



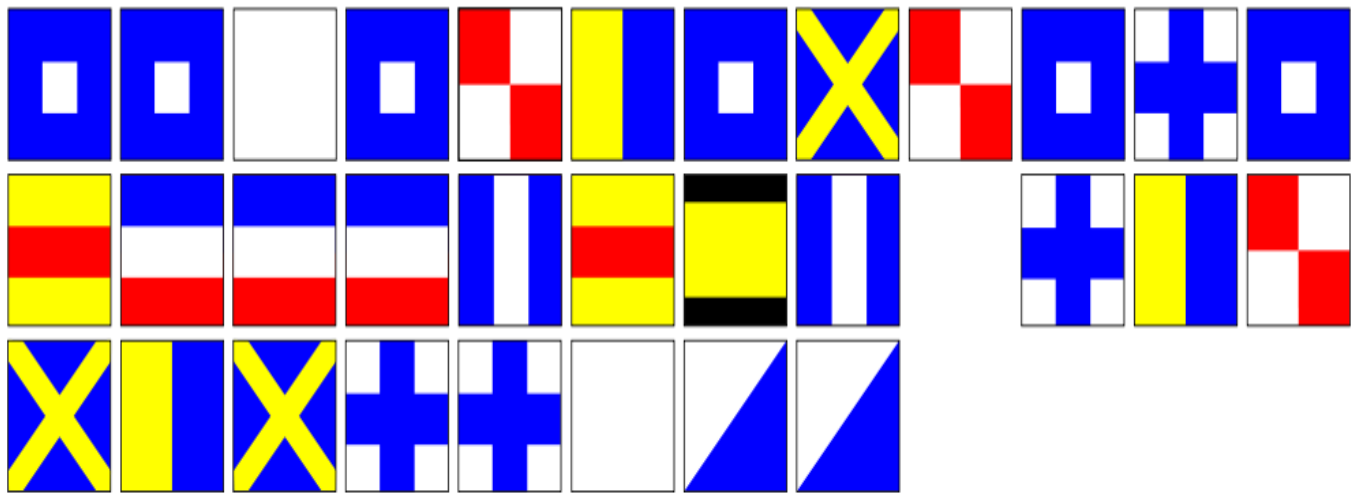
During the Napoleonic Wars, Britain fought against France in a naval clash known as [The Battle of Trafalgar](#) (this link animates the battle). It took place on October 21, 1805, at [Cape Trafalgar](#) (off the coast of Cadiz, Spain).

Britain's victory was so significant, and so meaningful to the country, that a major gathering place in London is known as [Trafalgar Square](#).

This image depicts a painting, called *The Battle of Trafalgar*, which [J. M. W. Turner](#) created between 1822-1824.

Turner's work combines several events from the Battle of Trafalgar into one major painting. They include:

- As the battle was about to begin - on the 21st of October, 1805 - Nelson flew a now-famous signal: "England expects that every man will do his duty" (as depicted in these flag images and as flown above *Victory* on the bicentennial of the battle). That occurred at about 11:45 AM (local time).



|         |         |      |       |     |      |     |     |   |    |    |    |
|---------|---------|------|-------|-----|------|-----|-----|---|----|----|----|
| 253     | 269     | 863  | 261   | 471 | 958  | 220 | 370 | 4 | 21 | 19 | 24 |
| England | expects | that | every | man | will | do  | his | D | U  | T  | Y  |



- The top-mizzenmast falls (about 1 PM local time).
- *Achille* is on fire in the background (late afternoon, local time)
- *Redoubtable* sinks in the foreground (the following day).

In his painting, Turner depicts *Victory* (Nelson's ship) flying her signal flags from the main-mast; they actually would have been flying from the mizzen-mast.

Once the battle began, Nelson would have ordered the "do his duty" signal flags to be replaced with: "Engage the enemy more closely."

The original of the painting at the top of this page is maintained by the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

Nelson's decisive victory over the combined Franco-Spanish fleet helped to insure that Britain was safe from invasion during the rest of the Napoleonic Wars.



Click on the top image for a very large and detailed view to experience, firsthand, how art can help us better-understand history.

### Credits:

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In-text images depict:

1. The flags spelling-out Admiral Nelson's famous directive.
2. Photo of Trafalgar's bicentennial celebration flying the "Do Your Duty" flags, by Ballista (online via Wikimedia Commons); license [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)
3. William Lionel Wyllie's illustration, "The Battle of Trafalgar," included in 1905's "The Encyclopedia of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars," Gregory Fremont-Barnes (main editor), at page 1002.



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## Media Stream



### Nelson's Signal: Do Your Duty

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### Carnage at the Battle of Trafalgar

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### Victory Flying Do Your Duty Flags

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### British Victory at Cape Trafalgar

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