

O Beautiful for Spacious Skies Worksheet

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Verse 1

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain;
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood,
From sea to shining sea.

Verse 2

O beautiful for heroes proved
In liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved,
And mercy more than life!
America! America!
May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness,
And every gain divine.

Verse 3

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam,
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law.

Vocabulary In one or two words define the following terms from the poem.

Verse 1: O, spacious, amber, grace

Verse 2: liberating, strife, mercy, refine, nobleness, divine

Verse 3: patriot, alabaster, mend, flaw, confirm, thine, Thy

Word Pictures Word pictures is another way of saying *imagery*. *Imagery* or *figurative language* helps us form a picture of what the author is trying to present. Discuss what these word pictures mean and, perhaps, without drawing a picture of Christ, draw your idea of the *imagery* or *figurative language* the author uses!

Verse 1: spacious skies, amber waves of grain, purple mountains, fruited plain, shining sea

Verse 2: heroes proved, liberating strife, gold refine, nobleness

Verse 3: patriot dream, alabaster cities gleam, mend ... every flaw, self-control

Mechanics Verbally discuss

Who is the speaker? (Does the speaker have a specific personality or has the author remained in the background so the message of the poem will be more clear?)

What does the poem reveal about the speaker's character? (Sometimes, poems reveal nothing about the speaker's personal thoughts, feelings, or attitudes. Yet, the poem may demonstrate those character traits that are important to the author like courage, loyalty, perseverance, etc.)

Is the speaker addressing someone in particular or is it to anyone? (Sometimes poems are not directed to anyone in particular, but to anyone that may read it.)

Does the poem have a setting? (Does the author tell where the poem occurs? Is the poem about a specific event?)

Is the poem about a particular event? (Is the event past or present? If it is about a past event, does the remembrance of the event have a particular meaning to the speaker?)

Is the theme of the poem stated directly or indirectly? (Some poems are straightforward and are meant to be taken literally. In songs, the theme may be presented in the refrain or in the last few lines. Sometimes the theme is a little bit more difficult to discern as it is made with figurative language or symbols.)

How did you respond to the poem when you read it the first time?

What point of view or perspective is the speaker? (What meaning do you think the poem has for the author?)

How did you respond to the poem when you read it the first time? (Did your thoughts and feelings change after you took time to study it?)

Comprehension Questions Verbally discuss

Verse 1: How does the author physically describe her country? Explain and discuss: “America! America! God shed His grace on thee.” What does this mean and is it important? Why?

Verse 2: What did heroes prove? What is meant by liberating strife? What did these heroes love more than life? What does the Bible say about this? Explain and discuss: “May God thy gold refine, Till all success be nobleness, And every gain divine.”

Verse 3: What do you think is meant by “patriot dream”? Is a patriot “me-oriented”? Does a patriot plan for the future (line 2)? How are cities described? Explain and discuss: “God mend thine every flaw, Confirm thy soul in self-control, Thy liberty in law.”

After reading this poem, what character traits did you think of? What does the Bible have to say about these character traits?

What Does the Bible Say?

Find Scripture proofs for each of the assertions or statements made for each of the three verses.

From bondage to spiritual faith;
From spiritual faith to great courage;
From courage to liberty;
From liberty to abundance;
From abundance to complacency;
From complacency to apathy;
From apathy to dependence;
From dependence back again to bondage.

The above was written by Professor Alexander Tytler when the USA was still a British colony. What does Professor Tytler mean? Give scriptural support for Professor Tytler’s assertions along with historical, Biblical examples.

Caleb (Num 13:30), Joshua (Josh 1:1-11), Jonathan (1 Sam 14:1,6-14), and Daniel (Dan 6:1-28) all seem to take courage seriously. Courage is doing what is right even though one is afraid. Give other individuals in the Bible that demonstrated courage. Give historical examples of courage. After reading the newspaper, listening to the news on radio, or watching the news, can you think of any examples of courage presently? What will you tell your grandchildren about courage? How will you encourage your grandchildren in this character trait?

Discuss this in light of 1 Corinthians 16:13, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

What does the Bible have to say about liberty, freedom/free, independence, and tyrant/tyranny. For scriptural helps refer to the web site page at the following address:

<http://www.lovetolearnplace.com/SpecialDays/Veteransday/Bible.html>

Discuss this poem in light of ...

Matthew 22:37 "... Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

Luke 10:27 "... Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind."

Deuteronomy 6:5 ... "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Mark 12:30 ... "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength ..."

The Author/Poet

Based on what you have studied about this poem so far, would you guess that the author was a Christian or a humanist? How did you arrive at your decision?

The name of the author for this poem or lyric is Katharine Lee Bates (1859-1929). She was born 12 August 1859 in Falmouth, Massachusetts. and died 28 March 1929 at home in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Bates, the daughter of a minister, attended Wellesley College and became a professor.

Geography

Locate Massachusetts on a globe, map and atlas.

Challenge Locate Falmouth and Wellesley on a map or in an atlas.

Compare/contrast Massachusetts' and/or New England's weather with your own for one week.
Make a Massachusetts or New England meal for your family.

Activities

1) Make your own book! Without making an image of Christ, draw pictures representing each verse. (Note: that will be three different illustrations). With construction paper and other items readily available at home, make a title page with the name of the song and the author's name which will be your book's cover. You may want to illustrate your cover and include this poem in your book.

2) Make your own play! Re-enact with your siblings or friends the message discussed in this poem. Keep it lively, simple, and short. You may want to end your play with singing a rousing chorus of this poem or reading Scripture verses. Videotape your creation.

3) Radio Drama! With a handheld tape recorder, create your own radio show dramatizing the message of this poem.

4) Be a Reporter! Either with your family camcorder or with a handheld tape recorder, “interview” various individuals this poem could illustrate (e.g., family members, soldiers/sailors, war veterans, pilgrims, settlers, Moses, Joshua and Caleb, etc.). In order to have the fast paced style of a reporter, watch and/or listen to the news with your parents’ permission. Keep the interviews lively, quick, and to the point.

Remain objective! Being objective means just reporting the facts and not giving your opinion of the situation.

5) What is one of the things you most enjoy? Is it literature? math? science? sports? cooking? Take that area of interest and relate that to this poem. If you enjoy dance, for example, develop a dance routine that physically expresses the sentiments of this poem. If you enjoy shop, create something out of wood that helps to clarify this poem. Do you enjoy creating stories? Write a story based on any time period you desire that expresses the sentiments of this poem. Do you enjoy creating things in the kitchen? Make an ancient meal from this time or develop your own meal that symbolizes the many different points this poem makes.

6) Poster. Create a poster illustrating the the author’s view of the impact of *O Beautiful for Spacious Skies*.

7) Scavenger Hunt. Go to the library to learn what you can about Katharine Lee Bates (1859-1929) and share it with your family. If possible, discover the story behind this poem.