

Grade 11 Informational

Bald Eagle

Ask a United States citizen to make an inventory of symbols associated with America, and the information will delineate the bald eagle near the top of America's nationalist icons. The bald eagle's history in America has its roots with the beginning of America itself.

Before 1782, the bald eagle enjoyed no national renown. However, when the new country's Second Continental Congress convened to select a national seal, many archetypes were suggested and considered as worthy of placement as the national emblem. Although legend has suggested that an extensive debate occurred between the founding fathers, the bald eagle was accepted as the national emblem on its first appearance before the committee. Its competition included the rattlesnake, suggested by Benjamin Franklin, the rooster, and even scenes from the Bible. So, where does the story about Benjamin Franklin suggesting the turkey get its origin? Franklin was not pleased with the selection of the bald eagle as evidenced in a letter written to his daughter. In this letter, Franklin even compared the bald eagle in an unflattering way to the turkey. He argued that the turkey was more deserving than the bald eagle as a national representative on a larger scale. Saying the bald eagle was "lazy" and even exhibited "bad moral character" in its hunting, Franklin did not support the bald eagle as the national choice. The point was moot; the bald eagle had quickly and quite easily moved through committees to arrive as the national emblem of the United States.

Chosen predominantly for its uniqueness to North America, the bald eagle makes its habitat in every state of America except Hawaii. With a wingspan of 6 to 8 feet and a length of 29 to 42 inches, the bald eagle carries its 7 to 15 pounds at a speed of 44 miles per hour in flight. Surviving mainly on a staple of fish, the bald eagle also consumes small animals, including ducks and rabbits, and the occasional carrion.

Placed on the endangered species list in 1967, the bald eagle has seen resurgence in population changing its classification to "threatened" in 1995. Today, half of the world's population of 70,000 bald eagles subsists in Alaska primarily feasting on salmon. Yet, illegal hunters, traps, power lines, windmills, and poisons along with natural predators still threaten the species' existence.

Despite its historic beginnings in America's history, the bald eagle remains a symbol of perseverance, survival, and national pride.

Grade 11 Narrative

Kaleidoscope

Jessica slumped unhappily in her chair and regarded her ankle reproachfully; just minutes ago, she had been preparing to participate in a track meet when, with an inadvertent misstep, she had twisted her ankle. Now she was positioned in a folding chair with her foot iced, wrapped, and elevated. She was immobile in the midst of a sea of purposeful activity. Members of the track teams were warming up: stretching, bending, running in place; and Jessica wanted nothing more than the ability to leap from the chair and join her team. Usually track meets were invigorating and satisfying for Jessica, but the hours of today's meet stretched before her like an endless desert landscape.

To alleviate her disappointment, Jessica squinted her eyes and began to play a game from her childhood—kaleidoscope. She closed her eyes to mere slits, viewed the distant scene as bits of shifting colors and movements, then blinked and turned her head to look in another direction in order to change the scene. On the far side of the field, Jessica noticed the blurred, blue brilliance of the Clarion High School Eagles' warm-up suits as a group of runners jogged lightly along the track. Beyond the joggers, were silver tiers of empty bleachers gleaming in the sunlight. Where the bleachers ended, Jessica could see a large splash of green, brightened by small, red dots. Opening her eyes wider and focusing, she could see a giant oak spreading its leafy branches protectively over a patch of grass where two or three spectators in red T-shirts had established themselves in comfortable chairs and propped their feet on foot stools—clearly planning to watch the entire meet.

Jessica wished that she were with the spectators, so she would at least have someone to talk to. The other members of the team had paused to commiserate with her, but everyone had returned to the practice areas—except for Janet, who suddenly appeared beside her.

"I'm sorry you've been sidelined, Jessica," she said. "We'll try our best to do well in the meet. Coach is having Stephanie take your place, but it won't be the same without you." Janet gave Jessica an amicable pat on the back and jogged off to resume her workout.

Jessica felt confident the team would compete well—despite her accident—but she wished she could take part in the competition. Sighing, Jessica returned to playing kaleidoscope. In the distance, she could see a large orange blob—undoubtedly a belated school bus—releasing what appeared to be a flock of canaries. She opened her eyes wide and realized that the track team from Adams High—in bright, yellow uniforms—was departing from the bus.

As the hours passed, Jessica cheered at all the appropriate moments: yelling

encouragement to teammates, shouting the names of the runners as they handed off the baton in the relays, applauding when the results of the pole vault were announced. When she occasionally lapsed back into playing kaleidoscope, she told herself that she was entitled to a diversion. Though her body was growing stiff, she could at least exercise her imagination to relieve the tedium of inactivity. Her team was accruing points at a steady pace, so she felt fairly confident of the meet's outcome.

Varying blots of color now adorned the silver bleachers on the opposite side. Four small groups of spectators had taken their places with others supporting their teams; together they presented an abstract design against a silver canvas—yellow melting into gold and black, circles of blue and red separated by silver, and a twist of purple spiraling below them.

When Jessica opened her eyes and returned her attention to the meet, she was startled to see that she had almost missed the event she enjoyed most—the 1600-meter relay. This was the event that Jessica usually anchored in the competition, but today Stephanie was running in her place. Jessica had wanted to lead her relay team to a stunning victory—but now she would have to watch.

The runners were already into the third segment of the relay, and Stephanie was poised to receive the baton and begin the final segment of the race. The runners from Adams High were moving more quickly than Jessica's team; but at the handoff, the anchor from Adams High dropped the baton—an action that would disqualify the team from the competition. Jessica watched attentively to see if Stephanie would become agitated since the runner from Adams had been running next to her. Stephanie stayed confident, took the baton smoothly, and managed to move out a little ahead of the others.

By the time Stephanie made the final turn on the track, Jessica was on her feet, hopping and cheering wildly. The runners were a blur of moving arms and legs, but Stephanie broke away from them and won decisively. Jessica collapsed into her chair, still clapping, and propped her foot up once again—her eyes wide open. Very soon Stephanie and the other members of the team encircled her, laughing and performing an impromptu victory dance. Jessica grinned and enjoyed this final—and gratifying—shifting of the kaleidoscope.