people. During the Middle Ages, heralds became personal agents for the king, somewhat like modern ambassadors. As the king's representatives, they enjoyed great honor. It was a crime to interfere with their work. Medieval heralds became authorities on *coats of arms*, the emblems used on the shields and clothing of nobles for identification during battle. They supervised the selection of new designs to prevent duplication." (*The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1979 Ed., Volume 9, page 185)

Because knights were usually covered from head to toe in armor, it became very important to be able to identify them by the designs on their shields and the surcoat worn over the armor. The heralds (artisans of design) were in charge of selecting and designing the armor and choosing the colors and symbols that best fit the knight and his family.

During the Crusades of the 1200s, a *coat of arms* was used to distinguish different families. Today, many families still use a coat of arms. Also, most countries have flags, seals and other decorations which display heraldic symbols. Special officials are responsible for creating and maintaining the country's heraldic symbolism. Even the United States has a heraldic symbol, depicted in the Great Seal that appears as the official President of the United States Seal. (If you wish you can show an example of this during the lesson, and discuss it further.)

The encyclopedia continues: "A complete coat of arms consists of a shield, crest, and motto. The shield...is the basic element. A helmet, or supporters [like lions or other animals on the outside of the shield] or both, may be added. Accessories include the wreath, mantling and scroll. The wreath represents a device used to cover the point where the crest was attached to the knight's helmet. The mantling originally protected the knight from the direct rays of the sun and also protected the helmet from stains and rust." (Ibid., p. 186)

The class members can have a lot of fun designing their own flags using the symbols of heraldry. There are several pages included that show different symbols and their meanings.

Explain these to the class and have some of the symbols displayed so they can choose what they want to put on their family flag. Some symbols are included in the student packets.

SUGGESTED LESSON PRESENTATION

Items needed:

- □ Your own creation of a family flag to show as an example
- □ Copies of heraldry designs and symbols for each student (included)
- □ Copy of Presidential Seal and "coat of Arms" symbols (included)
- □ Parchment paper (or other quality type) for each student (1 each)
- □ Pictures of the heraldry symbols (included)
- □ Copy of "My Family Flag – Meaningful Colors and Symbols" for each student

REVIEW:. In class, we have been studying about flags, and now we can combine the study of flags with our family history. You will want to remember the meanings of the flag colors for the project we will do today. Students will be drawing a "banner" -- their own family flag -- that can be "lifted up" and displayed in their own home.

LESSON: Explain the following information: Before America had its own official flag, many different families, villages, and colonies displayed their individual flags. Even other *countries* like Spain and France kept their flags in the parts of America they were trying to claim. You will remember that after America became a free country, the people were glad to finally have their very own flag—the one that Betsy Ross sewed. All the people could then rally together under one flag and unite as loyal citizens belonging to one country. Betsy Ross's flag unified our country.

Tell the students that when they design their own family flag, perhaps it will be a symbol the whole family can respect and use to show loyalty to each other.

Share the material on heraldry and symbols (see BACKGROUND INFORMATION). You may wish to associate the word "herald" with the song "Hark, the herald angels sing," and explain the meaning of herald *(a person who proclaims important news; a messenger)*. Tell the students that the flag they will be making will proclaim or "herald" important things about their family.

Show and explain the United States Presidential Seal and its various symbols. Explain that our Founding Fathers felt that these symbols were important to let people know what America stood for. On the Presidential Seal, point out the colors, the shield (protection), the 13 arrows (colonies) , the olive branch (peace), the 13 stars (the 13 new states) above the eagle, and all the things they represent. The motto, "E Pluribus Unum" means "Out of Many–One". In other words, we have many states, but we are still one united country.

ACTIVITY: Show your personal family flag or shield and explain some of the meanings of the various symbols, etc. Then explain and talk about symbols in general. Before the students begin creating their flags. Offer some of the following suggestions of design, showing examples as you go:

1. Frame. If the students wish, they can design a frame of flowers, symbols, designs, or even a fringe to go around the outside edge of their flag. They will need to plan this *before* they do any other designing, so there is space enough around the edges. Have the students sketch their ideas lightly on a practice page.

2. Stripes. The flag can be similar in shape and design to the American flag if they wish. The number of stripes could equal the number of family members. If there are only three members in a family, these stripes could be equal in width, and next to each other–horizontal or vertical–covering the entire flag.

3. Colors. Each stripe could be a different color, depending on each person's personality or strong trait (red = aggressive and outgoing, blue = quiet and creative; white = quiet and comfortable in the background; yellow = always wanting a party, fun, and projects, etc.). Like the American flag, all the stripes could alternate with one other color.

4. Designs. Many people choose shields to design. Others use pictures as symbols. Remind the students of the "Don't Tread On Me" flag with the coiled snake that had a particular message to relate. (Ask if they remember the meaning of that flag—"If you try to take away our rights, we will strike back!") The students' designs could be in the center of the stripes like that one, or in the upper left-hand corner. Let the students choose the objects and symbols for their design, and if needed assist them in arranging them in an artistic pattern.

5. Motto. Explain the meaning of the word "motto." *(A brief sentence, phrase, or single word used to express a principle, goal, or ideal.)* Their short motto can be placed anywhere on the flag. It would be especially effective if placed near the shield, written on a banner or ribbon.

Hand out the copies of heraldry included in this lesson, and display the pages showing various shields and symbols. After the students have an idea of how they want their flag to look, they can re-create their sketches neatly on the parchment paper.

Allow time for the students to design their family flag. Encourage them to first practice on pieces of plain paper to refine their ideas. Review the symbols you have talked about in previous lessons and have the students write down the following information about their family on the form provided:

1. What are your favorite colors? Review the meanings of red, white, and blue.
   Meanings of some other colors are:
   a. Yellow–happy and bright
   b. Green–growing and fruitful
   c. Purple–royalty
   d. Brown–earthy and steady
2. What is a symbol that would represent what your father does?
3. What is a symbol that would represent what your mother does?
4. How many are in your family?
5. Where do you come in the family? (Students can write the number somewhere on their flag.)
6. Are you related to someone famous?
7. What are your favorite hobbies?
8. What are some of your talents?
9. What is your favorite animal?
10. What could be your family's motto (or personal saying)?

My Family Flag--Meaningful Colors and Symbols

Name _____ Age _____ Today's Date _____

Meaningful Colors:

a. Red–Courage, sacrifice, bravery, and boldness–or to be FEARLESS in the face of danger. Red also reminds us of the blood that was spilt by those who gave their lives to make us a free nation. In addition, red represents earth and hardiness–or strength.

b. White–Purity, innocence, and peace. George Washington described the white in the flag as symbolizing our desire for liberty – the land of the free. Also, when two armies are fighting each other, they fly a white flag, which signals all the soldiers to stop fighting while the leaders talk, or while they pick up their wounded soldiers.

c. Blue–Loyalty, unity and justice. Blue also stands for Heaven and vigilance. (Vigilance means always being on guard to defend something.)

d. Yellow--happiness and bright personality

e. Green–growing and fruitful

f. Purple–the color of royalty

g. Brown–humble and dependable

1. The colors I have chosen to use are: _____

2. The symbol that represents what my father's occupation is _____

3. The symbol that represents what my mother does is:
_____

4. There are _____ people in my family.

5. I am child # _____ in my family.

6. Someone famous I am related to is: _____

7. My favorite hobby is _____, and the symbol for this could look like this:

8. I have a special talent. Its symbol could be: _____

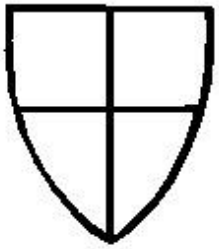
9. My favorite animal is a _____, and its symbol could look like this:

10. Our Family Motto: _____

Various Shield Shapes and Other Designs











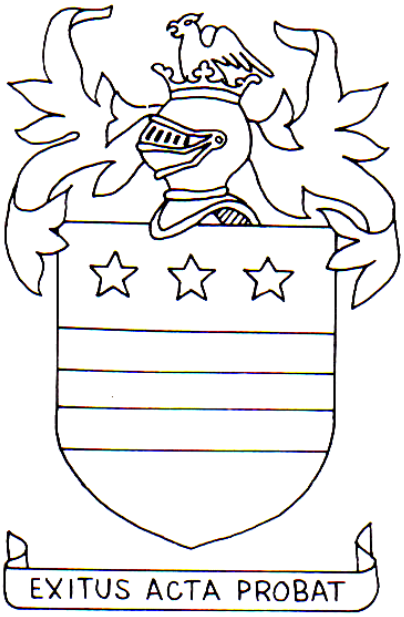




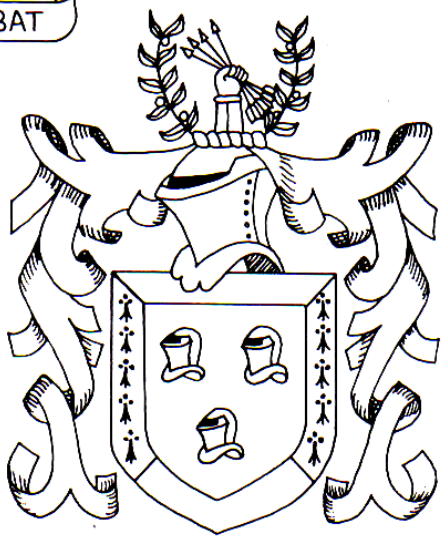

Coats of Arms and the Seal of the U.S. President

Heraldry All Around Us

The following coats of arms, and such related devices as seals, badges, emblems and flags, are examples of heraldry in use around us. Examine each coat of arms or other heraldically inspired image and consider why the particular symbols were chosen. Look for examples of canting arms and devices borrowed from local landmarks and local history. Search for your own local government's coats of arms and other symbols and their associated histories. You may color these illustrations according to their blazons.



George Washington, First President of the United States. Arms of the Washington family, originally of Sulgrave Manor in Northamptonshire, England, granted in 1592. (The flag of the District of Columbia is taken from the banner of Washington.) Argent, above two bars gules, three mullets gules. Crest-coronet. Crest: a demi-eagle rising sable. Motto (in Latin): The outcome justifies the deeds.



John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Thirty-fifth President of the United States. (Arms granted by the Chief Herald of Ireland in 1961.) Sable, three tournament helmets in profile or, surrounded by a border quartered per saltire of gules and ermine. Crest: a sinister cubit arm proper clothed in azure holding four arrows proper, surrounded by two olive branches vert. Mantle of gules lined argent. Wreath of or and sable.

Seal of the President of the United States. On a circular shield sable, a bald eagle displayed proper, with an inescutcheon paly (divided perpendicularly) of thirteen argent and gules, the chief azure, clutching an olive branch in his dexter claws and thirteen arrows in his sinister claws, a scroll argent inscribed or held in his beak, below a cloud argent and thirteen stars argent, all surrounded by fifty stars argent, the border argent inscribed or.

Symbols to copy, trace, or enlarge for your Family Flag

HEADGEAR IN ENGLISH HERALDRY

ROYALTY

all gold

PEERS

silver with gold trim

KNIGHTS

steel, visor open

GENTLEMEN AND SQUIRES

steel

ROYALTY

closed crown with
red chapeau inside

PEERS

baron's coronet with
chapeau inside

PEERS

red velvet chapeau
with ermine lining

WOMEN'S ARMS

maiden arms

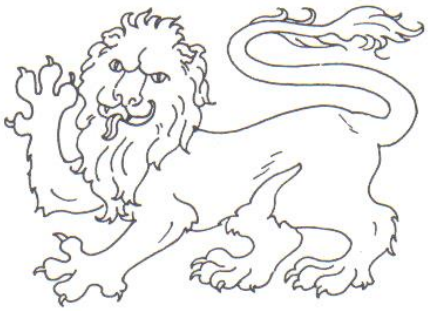
arms of husband
and wife

arms of husband
and wife (heiress)

arms of a widow

arms of a
divorced woman

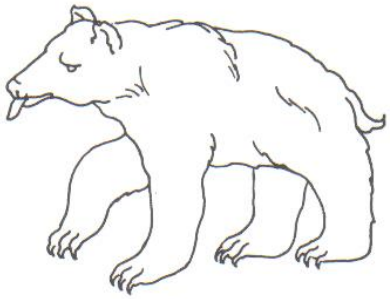
Common Charges [Large]



Lion Passant Guardant ("Leopard")

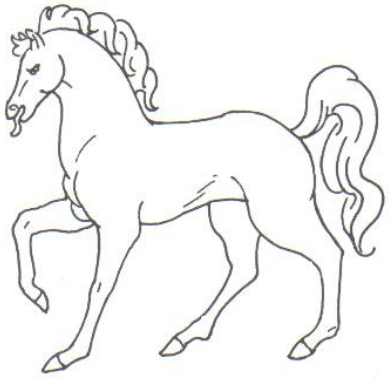
Lion Rampant

Stag



Bear

Dragon

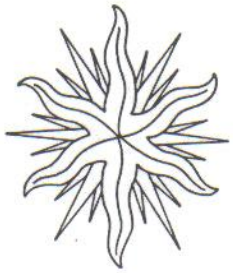
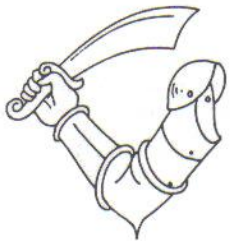


Horse

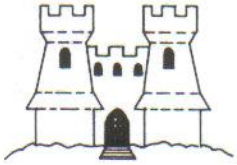
Unicorn

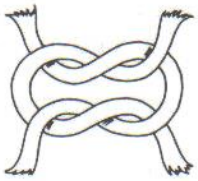
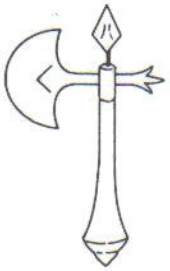
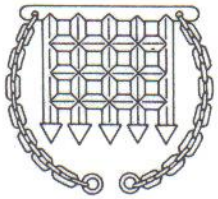
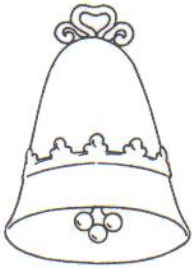
Owl

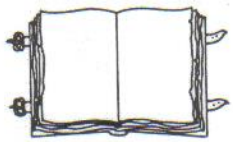
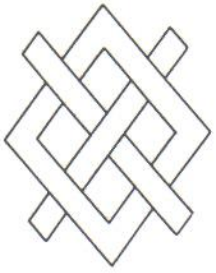
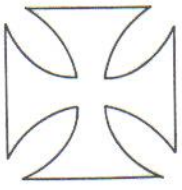
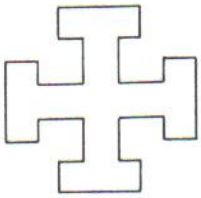
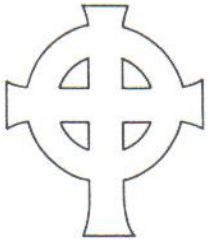
Common Charges [Small]



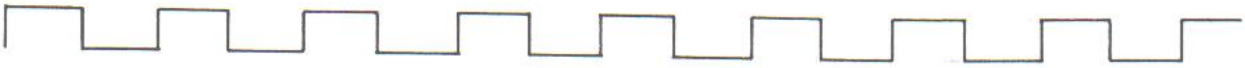





Lines of Partition

Engrailed

Invected



Embattled

Indented

Dancetty

Wavy

Nebuly

Potenty

Dovetailed

Rayonne

Scrolls