



## ARTIFACT ACTIVITY: BEAR FLAG

A free [Online Learning](#) activity aligned with  
Common Core & State Content standards for K-5th grades

**OVERVIEW:**

In this activity, learners will use object based thinking to analyze an artifact from California history. They will then create a plan to research questions they have about the artifact.

**APPROPRIATE FOR:**

K-5th grades

**OBJECTIVES:**

In this activity, learners will:

- Use object based thinking to analyze an artifact
- Create a research plan to learn more about the artifact
- Learn about the history of the state flag of California

**DIRECTIONS:**

Use the questions provided to analyze the photograph of an original Bear Flag, then compare it with the other examples provided.

**TIME:**

1 hour

**MATERIALS:**

- Photographs of Bear Flags on pages 3, 5, and 6

**STANDARDS:*****Common Core******Reading - Key Ideas and Details***

K-5                      Ask and answer questions about key details in a source

***Reading - Integration of Knowledge and Ideas***

K-5                      Use illustrations and details to describe the main ideas of a source

***History-Social Science California State Content Standards******Research, Evidence, and Point of View***

K-5                      Students pose relevant questions about events they encounter in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artifacts, photographs, maps, artworks, and architecture.

***Grade Level Content Area Connections***

1.3                      Students know and understand the symbols, icons, and traditions of the United States that provide continuity and a sense of community across time.

4.3                      Students explain the economic, social, and political life in California from the establishment of the Bear Flag Republic through the Mexican-American War, the Gold Rush, and the granting of statehood.

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## PART 1: ARTIFACT ANALYSIS

### DIRECTIONS:

View the photograph of the artifact and analyze it using the following questions.






### Questions:

1. What would you name the artifact?

2.

2. Analyze the artifact using the chart below:

 <p>Step 1: See <i>What observations can you make? What details can you point out?</i></p>	
 <p>Step 2: Think <i>What background knowledge can you add to your understanding? What do you think you can learn from it?</i></p>	
 <p>Step 3: Wonder <i>What questions do you have about this piece? What more do you need to know to gain understanding?</i></p>	

## PART 2: ARTIFACT COMPARISON



Recreation of Bear Flag by Pete Loeser

3. View the recreation of the Bear Flag above. What differences do you notice? Do these differences change any of your thoughts or questions?



Bear Flag, or Flag of California

4. Compare the photo with the current California State Flag. How is it similar? How is it different? What do you think led to these changes?
  
5. If you were to design a flag for the state of California, what would you include? Why would you include these designs? Sketch your ideas in the space below.

## PART 3: ARTIFACT RESEARCH

6. Choose one of your *wonder* questions to research further:

- a. Where is the best place to find more information?
- b. What related questions do you want to answer about this topic?
- c. What did you learn through your research?

### About this artifact:

The photograph of the flag shown on page 3 was one of the original flags used in 1846 when a group of United States citizens claimed California and declared independence from Mexico during what is now known as the Bear Flag Revolt. This particular version of the “Bear Flag” was designed by William Todd, a relative of First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln. It featured the following elements: a piece of light brown cloth for the background; a red strip of fabric to represent the stripes on the American flag; a star painted with a mixture of brick, dust, oil, and red paint, inspired by the Texas flag; the words “California Republic,” declaring California as a free republic in which people could elect their leaders; and a grizzly bear. The grizzly bear was painted by William Todd. Some people commented that the bear looked more like a hog, so this version of the flag has also been given the nickname “the hog flag.”

The black and white photograph is of the original flag, which was lost in a fire following the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco. The current flag was adopted in 1911, though some parts of the design have been changed slightly since then, including adjusting the shades of the colors and the artwork of the bear, which was made final in 1953.