

A script from



“Anthem Interrupted”

by
Paul Neil

- What** This is a Reader’s Theater piece about our National Anthem and the faith of the man who wrote it.
Themes: Independence Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Flag Day, Patriotism, Patriotic, America, Flag, Lincoln, Francis Scott Key, Veterans Day
- Who** Reader 1
Reader 2
Reader 3
Reader 4
- When** Present
- Wear
(Props)** If reading and not memorized, each Reader should have a black binder.
- Why** 2 Chronicles 7:14
- How** This would nicely be followed by a rendition of the Star-Spangled Banner—Verses 1, 2 and 4 would be good. Alternately, you might sing the first stanza as normal before the piece, then use this piece, then return to sing the other stanzas.
- For tips on how to perform a Reader’s Theatre, watch [How to Perform a Reader’s Theatre](#) on SkitGuys.com.
- Time** Approximately 5 minutes

Readers enter and address the audience.

Reader 1: We don't stand for much these days. Literally, I mean.

Reader 2: We stand for brides and prayers, for judges and graduations.

Reader 4: But most of us still rise for the singing of the National Anthem.

All: O say, can you see.

Reader 1: We stand and put our hands over our hearts.

Reader 4: We look toward the flag and listen to the singer head toward that high note and hope they can hit it in the same key they started in.

Reader 2: And then the final phrase is uttered:

Reader 3: Oh say does that star spangled banner yet wave over the land of the free and the home of the brave?

Reader 4: We cheer, and we put our caps back on and we sit down.

Reader 1: But just for today...will you stay standing a little longer? Figuratively, I mean.

Reader 2: Because as the last notes of the brass band fade away, the question remains unanswered.

Reader 4: DOES that banner still wave?

Reader 2: Before we answer, it's helpful to know the story behind the song.

Reader 3: During the War of 1812, Francis Scott Key had been negotiating for the release of a prisoner aboard a British ship just off the shore near Baltimore.

Reader 4: When the Battle of Baltimore began, the British detained him; thus Key found himself watching the bombardment of Fort McHenry.

Reader 1: Occasionally, during the overnight battle, fiery explosions brightened the landscape, and through his spyglass Key caught glimpses of the large American flag flying over the fort.

Reader 3: But then, the explosions stopped, and the skies remained dark.

Reader 4: Had the fort fallen? Had the United States of America, not yet four decades old, lost this battle—or worse, the war?

Reader 1: After a long night, the first light of the sun peeked over the horizon.

Reader 3: With heart racing, Key raised his spyglass and looked across the half dozen miles between the ship and the fort.

Reader 2: Through that small lens, he saw illuminated in the golden light of early dawn—not the tattered flag that had flown over the Fort when the sun went down—but an even larger flag, moving just a little in the morning breeze.

Reader 4: As it billowed, Key saw that it was adorned by the stars and stripes he had hoped to see.

Reader 3: The fort had survived the night. Still besieged by enemy soldiers, yes, but it stood.

Reader 1: And the soldiers at Fort McHenry had raised their largest flag as reveille sounded.

Reader 2: Held under British guard for another two days, Key passed the time writing the words we are so familiar with.

Reader 1: O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave?

Reader 2: The answer is in the next stanza.

Reader 4: On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes...what is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep, as it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?

Reader 1: Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam, in full glory reflected now shines in the stream!

Reader 3: 'Tis the star-spangled banner—O long may it wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

Reader 2: As we hear those words, it's clear that Francis Scott Key was a talented poet. But for those who knew him, his life was more sharply defined by His strong faith in Jesus Christ.

Reader 1: He was a devoted follower of Christ.

Reader 4: He stood resolute in the belief that it was only by God's power that the battle he'd witnessed had been won. So in the fourth stanza, he wrote...

Reader 2: "Blest with victory and peace may the heaven rescued land praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!"

Reader 1: Francis Scott Key, poet and lawyer, laid out his case for the listener: Americans, the residents of the young country rescued by heaven, blessed by God with victory, were bound to praise God for His grace.

Reader 4: "THEN conquer we must," he wrote.

Reader 3: Praise God. Thank Him. Worship Him. TRUST Him. Put our faith in Him.

Reader 1: Then, as individuals, as churches, as communities, as a nation, we move forward only as we are bathed in the presence of God.

Reader 3: Times have changed.

Reader 1: But then again...they haven't.

Reader 4: Our battles are just as often cultural as they are military, but the nights can be just as long and uncertain.

Reader 2: But in the light of the Son of God, we can see, though sometimes dimly, and often from a great distance, that our God stands victorious.

Reader 4: And as we reflect the glow of His glorious victory, let us with passion and compassion and love and courage be Christ to our neighbors, whatever orientation, religion, creed, or color they might be.

Reader 3: In uncertain days, let us take to heart the words of Abraham Lincoln.

Reader 1: "Sir," he said, "my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right."

Reader 4: If we are on God's side, then perhaps we can yet answer the question that Francis Scott Key wrote over 200 years ago.

Reader 2: "Does that star-spangled banner yet wave, over the land of the free and the home of the brave?"

Reader 3: "When our cause it is just, and THIS be our motto— 'In God is our trust,'"

Reader 4: "THEN the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave..."

All: "...O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave."