

# Exploring Nationalism: Leagues and Leeks



This activity pairs well with Part Six of the film at pause point 02:01:42.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explore the meaning of symbols
- Compare symbols in *Henry V* with symbols from students' lives
- Investigate personal allegiance to symbols

## MATERIALS

- Whiteboard and markers

## INTRODUCTION

In Act Five, Scene One, Gower asks Fluellen why he's wearing a leek in his hat since Saint Davy's Day has passed. According to legend, Saint David ordered Welsh soldiers to wear leeks on their helmets during a battle against the Saxons in the sixth century. After the Welsh won the battle, leeks became associated with that day in honor of Saint David and eventually became a national symbol for Wales. In this activity, we will explore the importance of symbols and discover what symbols our communities uphold.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### Part One – Symbols of Patriotism

**Step One:** The class brainstorms symbols that represent patriotism in the U.S. and write them on the board. (It is helpful to leave some room on the board for Part Two of this activity.) Students are encouraged to think of literal or abstract symbols that fit into this category. (Example of literal: American flag; Example of abstract: hamburgers).

**Step Two:** If a student resonates with a symbol already written, they may either underline or put a checkmark to denote its frequency. After a list has been curated, discuss as a group the importance of each symbol and its role in their lives. Use the discussion prompts below as needed.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which symbols came up the most?
- What symbol(s) were surprising to see on the list? Why?
- What symbols do you hold as valuable? Which do not have significance for you? Why?
- What symbols would you defend? Why?

## Part Two – Personal Symbols

**Step One:** As a class, students will brainstorm symbols that represent them personally. Students are encouraged to think of literal or abstract symbols that have personal significance for them.

**Step Two:** If a student resonates with a symbol already written, they may either underline it or put a checkmark next to it. After a list has been curated, use the discussion prompts below to discuss the importance of symbols in our lives.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which symbols came up the most?
- What symbols surprised you?
- Are there any symbols that came up in both columns?
- Is there a column that you relate to more?
- Would you defend this group of symbols more than the first group of symbols?
- Why are symbols meaningful?
- What do symbols communicate?

**Step Three:** Go back through the text or think back through the Guthrie production and assess how symbols were communicated.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What symbols were important to the characters?
- When and how did symbols reoccur?
- How and why did the characters defend certain symbols?