

# "God Bless America"

"God Bless America" is our country's unofficial national anthem.

Americans have sung these words through hard times and good times: the Great Depression, wars, times of peace and prosperity, and terrorist attacks.

Irving Berlin, the song's composer, was inspired by hard times and good times.

"I came here as an immigrant from Russia in 1893, and whatever success I have had as a songwriter I owe to this country," said Berlin.

When he was five, his family's home in Russia was burned because they were Jewish. His father died soon after they came to America. The family was very poor. Irving dropped out of school and became a newspaper boy. However, he learned he could earn more money singing.

His first big success was the song "Alexander's Ragtime Band," written in 1911. He wrote many successful songs and musicals, even though he never learned to read or write music.

He was drafted during World War I. He wrote "God Bless America" but decided it didn't fit in his funny musical about the army.

Later, singer Kate Smith asked Berlin to write a patriotic song for her radio show to mark the 20th anniversary of Armistice Day in 1938. He remembered "God Bless America" and revised it for her. It was an immediate success.

Berlin established the God Bless America Fund. He and Kate Smith gave all their earnings from the song to the Boy and Girl Scouts of America.

Berlin said his mother would say "God bless America" because America took them in when they had no place to go.

"I've tried to express my feelings in 'God Bless America,' a song which is not alone a song but an expression of my gratitude to the country that inspired it," said Berlin.

Berlin died at the age of 101. His daughters gave his notes for "God Bless America" to the Library of Congress.

During the dark days following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Berlin's song gave strength to Americans.

That afternoon, our nation's senators and representatives stood on the US Capitol steps and sang "God Bless America." Celine Dion's recording quickly hit the top of the charts.

Almost 100 years after "God Bless America" was written, it still inspires us.

## God Bless America *By Irving Berlin*

While the storm clouds gather  
far across the sea,

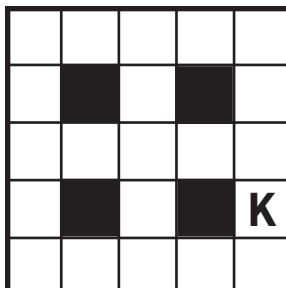
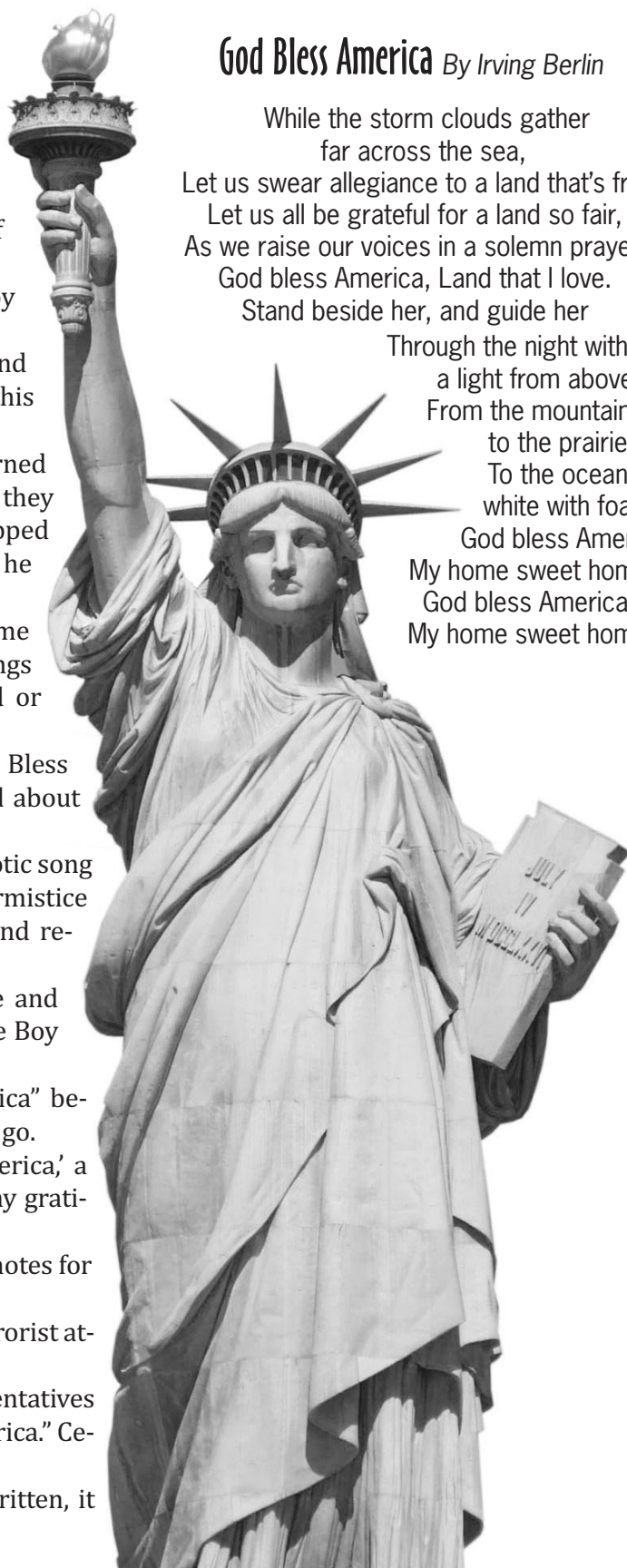
Let us swear allegiance to a land that's free,  
Let us all be grateful for a land so fair,  
As we raise our voices in a solemn prayer.  
God bless America, Land that I love.

Stand beside her, and guide her

Through the night with  
a light from above.

From the mountains,  
to the prairies,  
To the oceans,  
white with foam

God bless America,  
My home sweet home  
God bless America,  
My home sweet home.



### Cross Five

Place these six words in  
the crossword grid

Gamer, Names, Sight  
Songs, Sorts, Tasks