



## Celebrate America's 250th Anniversary by Entering the Spokane Lilac Festival Essay Contest

### Theme: What Does America Mean to You?

To honor the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, the Spokane Lilac Festival invites students in **grades 6–12** to participate in the **America 250 Student Essay Contest**.

This contest offers students a meaningful opportunity to reflect on our nation's history, recognize those who have served, and imagine how they can help shape the future. Students are encouraged to explore how communities like Spokane contribute to the American story through service, leadership, creativity, and civic engagement.

### Contest Divisions

Entries will be judged in two grade categories:

- **Middle School Division:** Grades 6–8
- **High School Division:** Grades 9–12
- Students may submit **one entry**.

### Essay Submission Guidelines

- Length: **250 words (±25 words)**
- Must address the theme: *What does America mean to you?*
- Should include a connection to history, the present, or the future
- Typed, double-spaced, student name and school on first page
- Original student work

## Important Dates

- **Submission Deadline:** Monday, April 6
- **Finalists Notified:** by April 14
- **Recognition:** Thursday, May 14, All City Civic and Military Luncheon

## Recognition & Opportunities

Selected students will:

- Be recognized by the Spokane Lilac Festival
- Have work displayed at festival events and on festival platforms
- **Be honored at the ACCML event alongside civic and military leaders**
- Be invited to participate in the Jr. Lilac Parade and the Armed Forces Torchlight Parade
- Division winners will be featured in the Lilac Parade Program

## Judging Process

All entries will be reviewed by a distinguished panel of community leaders, including representatives from:

- The Spokane Lilac Festival Association
- Local educators

## Submission Instructions

Schools should submit entries electronically:

- Essays: PDF format
- Include student name, grade, school, and teacher contact

Send submissions to: <https://form.jotform.com/260537165217052>

## Our Mission

**For more than 88 years, the Spokane Lilac Festival has honored our military, empowered youth, and showcased our region. As we celebrate America's 250th anniversary, we invite students to share their voices and creativity as part of this historic moment.**

## Teacher Instruction Sheet

Thank you for helping your students participate in the Spokane Lilac Festival's America 250 Student Essay Contest. This opportunity encourages students to reflect on our nation's history, civic responsibility, and the role communities like Spokane play in shaping the American story.

### Classroom Purpose

Students will:

- Reflect on the meaning of America and Freedom
- Connect history to present-day civic life
- Express ideas through writing
- Create work for an authentic community audience

#### Step 1: Introduce the Theme

Discuss:

- What does America mean to different people?
- How has America changed over time?
- How does Spokane contribute to our nation?

#### Step 2: Brainstorm

Students may explore:

- Military service and sacrifice
- Community and belonging
- Rights and responsibilities
- Diversity and unity
- Personal or family stories
- Hopes for the future

#### Step 3: Create

Create a 250-word essay!

#### Step 4: Revise & Submit

Teachers collect and submit selected entries.

## Submission Process

Schools submit electronically:

- Submit a PDF
- Include student name, grade, school, teacher contact

<https://form.jotform.com/260537165217052>

Deadline: **Monday, April 6**

Teachers may submit multiple entries.

## Tips for Success

- Encourage authentic student voice
- Focus on meaning, not perfection
- Allow choice of perspective
- Consider cross-curricular collaboration (ELA + Social Studies + Art)

## Essay Rubric (20 Points)

Category	4 Exemplary	3 Proficient	2 Developing	1 Emerging
Theme Connection	Deep, thoughtful interpretation	Clear connection	Basic connection	Limited/unclear
Historical/Modern Connection	Strong and specific	Clear but general	Minimal	Missing
Voice and Originality	Distinct, engaging	Some originality	Limited voice	Generic
Organization and Clarity	Well structured	Mostly clear	Some confusion	Disorganized
Conventions	Few/no errors	Minor errors	Frequent errors	Difficult to read

