

Name Class Date



American Icons – or are they?

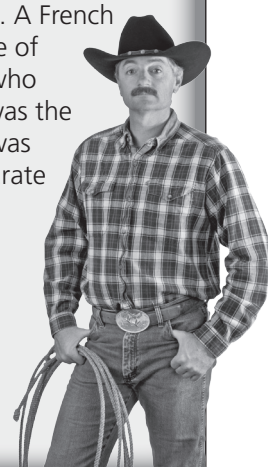
Think of America and what do you think of? The American flag? Cowboys? Hamburgers? Not all the things that are associated with America actually come from the USA. For example, the first unofficial national flag had the old British flag in the corner instead of the stars we see today. And, while it's true that an American lawyer wrote the words of the National Anthem, the tune comes from a British song which became popular in America.

Not even cowboys and blue jeans are fully American. The word 'cowboy' comes from the Spanish *vaquero* (*vaca* meaning *cow*, of course) and the modern cowboy's skills with horses and cattle were first developed in Spain and Mexico. The denim material for jeans comes from the large town of Nîmes in France (*from Nîmes* in French is *de Nîmes* and sounds like *denim*) and from a similar cotton people used in the Italian city of Genoa (*Genoa* in French is *Gênes* and sounds like *jeans*). Levi Strauss used this material to produce trousers for working men – trousers which people now call jeans.

Some food is also less American than you'd expect. Peanut butter was eaten in South America for centuries before appearing in every North American kitchen. The word 'hamburger' comes from the city of Hamburg in Germany, because German immigrants brought their tradition of cut-up beef mixed with onions, salt and pepper to New York and Chicago. The Americans added the bread and chips afterwards!

Even some iconic American architecture is more foreign than expected. A French sculptor designed the Statue of Liberty and Gustave Eiffel (who also built the Eiffel Tower) was the engineer on the project. It was sent to America in 350 separate pieces and only then put together in New York.

So next time you see an icon of the United States, ask yourself ... is it really as American as it seems?



1 23 Read the text about American Icons. Are the sentences T (True) or F (False)? Correct the false sentences. Then listen to the article and check your answers.

- The Americans used the old British flag as their first flag.
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- American cowboys use skills that riders first developed in Spain and Mexico.
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- Men in America first wore jeans to go to work in.
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- People started to eat peanut butter in the USA immediately after it was invented.
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- Immigrants introduced their version of hamburgers to all the major cities in America.
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- Americans were not involved in the design of the Statue of Liberty.
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2 Complete the sentences with the words in the box.

cotton	flag	engineer
anthem	cattle	immigrants

- Millions of from Europe have gone to live in America since the 1600s.
- The American is red, white and blue.
- Cowboys are famous for looking after their while riding on horses.
- Jeans are made of a strong, blue-coloured material.
- Americans call their national 'The Star-Spangled Banner'.
- Gustave Eiffel was a famous who built the Eiffel Tower in Paris in 1889.

3 Work with a partner. Answer the questions.

Which icons that represent other countries can you think of? What do you know about their history and where they come from?

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