

Welcome To Florida

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

I live in Florida. It is a state in the southeast. Florida is famous for sunshine, beaches, theme parks, citrus fruit, and tourism. It is the 22nd largest state. That makes it pretty average in size, but it is 4th in population behind California, Texas, and New York. You might know some of the major cities, like Miami, Tampa Bay, and Orlando. The state capital is Tallahassee. Now that you know some of the basic facts about Florida, let me tell you a little more about my state.

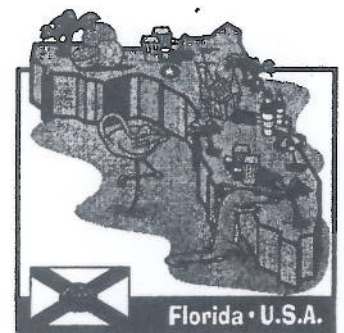
It has the southernmost point in the continental United States at Key West. It is near the countries of the Bahamas and Cuba. Because of its location, it is a very flat and warm state, and it is even swampy in many places. Have you heard of the Everglades? People like to live here, but so do alligators! Florida does not really have four seasons. It really has two. It has a wet, hot season for most of the year, and a dry, cooler season around winter. It is often called *The Sunshine State*, but it is also known as *The Lightning Capital of the World*, because of all the thunderstorms.

With all this hot weather, it makes Florida an ideal place to do some outside stuff. It is a very long peninsula with beaches on three sides and quite a few islands, too. There are hundreds of miles of places to boat, fish, surf, and play in the sun. It also means there are a lot of sports being played. Florida has several pro teams in basketball, football, baseball, and ice hockey. You can catch a game almost any time of the year, or you can get out and play for yourself! Golf is a popular pastime.

Another benefit of the weather is the theme parks. People like to come here when it is cold up north or when they are on spring break. Water parks, theme parks, and the beaches attract thousands of people! Disney, Universal, and Sea World are just a few of the famous parks in Florida.

Florida has a multicultural population. There are Seminole Indians living here. There are also a lot of immigrants from Central America. Spanish is often spoken by the Cuban-American and Mexican-American people living here. You can find many people from Guatemala, Haiti, and other Central American or Caribbean nations. This means there is a lot of interesting and good food around!

Now that you know a little more about Florida, are you thinking about visiting? It is a very popular tourist destination. Hope to see you soon!



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Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What is Florida's population ranking?
 - A. 1st
 - B. 4th
 - C. 2nd
 - D. 3rd
2. True or False: Florida is one of the largest states in terms of size.
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. Which of these is Florida NOT famous for?
 - A. theme parks
 - B. mountains
 - C. citrus fruit
 - D. beaches
4. Which of these is one of Florida's nicknames?
 - A. The Long State
 - B. The Mosquito State
 - C. The Sunshine State
 - D. The Gateway to the Atlantic
5. SHORT ANSWER: Would you like to visit Florida? Why or Why Not?



Write some of the things you've learned about Florida below:

Symbols of Florida

The State Seal

The elements and basic design instructions for Floridas State Seal were established by the Legislature in 1868 as follows:

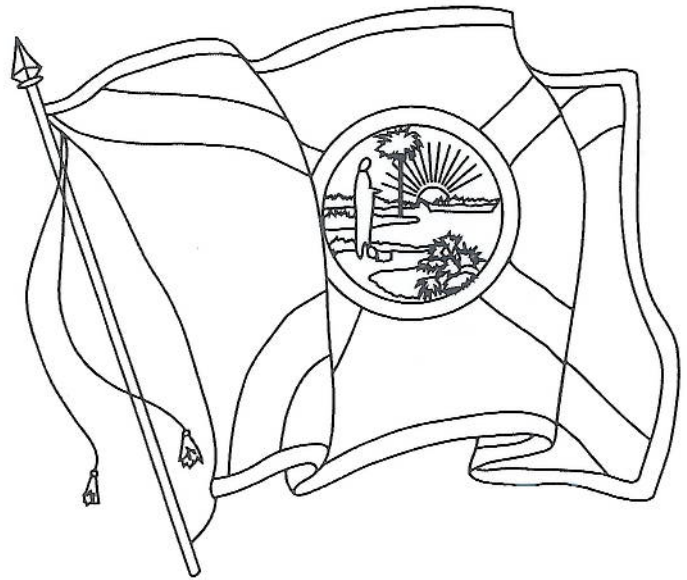
“That a Seal of the size of the American silver dollar, having in the center thereof a view of the sun’s rays over a high land in the distance, a cocoa tree, a steamboat on water, and an Indian female scattering flowers in the foreground, encircled by the words, ‘Great Seal of the State of Florida: In God We Trust’, be and the same is hereby adopted as the Great Seal of the State of Florida.”

The Great Seal of the State of Florida that is used today was revised in 1985. Previous State Seals had errors that have been corrected. The revised Seal doesn’t have a background of mountains in Florida. It has a Seminole Indian woman rather than a Western Plains Indian. The steamboat is more accurate. The cocoa palm has been changed to a sabal palm, the state tree.

The State Flag

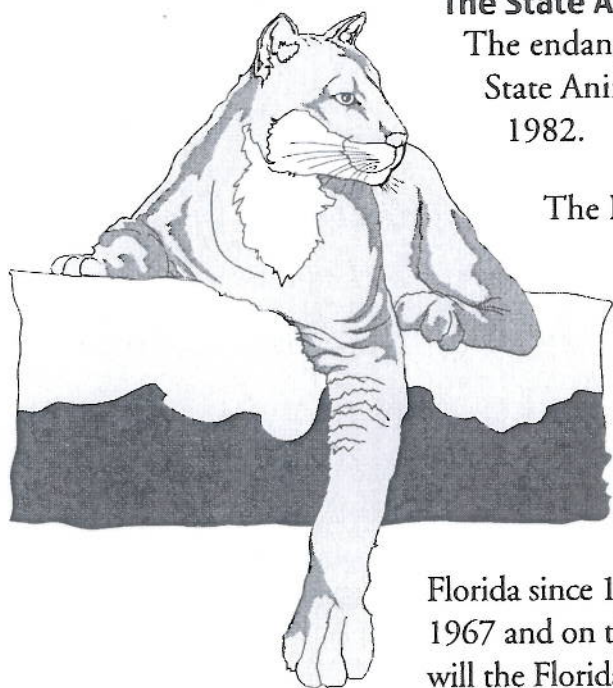
Many flags have flown over Florida since Juan Ponce de León landed in 1513. Among them have been flags of five nations: Spain, France, Great Britain, the Confederate States of America, and the United States.

Between 1868 and 1900, Florida’s state flag consisted of a white field with the state seal in the center. During the late 1890s, Governor Francis Fleming suggested that a red cross be added, so that the banner did not appear to be a flag of truce or surrender when hanging still on a flagpole.



A joint resolution of the legislature in 1899, approved by state voters in 1900, made our current State Flag the official banner of Florida. The official specifications for the flag state that:

“the State Flag shall conform with standard commercial sizes and be of the following portions and descriptions: The seal of the state, in diameter one-half the hoist, shall occupy the center of a white ground. Red bars, in width one-fifth the hoist, shall extend from each corner towards the center, to the outer rim of the seal.”



The State Animal

The endangered Florida Panther (*Felis concolor coryi*) became the State Animal following a state-wide vote of school students in 1982.

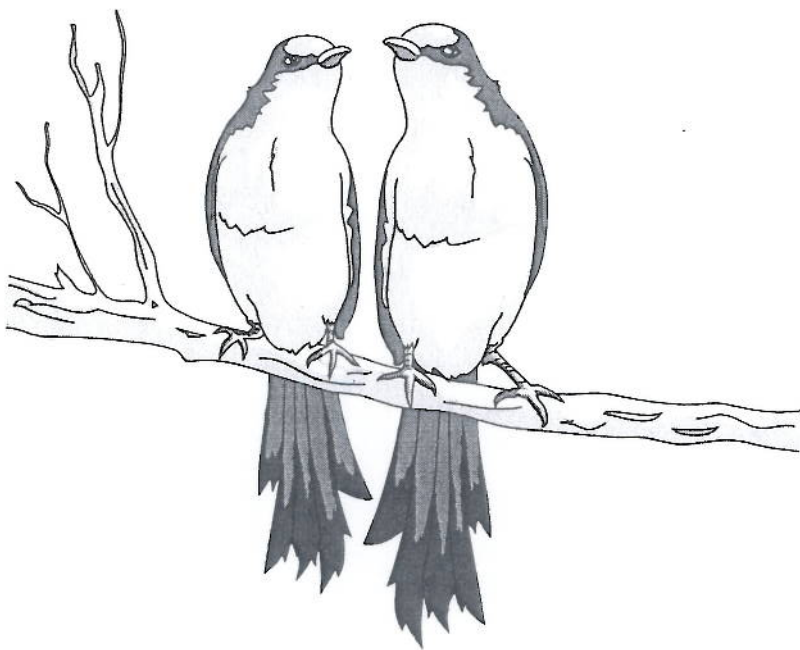
The Florida panther is a large (six feet or longer), long-tailed, pale brown cat. Its habitat is usually the same as that of the white-tailed deer, its main food. Panthers have been persecuted out of fear and misunderstanding of the role these large predators play in the natural ecosystem. Human population growth, however, has been the main threat to the panther.

The panther has been protected from legal hunting in Florida since 1958. It has been on the federal endangered species list since 1967 and on the state's endangered list since 1973. Only with support will the Florida panther remain a part of our unique wildlife community.

The State Bird

The 1927 legislative session designated the mockingbird as the Florida State Bird. The common mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) is a superb songbird and mimic. Mimic means that it imitates (mocks) the songs of other birds. Its own song is pleasant, varied, and repetitive. Often it will sing all night long, especially in bright springtime moonlight.

Mockingbirds are about 10" in length, with a 15" wingspan. They have grayish upper portions, white undersides, and white patches on the tail and wings. The females have slightly less whiteness.



The male and female work together to make the nest. It is a bulky, open cup of grass, twigs, and roots carelessly arranged in a dense tree or bush. The 3-6 eggs per nest are pale blue-greenish with brown spots. This year-round Florida resident is known for its fierce defense of the family nest.

The State Flower

The orange blossom was chosen to be the State Flower by the 1909 Legislature. It is one of the most fragrant flowers in Florida. Millions of these white flowers perfume the air throughout central and south Florida during orange blossom time. The citrus crop, important to the economy of Florida, follows the flowering.

The State Tree

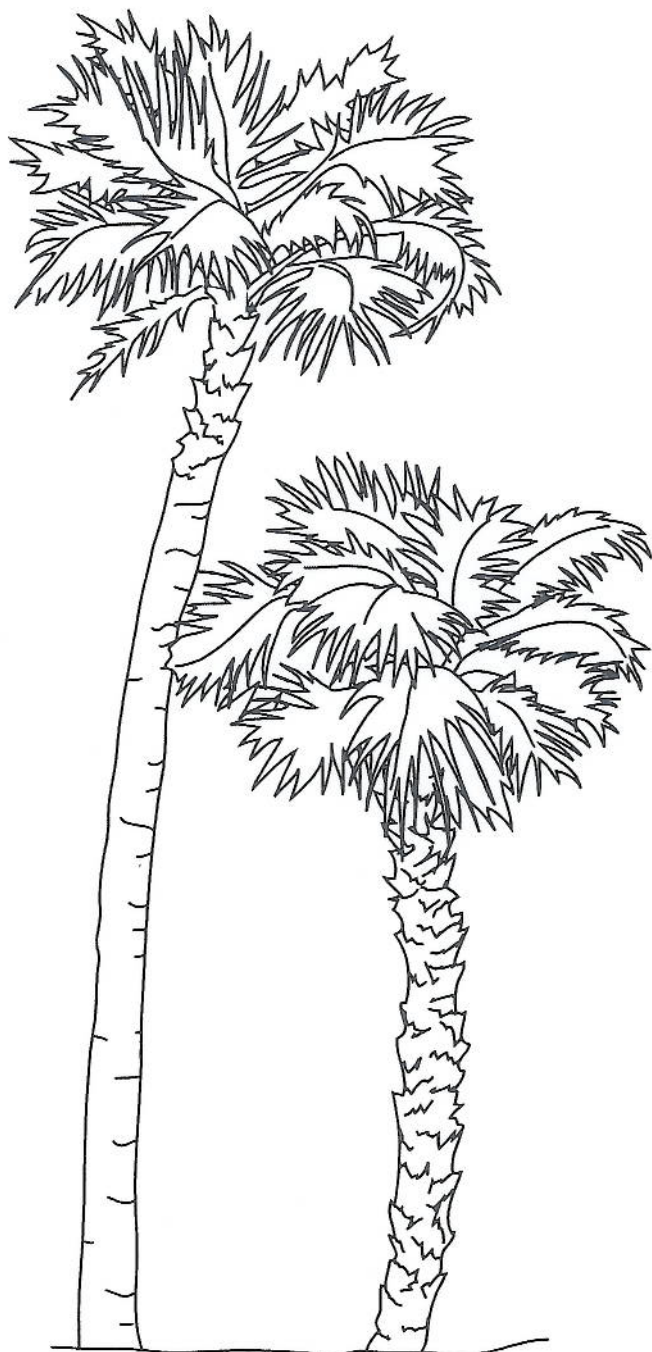
The 1953 Legislature designated the sabal palm as the State Tree. This palm is the most widely distributed palm tree in the state. It possesses a majesty that sets it apart from other trees. It grows in almost any soil and has many uses including food and medicine. It is also used widely for landscaping because of its universal popularity. The sabal palm is on the State Seal.

The State Song

In 1935, "The Suwannee River" was adopted as the official state song. It replaced "*Florida, My Florida*" adopted as the State Song in 1913.

The Suwannee River flows south from the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia to the Gulf of Mexico in Florida. It separates the Florida panhandle from the rest of the state.

Stephen Foster, one of America's best-loved songwriters wrote "*The Suwannee River (Old Folks at Home)*" in 1851. He wrote about 200 songs during his career. A memorial center at White Springs, Florida honors Foster.



Student _____ Date _____ Class _____

Symbols of Florida

Answer the following questions after discussing the article in class.

- 1 Tell about the history of the Great Seal of Florida. Use details and information from the article to support your answer.

READ	
THINK	
EXPLAIN	

- 2 Why was the flag of Florida changed?
- (A) to make it look more colorful
 - (B) because it looked like a flag of surrender
 - (C) to use the Great Seal in the design
 - (D) because it looked like another state's flag
- 3 Why is the state bird called a mockingbird?
- (F) It mimics.
 - (G) It makes a nest with its mate.
 - (H) It sings.
 - (I) It is here all year long.
- 4 What is the state tree?
- (A) pine tree
 - (B) oak tree
 - (C) sabal palm
 - (D) cocoa palm

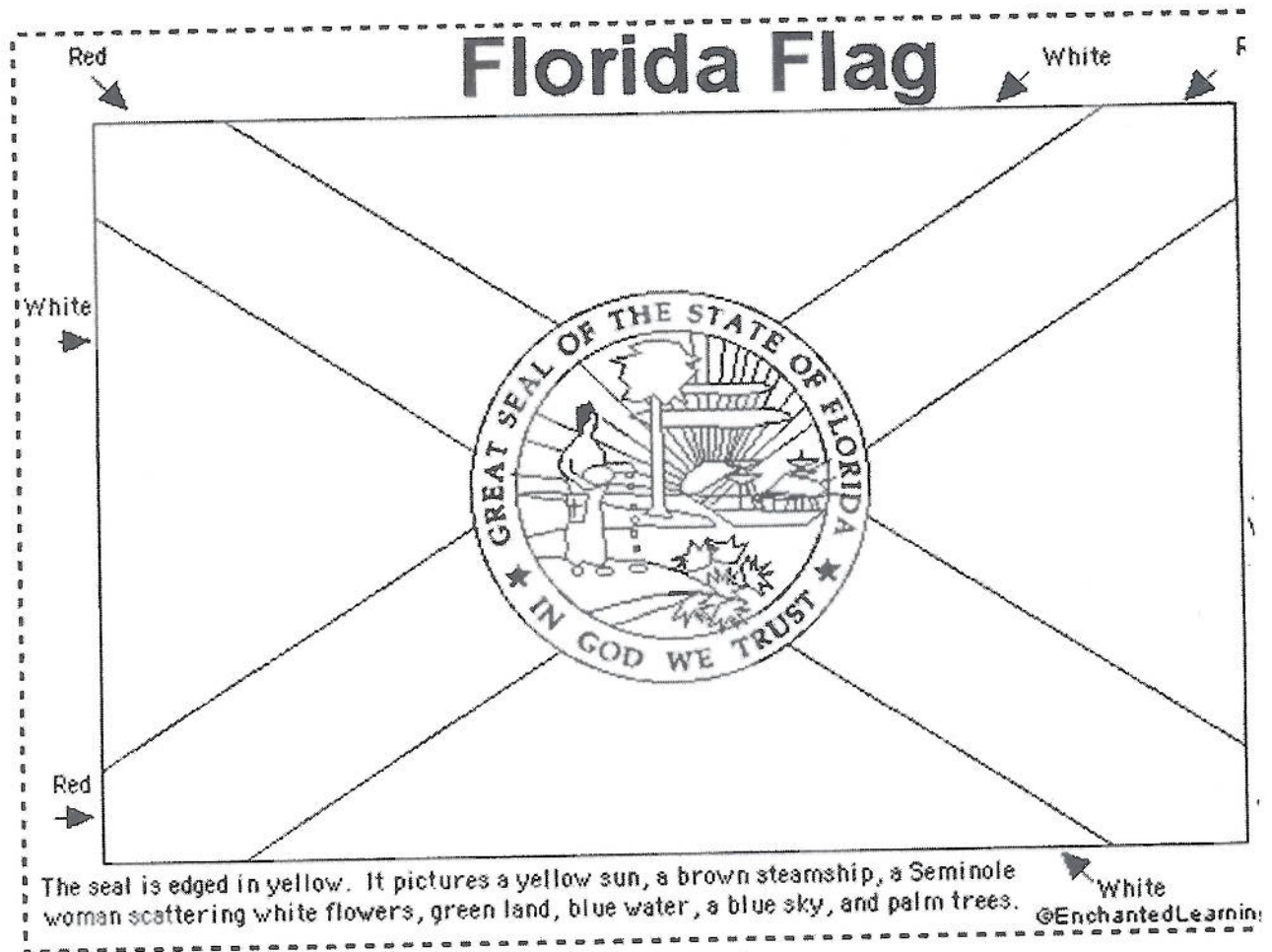
Name: _____

Date: _____

Florida State Quarter Facts



Do you see the year Florida joined the U.S.? What is the state flower?
What is the state nickname? How many symbols can you find on the
Florida state quarter and why are they important to the state?



Florida Flag Printout

Florida's official flag was adopted in 1900. Florida's flag has a red cross of St. Andrew on a white field; in the center is the state seal, which depicts a Native American (Seminole) woman scattering flowers, the sun with many rays, palm trees (the large one is a cabbage palm), a sailing steamboat, the land and the water.

Florida was the 27th state in the USA; it was admitted in 1845.

Questions:

1. What is the Native American woman scattering in the state seal?

2. What type of boat is depicted in the state seal? _____

3. What type of trees are pictured on the state seal?

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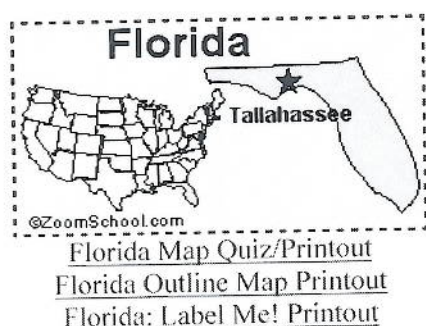
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Florida
Facts, Map and State Symbols



Florida was the 27th state in the USA; it was admitted on March 3, 1845.

State Abbreviation - FL
State Capital - Tallahassee
Largest City - Jacksonville
Area - 65,758 square miles [Florida is the 22nd biggest state in the USA]
Population - 19,552,860 (as of 2013) [Florida is the fourth most populous state in the USA, after California, New York and Texas]
Name for Residents - Floridians
Major Industries - tourism, agriculture (oranges, grapefruit, tomatos), electronics

Major Rivers - St. Johns River, St. Marys River, Suwannee River
Major Lakes - Lake Okeechobee, Lake George
Highest Point - A hill in Walton County - 345 feet (105 m) above sea level
Number of Counties - 67
Bordering States - Georgia, Alabama
Bordering Bodies of Water - Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico



Origin of the Name Florida - Florida was first seen by the Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon on Palm Sunday on April 2, 1513 - he then named the "Pascua de Florida," meaning "Feast of Flowers" and

claimed it for Spain

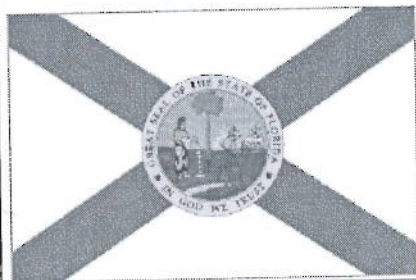
State Nickname - The Sunshine State

State Motto - "In God we trust."

State Song - "Swanee River"

Florida State Symbols and Emblems:

State Flag



Florida's official flag was adopted in 1900. Florida's flag has a red cross of St. Andrew on a white field; in the center is the state seal, which depicts a Native American (Seminole) woman scattering flowers, the sun with many rays, palm trees (the large one is a cabbage palm), a sailing steamboat, the land and the water.

Animal Symbols:

State Bird



Mockingbird

State Mammal



Florida Panther

State Marine Mammal



Manatee

State Salt Water Mammal



Porpoise/Dolphin

State Insect



Zebra longwing butterfly
(*Heliconius charitonius*)

State Reptile



Alligator

State Saltwater Fish

Sailfish

State Freshwater Fish

Largemouth bass

State Shell

Horse Conch
(*Pleuroploca gigantea*,)

Plant Symbols:

State Flower

Orange blossom

State Wild Flower

Corcopsis

State Tree


Palmetto palm

State Beverage



			Orange juice
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Earth Symbols:

<p>State Fossil (unofficial)</p>  <p><u>Eupatagus</u> An extinct type of sand dollar.</p>	<p>State Stone</p> <p>Agatized coral</p>	<p>State Gem</p> <p>Moonstone</p>
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Related Pages:

Related Pages:

Florida: Map/Quiz Printout

Answer geography questions about Florida using the map on this quiz.

Answers

Florida State: Label Me! Printout

Label the major features of Florida.

Answers

Florida: Outline Map Printout

An outline map of Florida to print.

Florida: US State Dot to Dot Mystery Map

Connect the dots to draw the borders of a mystery state of the USA. Then use a globe or atlas to figure out which state you have drawn. You might want to give students

Florida Flag Printout/Quiz

Answer questions on the flag of Florida.

Florida's Flag: Large Coloring Printable

A large black-and-white printable of the flag of Florida.

US State/US President/3-Syllables Venn Diagram Printout

On this printout, the student classifies US states, US presidents, and 3-syllable words by

My County

County name_ _____

State motto _ _____

It became the ____ county in Florida on_ _

County Seat

State parks

Its bordered by (counties) _____

Population_____

Where located (north, south, east, west)

State Facts:

Bird:_ _____

Tree:_ _____

Flower: _____

Fish:_ _____

Reptile:_ _____

Insect:_ _____

Song: _____

Draw county shape:

Would you visit this county?

My County

County name _____

How did the county get it's name _____

It became the ____ county in Florida on _____

County Seat _____

State parks _____

Its bordered by (counties) _____

Population _____

Where located (north, south, east, west) _____

Interesting facts _____

Draw county shape:

Would you visit this county?