

Why I Honor the American Flag
By Sofia Parfomak, 8th Grade

My grandpa was Polish, at first. The Germans had invaded Poland and had forced his family to work in a labor camp. A German flag flew over all the workers, but nobody honored it. They looked at it and saw only death and despair.

But then the troops came. Men with shining buttons on their coats, warm smiles on their faces. They were U.S. troops, and they had come to rescue the workers. They transformed the labor camp into a refugee camp, a place where everyone was safe.

And soon, they sent my grandfather to America. For days and nights, he sailed on a Navy ship, anticipation and hope filling him. And then the country came into sight. The Statue of Liberty stood in the distance, but what told the immigrants of freedom, of safety, was the flag. Stars and stripes, red, white and blue, waving in the breeze. People cheered, cried, tossed their hats in the air. This flag was not like the German flag, it was not a symbol of doom. It was a symbol of hope and new life. It was the American flag.

He was eighteen when they asked him, “Do you pledge loyalty to our country?”

And with that same hope, that same feeling of safety, he gave the Pledge of Allegiance under that flag. And with those words, he became part of it. The stars and stripes, representing the people of America, now represented him as well.

He was drafted to serve in another war, the Korean War. The only difference was that now, he had a home to fight for. He had a true flag to hold in his heart.

My grandpa was the reason I am American. With his life, I now know the true meaning of loyalty and hope. He started my family, and he continues to tell us his story to this day. So when I look at the American Flag, I don't just see a lifeless banner. I see stories, the stories of my family, and the stories of others. I see a struggle for hope, freedom, and justice. But most of all, I see my grandfather, sailing into New York Harbor. I see him arriving under the stars and stripes.

Flag Still Flying

By Andrew West, Grade 8

My grandfather served in the Army. I never got to meet him, but he is still a part of me. In fact, both of my great grandfathers served in the Army as well. It means a lot to me that because of their service, I can now live in freedom and peace. They sacrificed their lives for me, and they hadn't even met me yet. The generosity and heroism of my great-grandparents gave me what every person wants in life which is peace of mind. Lucky for all of us, we already have that. We should all be so grateful for all of the men and women in the military who bravely serve for our sake. "Standing as I do, with my hand upon this staff, and under the folds of the American flag, I ask you to stand by me as long as I stand by it."-Abraham Lincoln

In the morning, I bike to school and I pass the stars and stripes flying over a park. As I ride down that hill, I always think of all the things that our brave men and women in service are giving up to protect our country. They go to places that they never have been to before and can get easily homesick. They give up quality time with their families and friends. They can be deployed for years at a time. Also, they have to face grave danger no matter where you go. These dangerous situations are always faced with honor and heroism. These heroes have given their lives for us. I cannot express how much I thank them for their service. "The lord gets his best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction." -Charles Spurgeon.

So, as I ride past that flag, I always make a quick salute to the flag proudly still flying in honor above the park. "Live as brave men; and if fortune is adverse, from it blows with brave hearts."-Marcus Tullius Cicero.

Why I Honor the American Flag

By Natalie Anderson, Grade 8

The American flag, our flag, is a symbol of what it means to be an American. It represents freedom in the past, present, and future. It is an everyday reminder that you are who you are because of our country and those who have fought bravely for it. I think some people take all our graces for granted. We are so blessed to be able to live our lives the way we do. Some kneel at our flag because they think it stands for racism or hate, but it is the opposite. Our flag represents equality, liberty, and justice for all, as our Pledge of Allegiance states.

This land is our land, so we need to take care of it. Our armed forces protect our country because they love it and the people in it, regardless if they know them or not. You are free to do what you choose, and some people make the choice to join the military. They are extremely brave and selfless to do so. Their families are equally as strong to stand with their loved ones and to let them make their own choices. Some could put them in harm's way, but these people would lay down their lives for our country.

Red, white, and blue: the colors of our nation. We stand proudly at the sight of the flag waving up high, but it is not always mighty looking. Through war and destruction, it can be left in tatters, whether it's in our country or brought to another. The scars of past conflicts will never destroy our flag. Even dirty and tattered, it is still bold and fierce. It stands for all that is just and free. It has been through a lot, but it only adds to its story and meaning. I honor the American flag because it stands for us and what we believe.