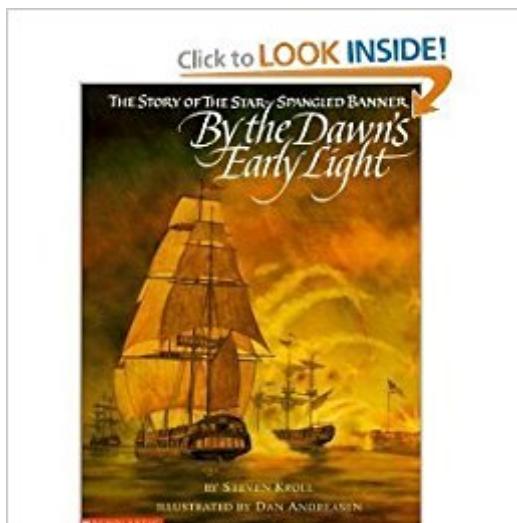


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# By The Dawn's Early Light: The Story Of The Star-spangled Banner



## **Synopsis**

A historically accurate narrative and majestic oil-painting illustrations chronicle the story of how Francis Scott Key came to write the United States' national anthem.

## **Book Information**

Age Range: 9 and up

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## **Customer Reviews**

Kroll ( Mary McClean and the St. Patrick's Day Parade ) dramatizes a critical moment in the War of 1812 as he describes the writing of the national anthem. Just before the British attack on Fort McHenry, Baltimore, in September 1814, the Washington lawyer Francis Scott Key and a colonel boarded a British ship to petition for the release of an American doctor taken prisoner. The plea was granted, but the three Americans were forced to watch the British attack on Baltimore before they could return to shore. Written the day after that attack, the song was inspired by the sight of a huge flag ("forty-two by thirty feet, fifteen stars and fifteen stripes") flying over the fort during heavy fighting and shelling. By dawn the gunfire had ceased, and Key "strained to see what flag was flying over the fort." Glimpsing the Stars and Stripes, Key scribbled the now famous first words of the anthem on the back of an old letter he found in his pocket. Although the beginning is marred by unnecessary information and awkward phrasings ("Francis got released from military duty" and "he could not have violated his neutrality."), the rest of the story energetically conveys Kroll's careful research and patriotic thrumming. Oil paintings hinting of Turner capture a sense of history and portray the excitement and the action. Ages 5-9. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 4-6-After providing brief background on the War of 1812, Kroll tells the story of how Francis Scott Key came to write the famous song. The narrative is appropriate for youngsters without being oversimplified. Andreasen's oversized, realistic oil paintings face text pages or go across double-page spreads. Backgrounds simulate vellum or parchment to add to the period atmosphere. A photograph of the original manuscript, music and verses of the song, and maps of Washington and the Battle of Baltimore are included, while an author's note adds details on the history of the song and the war. Stephanie St. Pierre's *Our National Anthem* (Millbrook, 1992) is a much more detailed survey, in more simplified language, illustrated with photographs and reproductions. Kroll and Andreasen's account is more exciting and more visually appealing. Sylvia S. Marantz, formerly with Worthington Schools, Columbus, OH  
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This book was a request from my seven year old granddaughter for Christmas. She was read the book in school, then checked it out of the public library four times to reread. When she requested this book, the only book request, I thought it must be special. Since it is out of print had a private book store with it available. Of course it cost more than when first published but my granddaughter was thrilled to receive it and read, reread it many times. It has to have great appeal for a child to "rate" it so highly.

Thanks

The illustrations in this book were nice full page drawings. The book is thin, has maybe 20 pages. The story does include some history leading to the event which is nice. But the conclusion seemed a bit short. I was looking for more details about the night that the fort was bombed, an explanation of the lines Key wrote, how many soldiers died, etc. This has no details like that, just kind of a general overview. So maybe this book was written for kids.

I loved this book! I think it's out of print but I just came across it while looking for another book about the flag. This book is definitely worth the money!

I think the vast majorities of stories I have heard about how Francis Scott Key came to write the words of "The Star Spangled Banner" begin with Key being held as a prisoner on a British ship during the attack on Ft. McHenry. In "By the Dawn's Early Light: The Story of The Star Spangled Banner," author Steven Kroll begins with Key, a well-known Washington lawyer, being informed that

Dr. William Beanes had been arrested by the British. It seems the doctor had been treating British wounded after the attack on Washington, D.C., and had some unruly stragglers arrested. Key gets permission from President Madison to try and affect the doctor's release. Kroll's narrative follows the events from August 13, 1814, when Key was informed of Beanes's plight, to when Key's poem, originally called "The Defense of Fort McHenry," was published in the "Baltimore American." I like the way Kroll weaves all sort of historical details into his narrative, making this the most memorable account of the writing of the national anthem that I have come across. The story being told is complimented by the oil paintings of Dan Andreasen, which are done in a style reminiscent of what you found in classic children's books during the Fifties. There is also a photographic reproduction of the original manuscript of Key's poem that her wrote in a hotel after the battle. In his Author's Note Kroll explains that it was the fort's storm flag, measuring 25 by 17 feet, that was flying overhead during the battle. The flag that was raised in celebration, as Key sailed back into Baltimore, was the larger, garrison flag for Ft. McHenry (both flags were made by Mary Pickersgill). When I last visited the Smithsonian Institute I was memorably surprised by the display of the Ft. McHenry flag, which, I assume, was the aforementioned storm flag. At least, that is how I would interpret what I have read; I might be wrong.

I may as well confess it: I am a sucker for tall-masted ships. The illustrations in this book knock my socks off. Drop-dead gorgeous ships. Great book about the history of the American National Anthem (includes all 4 verses -- they are majestic.) Very complete and inspirational book.

I love a book that brings a historical event to life with rich illustrations and vivid storytelling, captivating the reader in such a way that he absorbs the details of the event without even realizing it. Yet a truly outstanding historical book must do this without either sacrificing or embellishing the facts. By the Dawn's Early Light fits the bill on every count. What a pleasure it was to read it with my children. At 9 & 12, they do not "need" to learn from picture books, but when the book is this good, why not? The marvelous watercolors drew us into the story, the engaging narrative kept us there and, with the accompanying notes, told us all we needed to know about this event in our country's history. It is worthy of a place on my shelf and is a book I wish I'd bought long ago.

A little wordy at times to keep the attention of a 5 and 8-year old but an interesting read with great illustrations that helped keep or get us back on track. The copy of the original poem at the back of the book was of immense interest to our children. A nice way for adults and kids alike to learn about

american history together.

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