

Where  
the past  
is present

# DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## TEACHER RESOURCE LESSON PLAN

### THE DETROIT FLAG AND SEAL



#### INTRODUCTION

This lesson helps fourth grade students understand the life and culture in Detroit as it grew into one of the largest cities in the United States. Students will learn about the industrialization of Detroit, as well as the key symbols that still represent the city and its people today. The lesson includes a comprehensive background essay, a list of additional resources, and copies of worksheets and primary sources.

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What symbols represent Detroit, and why are they important?

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Understand that flags are symbols that represent values of a city, state and nation.
- Summarize the symbolism of each section of the Detroit flag.
- Construct a timeline of a particular era of Detroit history after doing a study.

#### MI GLCES – GRADE FOUR SOCIAL STUDIES

##### H4 – History of Michigan Beyond Statehood

- 4-H3.0.1 - Use historical inquiry to investigate

the development of Michigan’s major economic activities from statehood to present.

- 4-H3.0.2 - Use primary and secondary sources to explain how migration and immigration affected and continue to affect the growth of Michigan.
- 4-H3.0.3 - Describe how the relationship between the location of natural resources and the location of industries (after 1837) affected and continues to affect the location and growth of Michigan cities.

#### COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS - ELA

##### Reading

- 1 - Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- 9 - Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

##### Speaking and Listening

- 1 - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- 2 - Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

# LESSON PLAN: THE DETROIT FLAG AND SEAL

## BACKGROUND ESSAY

By the 1860s, Detroit's transformation from frontier outpost to bustling metropolis was almost complete. In 1870, the city's population was 79,577. The city covered almost 13 square miles, and it ranked 18th in size in the United States. The city boasted over 14,000 homes, 52 churches, 24 public schools, and 14 hospitals and asylums. Detroit's streets were littered with horse-drawn streetcars. In 1886, streetcar lines covered 42 miles of streets in the city of Detroit. In 1893, the streetcar horses were replaced by new electric trolleys.

Immigration from foreign countries was beginning to peak. Nearly half of all Detroiters were born outside the United States, with the highest percentage coming from Germany, Ireland, Poland and Canada.

Detroit's economy was booming. One of the largest industries in the 1870s was copper smelting. Raw copper ore was shipped from Michigan's Upper Peninsula to Detroit, where it was processed in factories. "Smelting" is the process of removing minerals and other contaminants from the ore in order to make pure metal. The copper was then made into several products, like wiring, pipes, jewelry and other items. By the 1880s, Detroit was also known for its iron foundries. In addition to refining the raw iron ore, several manufacturers melted the iron until it was a red hot liquid, and poured it into molds to make stoves, candle holders, tools, building facades and other products.

### The Original "Big 3"

By the 1890s, Detroit had emerged as a center of heavy industry. The availability of iron ore in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and easy access to coal via the Great Lakes made Detroit an ideal place for factories. Manufacturers were building names for themselves and the city in three key industries: railroad cars, stoves and ship building.

The railroad helped jump start Detroit's

development, and Detroit became known for manufacturing railroad cars. It was the largest industry in Detroit in the 1890s. In 1892 several companies, including the Michigan Car Company, Peninsular Car Company, the Russel Wheel and Foundry Company and the Detroit Car Wheel Company merged to become the Michigan-Peninsular Car Company. The company made train wheels and frameworks for rail cars, as well as innovated on car design. In 1868, Detroitier William Davis patented the first refrigerator rail car. He sold the design to George H. Hammond, a Detroit meat packer, who built a set of cars to ship his meat to the east coast. It used ice harvested from the

Great Lakes to keep it cool. Even railroad sleeper car innovator George Pullman manufactured his cars in Detroit in the 1870s.

In the middle of the 19th century, Detroiters had to purchase cast iron wood and kitchen stoves from upstate New York. It took a lot of time and a lot of money to ship stoves and repair parts to Detroit. In 1861, Jeremiah Dwyer, an apprentice stove maker from Albany, New York, began

dabbling in the manufacture of cast iron stoves in Detroit. By 1864, his Detroit Stove Company was making stoves that were noted across the country for their quality. By the 1870s, the company had grown so large that it changed its name to the Michigan Stove Company, and declared Detroit the "stove capital of the world."

They commemorated their title at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago with a monumental structure: the world's largest stove, which was a replica of their Garland wood stove that was carved from wood, weighed 15 tons and stood 25 feet tall. (The stove had been restored and erected at the Michigan State Fairgrounds in 1974. It burned to the ground in August 2011 when it was allegedly hit by lightning.) Other stove manufacturers in Detroit included the Peninsular Stove Company.



# LESSON PLAN: THE DETROIT FLAG AND SEAL

The availability of natural resources also made Detroit a shipbuilding center by the 1870s. Early entrepreneurs had built “dry docks” on the Detroit River in the 1850s. Dry docks were landings in a harbor next to a pier where ships were loaded and unloaded or repaired. Most had a series of gates to let water in and out. In 1879, the Detroit Dry Dock Company purchased a large shipyard in Wyandotte, Michigan and began building massive fresh water vessels. Factories that made marine engines, steam boilers, and ship parts sprung up all over the city. By 1905, Detroit shipbuilding companies were manufacturing nearly half of all ships – both freight and passenger – on the Great Lakes.

In addition to heavy industry, Detroit was also known for making a host of other consumer goods. Turning lumber from northern Michigan into boards was still an important industry, as well as making leather and fur goods and clothing, cigars and tobacco products, boots and shoes, soap and candles, seeds, and pharmaceuticals.

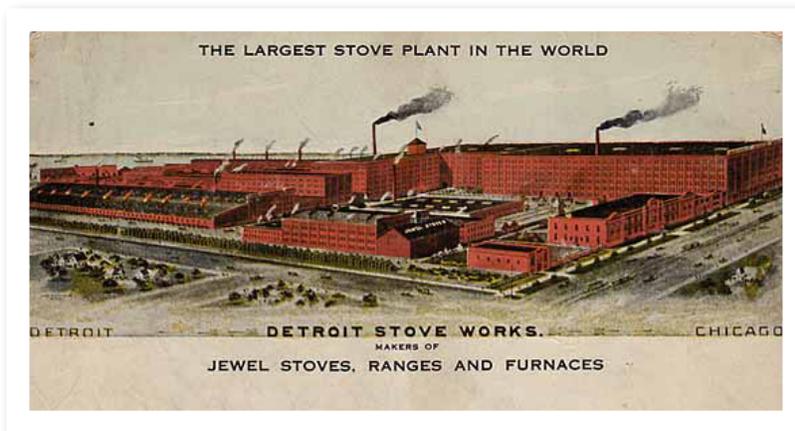
Dexter Ferry founded the D. M. Ferry & Co., a flower and vegetable seed producer, in Detroit in 1879. People can still buy seeds from the company today. Many common products and businesses that are familiar today got their start in the late 1800s, including Vernor’s ginger ale, Sander’s ice cream shops, Hudson’s department store, Stroh’s beer and Kresge 5 and 10 (now known as Kmart).

Detroiters were hard workers. The new industries required both skilled and unskilled workers. Many of the foreign-born immigrants found jobs in factories. Women would sew or make cigars, and men would work long hours in the factories. A normal work week was ten hours a day, six days a week. Most laborers earned about \$1.00 per day. The city also had many professional jobs. Hundreds of doctors, lawyers, dentists, barbers, merchants, and clerks worked in offices spread across the city.

## Progressive Detroit

Hazen S. Pingree was a cobbler who moved to Detroit after serving in the Union Army during the Civil War. In Detroit, he quickly found success as a shoe manufacturer, and by the early 1880s he and partner, Charles H. Smith, were the largest shoe and boot manufacturer in the Midwest.

In the 1880s, Pingree was upset and angry by the corruption he saw in Detroit’s city government. He had a distrust of private companies that did business for the city, such as paving streets, building sewers and supplying electric and gas, which he felt were taking advantage of city contracts and charging exorbitant fees. Pingree ran for the office of Detroit mayor and was elected in 1889.



Pingree’s administration was known for fighting corruption in the city. He challenged the privately-owned electric and gas monopolies by creating municipally-owned competitors. His largest and most public struggle was against the private

Detroit City Railways. He felt they overcharged patrons and demanded they lower their fares to three-cents per ride. He even tried to create a competing municipally-owned streetcar company, but did not succeed because it was prohibited by the Michigan Constitution.

In 1893, Detroit and the country faced a severe economic depression. Pingree took action by creating public welfare programs and initiating public works projects for the unemployed which built new schools, parks, and public baths. In 1894, Pingree won national acclaim for his “potato patch plan.” He arranged for vacant city land, both public and private, to be converted to vegetable gardens that would provide food for the city’s poor. Pingree even funded part of the garden plan with his own money.

In 1896, Pingree was elected Governor of Michigan. He still had one year left as mayor of Detroit, and he intended to serve in both positions

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at the same time. However, the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that he could not hold two elected offices at once because it created a conflict of interest. As a result, Pingree resigned as mayor. During his four years as Michigan's governor, Pingree advocated for several reforms, including direct election of U.S. senators, an eight-hour workday and a regulated income tax.

## Conclusion

Detroit at the turn of the 20th century was an exciting and overwhelming place. The city had grown from a mainly agrarian place to a bustling industrial city in less than 75 years. The population skyrocketed as foreign and native immigrants arrived in the city to work in the factories. Detroit grew faster than it could handle, and politicians like Hazen Pingree worked hard to ensure that the growth was regulated and fair, and that the citizens' interests were considered and protected.

With its three key industries – cast iron stoves, railroad cars, and marine engine and ship building – providing ideal infrastructure, Detroit was primed to take on the 20th century's newest industrial innovation, the horseless carriage. Although Detroit was not the only city building automobiles in the early 1900s, key innovators like Ransom Olds, Henry Ford and the Dodge Brothers ensured that 20th century Detroit would become known as the "Motor City."

## MATERIALS USED:

### Data Elements

- *Detroit Flag: Symbols of Our History*

### Worksheet

- *Detroit Flag Skeleton*

### Butcher or chart paper

**Markers, crayons, scrap paper, old magazines, glue sticks and other craft materials**

## LESSON SEQUENCE:

1. Show the students a well-known symbol, such as the Nike swoosh or the Apple logo. Ask the students what it is. Discuss the idea that a symbol is a picture that represents something. Ask for examples of other symbols.
2. Show the United States flag and ask how it is a symbol. Explain, if necessary, that the fifty stars symbolize the fifty states and the thirteen stripes represent the original thirteen colonies. Flags often symbolize the history of a place.
3. Ask the students if they have ever seen the Detroit flag. If they have, ask them what it looks like. Show the Detroit flag and ask for guesses as to what each part symbolizes.
4. Distribute copies of *Detroit Flag: Symbols of Our History* handout and *Detroit Flag Skeleton* graphic organizer. As a class or in small groups, read about the Detroit flag and complete the skeleton worksheet. Students should complete the worksheet by taking the information in the essay and summarizing it in their own words on the graphic organizer. If time permits, have the students color the flag.
5. Discuss the worksheets with the class.
6. Lead a discussion about symbols today. Ask the students why they think symbols send messages, and why they are important. For example:
  - Advertising – symbols like the Nike swoosh make the company readily identifiable to the public. This type of symbol is called a brand.
  - Nationalism – symbols on flags, like the Detroit flag or the United States flag symbolize themes of pride and nationalism. They are used to give groups of people a sense of pride about their city or country's history and culture.
7. Ask your students what symbols they would use to represent the school or classroom. Write the suggestions on the board.
8. Have each group make their own flag that uses symbols to represent the school or classroom. Let them know that they can only use pictures. No words are allowed on their posters. Having a wide array of craft materials available will result in very intricate and interesting flags.
9. If time permits, have each group present their flag to the rest of the class, explaining the symbols they chose and what they mean. Post the flags around the classroom.

# LESSON PLAN: THE DETROIT FLAG AND SEAL

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Ault, Phillip H. *These Are the Great Lakes*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1972.

Glazer, Sidney. *Detroit: A Study in Urban Development*. New York: Bookman Associates, 1965.

Grady, Wayne, Bruce M. Litteljohn, and Emily S. Damstra. *The Great Lakes: The Natural History of a Changing Region*. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2007.

Grimm, Joe. *Michigan Voices: Our State's History in the Words of the People Who Lived It*. Detroit, Mich: Detroit Free Press, 1987.

Henderson, Kathy. *The Great Lakes*. Chicago: Children's Press, 1989.

Henrickson, Wilma Wood. *Detroit Perspectives: Crossroads and Turning Points*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991.

Hyde, Charles K. *A Brief History of Detroit's Riverfront*. Detroit, Mich: Wayne State University, Dept. of History, 1987.

Hyde, Charles K. *Detroit: An Industrial History Guide*. Detroit: Detroit Historical Society, 1980.

Kummer, Patricia K. *The Great Lakes*. New York: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2009.

McGraw, Bill. *Great Pages of Michigan History from the Detroit Free Press*. Detroit, Mich: Detroit Free Press, 1987.

Piehl, Janet. *The Great Lakes*. Minneapolis: Lerner Pub, 2010.

Making of Modern Michigan. Michigan State University. 23 November 2011. <http://mmm.lib.msu.edu/>

Michigan Maps. Michiganadvantage.org. 23 November 2011. <http://www.michiganadvantage.org/Maps/>

Michigan's Natural Resources and Environment: A Citizen's Guide. State of Michigan. 23 November 2011. <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/publications/naturalresources.pdf>

Mineral Information Institute. 23 November 2011. <http://www.mii.org/>

Mining in Michigan. Michigan Historical Center. 23 November 23, 2011. <http://www.hal.state.mi.us/mhc/timetraveler/mining/index.html>

Mining in Michigan Gallery Tour. Michigan Historical Center. 23 November 2011. <http://www.hal.state.mi.us/mhc/museum/explore/museums/hismus/prehist/mining/>

Soo Locks Animation. United States Army Corps of Engineers. 23 November 2011. <http://huron.lre.usace.army.mil/SOO/alock.html>

Soo Locks Webcam. Soo Locks Boat Tours. 23 November 2011. <http://www.soolocks.com/cam.phtml>

TEACH Great Lakes. Great Lakes Information Network. 23 November 2011. <http://www.great-lakes.net/teach/>

Tilden Mine Tour. Hunt's Guide to Michigan's Upper Peninsula. 23 November 2011. [http://hunts-upguide.com/ishpeming\\_tilden\\_mine\\_tour.html](http://hunts-upguide.com/ishpeming_tilden_mine_tour.html)

## LINKS

Department of Natural Resources. State of Michigan. 23 November 2011. <http://www.michigan.gov/dnr>

Great Lakes and Seaway Shipping. Boatnerd.com. 23 November 2011. <http://www.boatnerd.com>

Growth of Manufacturing Online Tour. Michigan Historical Center. 23 November 2011. <http://www.hal.state.mi.us/mhc/museum/explore/museums/hismus/prehist/manufac/>

For more information about the  
**Detroit Historical Society**,  
or to schedule a field trip to the  
**Detroit Historical Museum** or  
**Dossin Great Lakes Museum**,  
visit [detroithistorical.org](http://detroithistorical.org)

# DETROIT FLAG SKELETON

Use the *Detroit Flag: Symbols of Our History* handout to complete the worksheet. When you are finished, draw and color the flag in the center.

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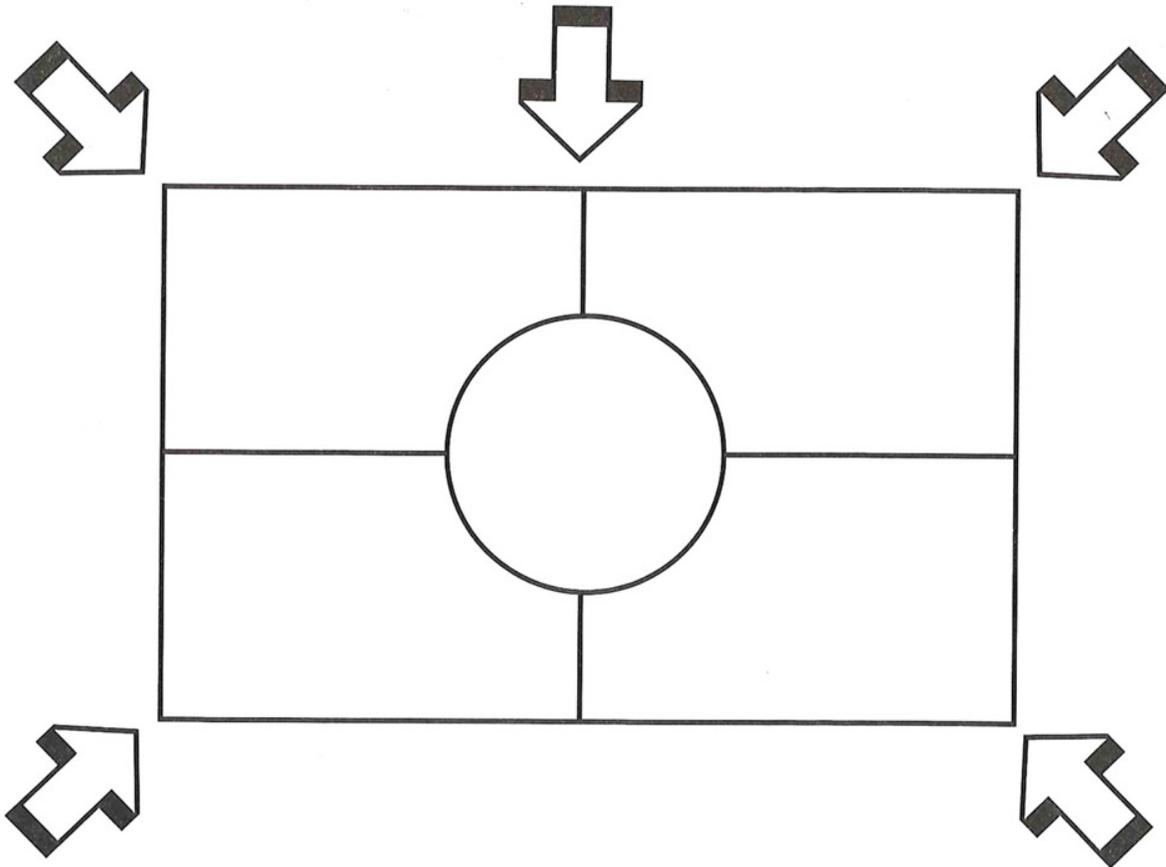
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## DETROIT FLAG: SYMBOLS OF OUR HISTORY

### Did you know that the City of Detroit has its very own flag?



Not only is it beautiful, also tells a story about our history and the spirit of our people.

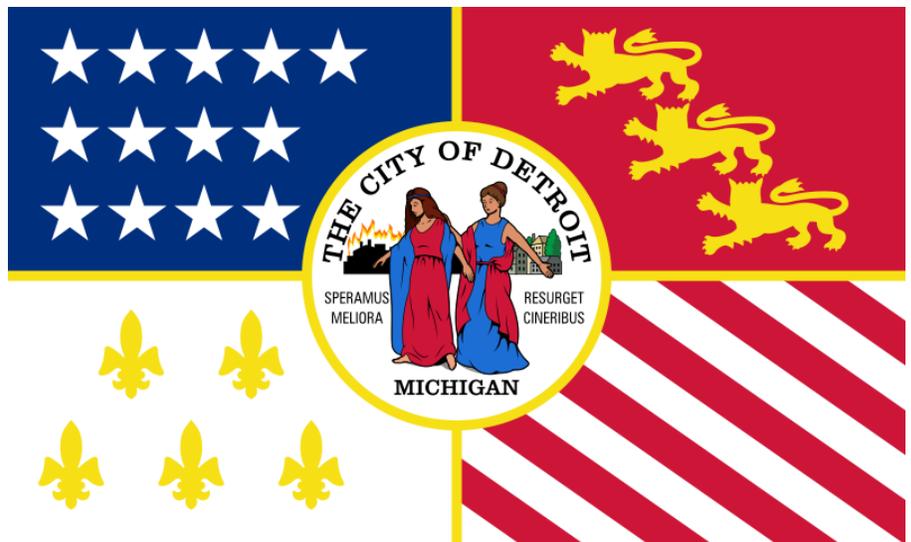
The story begins when Detroit officially became a city in 1802. Michigan was still a territory and not a state, and the Territorial Legislature authorized the new city to create an official symbol, called a “seal”. It took 25 years, but the city finally adopted the present seal in 1827. American artist J.O. Lewis created the design, and he was paid five dollars for this service.

The official Seal of the City of Detroit commemorates the great fire of 1805 that burned Detroit to the ground. The center of the seal shows two women. The woman on the left represents Detroit at the time of the fire. She is weeping over the loss of the city. The woman on the right, who represents hope and the future, is comforting her. The background scene to the left shows the city in flames. On the right is a new and

brighter industrial city. Above and below the scene are two latin phrases. The one at the top, “Speramus Meliora” means “We Hope For Better Things.” The one at the bottom, “Resurget Cineribus” translates to “It Shall Rise From The Ashes.” These phrases make up the city’s motto, and it captures the spirit of Detroit— one that meets challenges and evokes images of Detroiters working and building together.

David E. Heineman, a Detroit resident, designed the city’s first flag in 1907. The flag is divided into 5 sections:

- In the lower left section, a white background has five fleur-de-lis. This represents the French founding of Detroit in 1701. The French controlled Detroit from 1701–1760.
- The upper right section shows a red background with three gold lions. It represents the British, who occupied Detroit from 1760-1796.
- In the upper left section, a blue field with thirteen stars represents the American occupation of the city from 1796-1812.
- Finally, the lower right section contains red and white stripes. They represent the American re-occupation of Detroit from 1813 to the present.
- The city seal makes up the center section.



The city’s early history and her spirit is reflected in the flag’s design. It was first flown on June 12, 1908, on Pennant Day, a celebration honoring Detroit’s baseball club. However, it did not officially become the city flag until 1948, when the Common Council adopted it at the urging of Mayor Eugene Van Antwerp.