

**Real World Graduation: Question 54: Pledge of Allegiance**

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Question 54

In 1892, in preparation for the celebration of the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America, a magazine in Boston called The Youth's Companion published a "pledge to the flag" to be recited by schoolchildren. It is believed to have been written either by Francis Bellamy or James Upham. The pledge has undergone several revisions in the years since; it currently reads:

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with justice and liberty for all."

Although it was originally devised for schoolchildren, it was eventually adopted in 1942 as part of the United States Flag Code (U. S. C. Title 36). What is the purpose of such a pledge?

- a) To inspire people to be proud of living in a nation that has liberty and justice for all
- b) To emphasize that only people who believe in God can be Americans
- c) To remind people that America cannot be divided
- d) To confirm that the people are the ultimate sovereign in America
- e) A combination of a), c), and d)

### Answer to Question 54

This is a trick question. All of the answers are false. The correct answer is that the pledge of allegiance is a means to get you, the citizen, to give an oath of loyalty to a flag, which is a mere symbol of the republic.

As a citizen, it is expected that one will be loyal to your fellow-citizens and the government, so long as the government performs its duties to defend your liberties. An oath of loyalty is not necessary; and giving it pre-empts your right with the rest of the people to abolish any government which does not serve their needs. This principle is stated in the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness -- that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

Answer a) is wrong because giving an oath of loyalty is not inspirational; it is an obligation. Furthermore, no nation, no matter how well constituted, can ever secure liberty and justice for all - there will always be some injustice and some infringements on liberty because it is the nature of people to conduct their affairs imperfectly.

Answer b) is wrong because everyone born to American parents in America is a U. S. citizen, whether they believe in God or not; in fact babies do not believe in anything. The atheist, the devil-worshipper, the born-again Christian, and all the others in between are all equal citizens.

Answer c) is wrong because it is either false (as in the Civil War), or is just an idle sentiment. Of course America can be divided. Many so-called "leaders" have made a fortune doing so: David Duke, Jesse Jackson, George Wallace, Al Sharpton, Bill Clinton (changed from William Jefferson Blythe III), Louis Farrakhan (Louis E. Walcott), and Barack Obama, just to name a few

Answer d) is wrong because, if you are taking an oath of loyalty, then you are in effect giving up your portion of the public sovereignty to an emblem that represents the current government.

Here is a little exercise guaranteed to bring a smile. Imagine John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, Gouverneur Morris, James Otis, Joseph Warren, James Madison, James Monroe, George Mason, Patrick Henry, John Jay, or John Hancock ever taking an oath of loyalty to the Union Jack. Even the tyrant George III never demanded it, but we have it in U. S. Code Title 36. Even if the Founders did take oaths of allegiance, it didn't matter much in the long run, did it?

All in all, the pledge of allegiance is OK as a teaching aid to young children, but adults should be careful not to take it too seriously. It was written by a socialist whose main objective is to get you, the citizen, to pledge undying loyalty to a government, even one over which you have no control. There is too much in it that dilutes your citizenship and your rights. Politicians are fond of reciting the pledge on every occasion (if a camera is rolling) but they would serve us better if they took an oath of loyalty to the principles of limited government per the U. S. Constitution.