

Name: _____

American Bald Eagle

by Mikki Sadil

Watching a Bald Eagle is an awesome sight! They are very large, graceful birds with wingspans from six to eight feet across, and bodies often as long as three feet. They can soar over 10,000 feet high, and they have such good eyesight they can spot a fish from a mile away. When they go after a fish in the water, they can be diving down at speeds up to 100 miles an hour! They glide just inches over the water until they snag the fish with their feet, and then fly off to eat it. They are very hardy birds and can live up to thirty years in the wild. The Bald Eagle is the only eagle that lives exclusively in the US, from Alaska to Mexico and from the Pacific Coast to the Atlantic Coast.



The most interesting thing about the Bald Eagle is that it is the United States' National Emblem. In 1776, after the original thirteen American colonies declared independence from England, they wanted an official Seal of the United States. After another six years, in 1782, the Continental Congress adopted a drawing of the Bald Eagle as the seal, but it wasn't until 1787 that the American Bald Eagle was officially adopted as the Emblem of the United States. The Seal of the US is a very distinct drawing of the Bald Eagle, and it shows, among other symbols, the dexter (right) talon of the eagle holding an olive branch, and the sinister (left) talon holding thirteen arrows which represent the original thirteen colonies. Together, the olive branch

signifies that America always wants peace, while the arrows signify that America is always prepared for war if it becomes necessary.



Seal of the United States

When the eagle was being considered for the national emblem, Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey to be the emblem instead. He said that the eagle was "of bad moral character because he steals fish from other birds." He lost his argument, which is probably a good thing. What would our Thanksgiving Dinner be if we couldn't have turkey?

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1. Where do bald eagles live?
 - a. Europe and North America
 - b. North and South America
 - c. North America and Asia
 - d. only in North America

2. When did the bald eagle become the official emblem of the United States?
 - a. in the same year the Declaration of Independence was signed
 - b. six years after the Declaration of Independence was signed
 - c. eleven years after the Declaration of Independence was signed
 - d. two hundred years after the Declaration of Independence was signed

3. On the Seal of the United States, there is a picture of an eagle grasping an olive branch and arrows. What does the olive branch symbolize?

4. How long do bald eagles live in the wild?
 - a. about three decades
 - b. about half a century
 - c. about a fortnight
 - d. about a dozen years

5. Why didn't Benjamin Franklin want the bald eagle to be used as a symbol to represent the United States?

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Match each vocabulary word on the left with its definition on the right.

_____ 1. sinister

a. claw on a large bird

_____ 2. dexter

b. knowing right from wrong

_____ 3. talon

c. solely; only; nowhere else

_____ 4. snag

d. grab while moving

_____ 5. exclusively

e. separation from another person or country

_____ 6. independence

f. right

_____ 7. moral

g. left

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Seal of the United States

Article by Mikki Sadil



Seal of the United States

In the article, "American Bald Eagle," you learned that the bald eagle is pictured on the national Seal of the United States and it's commonly used as a symbol for America.

In the space below, draw a new national seal. Be sure to include symbols for America in your picture. Then describe your new seal on the lines below.



ANSWER KEY

American Bald Eagle

by Mikki Sadil



1. Where do bald eagles live? **d**
 - a. Europe and North America
 - b. North and South America
 - c. North America and Asia
 - d. **only in North America**
2. When did the bald eagle become the official emblem of the United States? **c**
 - a. in the same year the Declaration of Independence was signed
 - b. six years after the Declaration of Independence was signed
 - c. **eleven years after the Declaration of Independence was signed**
 - d. two hundred years after the Declaration of Independence was signed
3. On the Seal of the United States, there is a picture of an eagle grasping an olive branch and arrows. What does the olive branch symbolize?

The olive branch symbolizes the United State's desire for peace.

4. How long do bald eagles live in the wild? **a**
 - a. **about three decades**
 - b. about half a century
 - c. about a fortnight
 - d. about a dozen years
5. Why didn't Benjamin Franklin want the bald eagle to be used as a symbol to represent the United States?

He believed the bald eagle was of bad moral character because it steals fish from other birds.

ANSWER KEY

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Match each vocabulary word on the left with its definition on the right.

g 1. sinister

a. claw on a large bird

f 2. dexter

b. knowing right from wrong

a 3. talon

c. solely; only; nowhere else

d 4. snag

d. grab while moving

c 5. exclusively

e. separation from another person or country

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f. right

b 7. moral

g. left