

America, the Beautiful

O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties, above the fruited plain!
America! America! God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea.

O beautiful for pilgrim feat, whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat, across the wilderness!
America! America! God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control, Thy liberty in law.

O beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved, and mercy more than life!
America! America! May God they gold refine,
"Til all success be nobleness, and every gain divine.

O beautiful for patriot dream that sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human tears!
America! America! God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea.

Song Story

"America the Beautiful" was written in 1893 by Katharine Lee Bates a Massachusetts educator and author. After she rode in a covered wagon to the top of Pikes Peak in Colorado Springs, Colorado she was so inspired by the beauty of the American land that she wrote the song to pass on her love for the country. "One day," she wrote, "some of the other teachers and I decided to go on a trip to 14,000-foot Pikes Peak. We hired a prairie wagon. Near the top we had to leave the wagon and go the rest of the way on mules. I was very tired. But when I saw the view, I felt great joy. All the wonder of America seemed displayed there, with the sea-like expanse."

The song was first published on July 4, 1895 in an American journal and went through a couple of revisions before Bates finally received the copyright of the song. The final form was completed in 1911 and set to the music of Samuel Ward's "Materna."