

America 250 Essay Contest Rules

The America 250th Essay Contest is open to all Yavapai County residents in grades 4-12.

Submission Categories:

- Grades 4-6 (300-500 words)
- Grades 7-9 (500-750 words)
- Grades 10-12 (500-750 words)

Essay Prompts:

- America will celebrate its 250th birthday in 2026. Choose one story from the past that has shaped life in your community today—this could be an event, an invention, a local decision, or a tradition. Explain what happened, how it changed everyday life for people where you live, and what lessons it offers for how people in your community can work together to build a better future.
- What is a typical day like for you in Yavapai County in 2026? Write a blog post highlighting a day in the life of a student living in Yavapai County today.

Submission Requirements: To be considered, all submissions must meet the following criteria. Failure to adhere to these requirements will result in disqualification:

1. The essay must be the participant's own creation. No AI-generated, plagiarized, or previously published essays.
2. The essay must fit within the following wordcounts:
 - i. Grades 4-6: 300-500 words
 - ii. Grades 7-9: 500-750 words
 - iii. Grades 10-12: 500-750 words
3. Typed, double-spaced, 12-point font (Times New Roman or Arial preferred)
4. Each participant may submit (1) entry.
5. Content must be appropriate for general audiences.
6. All submissions must include the following information on a cover page:
 - i. Author's full name and grade level
 - ii. School (if applicable)
 - iii. Contact information: phone number and/or email address
7. Late or incomplete submissions will not be considered.

Note: The Yavapai County Free Library District (YCFLD) will not share your personal information. Winners will be asked to submit a Work and Photo Release allowing the Library to publish their essays in print or on their websites and to use their photographs in contest-related promotional materials, which may include photographs taken at USA250 events. or use it for promotional purposes. Contact information will only be used to reach contest winners.

For questions or additional information about the contest, please email: library.district@yavapaiaz.gov.

Judging Criteria: Winners will be selected, at the Library’s sole discretion, based on the following:

- Relevance to the chosen prompt.
- Quality of writing, relative to the author’s grade level.
- Appropriateness of content.
- Relevance to the theme
- Originality and creativity
- Clarity and organization
- Historical insight or personal reflection
- Grammar, spelling, and mechanics
- Originality and personal reflection
- Clarity and impact of the writing

We are accepting submissions March 1-March 30, 2026. Winners will be announced by May 15, 2026 as decided by a panel of judges chosen by Library staff members. Essays will be evaluated by a panel of educators, librarians, and community leaders based on:

Submission Instructions: Participants can submit their entries in one of the following ways:

1. Drop-off: Bring your essay to any participating library in Yavapai County during regular operating hours.
2. Mail-in: Send your essay to the following address:
Yavapai County Free Library District
ATTN: Essay Contest
1971 Commerce Center Circle, Suite D
Prescott, AZ 86301
3. Email: Send your digital entry to library.district@yavapaiaz.gov
 - a. Subject line: “USA 250 Essay Contest – Your Name
 - b. PDF or Word document

Prizes

- There will be three winners in each category. Winners will receive:
 - Commemorative America 250 Certificates of achievement
 - Publication opportunities (time capsule, library displays, or online)
 - Recognition at an America 250 community event
- By submitting an essay to the Yavapai County Free Library District (also referred to herein as “YCFLD” or “Library”) as a part of this contest, you acknowledge and agree to the following terms:

1. Ownership and Usage Rights: All submitted essays, regardless of winning status, becomes the sole property of YCFLD. By submitting your essay, you irrevocably release and transfer all rights to YCFLD for any usage deemed appropriate, including but not limited to: inclusion in the USA250 Yavapai County time capsule, digital or physical marketing materials, social media platforms, press releases, and other promotional uses. **2. Attribution Permission:** You grant YCFLD permission to use your name and submitted essay for publicity and promotional purposes without compensation. **3. Originality of Writing:** You represent and warrant that the submitted writing is your child’s original creation, does not infringe upon the rights of any third party, and has not been previously published or entered into another contest. **4. Liability Release:** You release YCFLD from any claims, demands, or liabilities related to the use of the submitted essay. **5. Eligibility:** To participate, all entrants must complete and sign this release form. Participants under the age of 18 must provide a signature from a parent or legal guardian to be eligible. **6. Alterations:** YCFLD reserves the right to modify, adapt, or edit any submitted essay as Library sees fit in its sole discretion, for any use or purpose that Library in its sole discretion may determine is desirable to Library. **7. Selection of Winners:** Selection of winners is in the sole discretion of Library, is final, and is not subject to any reconsideration, review, or appeal. **8. Discretion re: Use of Winning Essay(s):** Library, in its sole discretion, and at any time, may choose to limit the use of winning essay(s), to cease the use of winning essay(s), or to decline to utilize winning essay(s) at all, for purposes of including in the USA250 Yavapai County time capsule, if Library determines in its sole discretion that such action is in the best interests of Library, library patrons, or the community. Library may take such action to limit, cease, or decline to utilize winning essay without notice, and such action does not affect the transfer of Ownership and Usage Rights as set forth in paragraph 1 above.

By signing this form, I confirm that I have read, understood, and agree to all terms outlined above. (If the artist is under 18, a parent or guardian must sign on their behalf).

Signature: _____

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Author Information:

Author’s Full Name: _____

Author’s Age: _____

Phone Number and/or Email Address: _____



YAVAPAI COUNTY FREE LIBRARY DISTRICT

AMERICA 250 ESSAY CONTEST



To commemorate America's Semiquincentennial (250th Anniversary) students are invited to dive into the nation's history and look to the future by writing a short essay guided by one of the prompts.

WIN A \$50 GIFT CARD!

**OPEN TO STUDENTS
ACROSS YAVAPAI COUNTY!**

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FOR QUESTIONS OR TO SUBMIT YOUR ESSAY, EMAIL
LIBRARY.DISTRICT@YAVAPAI.AZ.GOV



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COUNTY
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DISTRICT

