

Marshall County America 250 Essay Contest Guidelines

Essay Prompts

- High School (9-12) Essay prompt:
Choose a word or phrase from the Declaration of Independence and explain how its meaning has evolved from 1776 to the present day. Use historical examples and contemporary connections to support your analysis.
- Middle School (6-8) Essay prompt:
Discuss the relevance of the Declaration of Independence in modern American society (Why is it important to us today?).

Essay Requirements

- **Length:** 9 - 12 grade: 250–500 words >> 6 - 8 grade: 200–400 words
- **Format:** Typed, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman (or similar), 1-inch margins
- **Title:** Include a creative and clear title at the top of your essay
- **Original Work:** Essays must be the student's own work

Eligibility

- Open to all high school students (grades 9–12) & middle school students (6-8)
- Only one submission per student

Submission

- Submit essays by **March 12, 2026**
- Essays should be in a google doc or PDF file and submitted online at america250contest@gmail.com
- Include a cover page with:
 - Student's name
 - Grade level
 - School name
 - Contact information (email/phone)

Judging Criteria

Essays will be judged on the following:

1. **Clarity & Organization** – Clear thesis (introduction), logical flow, and strong conclusion
2. **Content & Insight** – Original ideas, depth of thought, and relevance to the prompt/theme
3. **Mechanics** – Grammar, spelling, and proper word count

Awards

- Cash prizes in the amount of **\$250 for 1st place and \$150 for 2nd place** will be awarded in each grade category (**6th-8th & 9th-12th**)
- **Note:** Winning essays may be published in local newspapers, online sites, etc.