

A Nation's Strength  
by Ralph Waldo Emerson

What makes a nation's pillars high  
And its foundations strong?  
What makes it mighty to defy  
The foes that round it throng?

It is not gold. Its kingdoms grand  
Go down in battle shock;  
Its shafts are laid on sinking sand,  
Not on abiding rock.

Is it the sword? Ask the red dust  
Of empires passed away;  
The blood has turned their stones to rust,  
Their glory to decay.

And is it pride? Ah, that bright crown  
Has seemed to nations sweet;  
But God has struck its luster down  
In ashes at his feet.

Not gold but only men can make  
A people great and strong;  
Men who for truth and honor's sake  
Stand fast and suffer long.

Brave men who work while others sleep,  
Who dare while others fly...  
They build a nation's pillars deep  
And lift them to the sky.



Jean Baptiste Edouard Detaille, *Cavalry Charge*, 1902. Museum of Modern Art, Boston

This work of art fits my poem because it depicts a cavalry charge, which is a patriotic image. The image also shows a man with a sword, which is an image in the poem.

This poem fits my theme of patriotism because it is about the role of soldiers and brave men serving their country. It is patriotic to suggest that a country is strong because its people are strong, and that the men who defend the country and sacrifice themselves for their country “for truth and honor’s sake” build the “pillars deep” and sturdy and lift the country “to the sky”.