

On July 4th, 1776, the United States declared its independence from Britain, launching an experiment in self-governance that would reshape the

modern world. 250 years later, the country marks that moment with flags, fireworks, and reflection. This year's Fourth of July is a semiquincentennial – an anniversary that arrives only once every 250 years.

In these activities, you'll explore American history, culture, and identity through music, cooking, hands-on crafts, and more. Let's dig in!

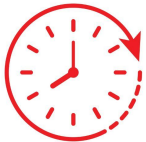


This packet includes...

- “Independence Day” Reading Activity
- “The American Flag” Reading Activity
- “Design an American-Inspired Flag” Activity
- “State Research Spotlight” Activity
- “Firework Craft” Creative Activity
- “Summer Recipes” Cooking Activity
- “Songs of America” Activity
- “Stars, Stripes, and Signs” Activity

Explore More

Take your Fourth of July exploration further with these extensions!



A real time capsule will be sealed on the U.S.'s 250th Independence Day and opened in 2276. If you were curator, what would you include to represent America in 2026, and what would you deliberately leave out? Discuss your reasoning with a family member or friend.



Independence Day is a good moment to reflect on the people whose contributions to our communities often go unacknowledged. Identify someone whose work or presence makes a difference in your community, and find a meaningful way to recognize them.



Research how the Fourth of July has been celebrated across different eras of American history. How has the holiday evolved, and what do those shifts reveal about changing American values and national identity?



How Did Independence Day Begin?



Long before the United States existed, **Native Americans inhabited this land** in hundreds of nations with their own languages, governance structures, and ways of life.



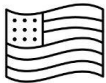
Over time, **people arrived from across the world:** Europe, Africa, Asia, and beyond. Some immigrated by choice in search of new opportunities or freedom. Others were forcibly brought by slave traders as enslaved people, stripped of liberty and choice.



In the 1600s and 1700s, **Great Britain established colonies**, settlements it owned and controlled, along the eastern coast of North America. As British taxation and governance grew more restrictive, **colonial resistance mounted.** Many colonists argued that being governed without representation was fundamentally unjust.



On July 4th, 1776, colonial leaders published the Declaration of Independence to assert their break from Britain, as well as a set of principles about human rights and self-governance that would influence democracies around the world.



Today, the U.S.A. celebrates that moment every year on Independence Day.

Did You Know...?

The declaration was actually signed on July 2nd and published on July 4th. John Adams reportedly refused to attend Fourth of July celebrations for years because he thought the wrong date was being celebrated: He was holding out for July 2nd.

“Yankee Doodle” was originally a British song meant to mock American colonists. The colonists liked it so much they, adopted it as their own and eventually turned it into a patriotic anthem.

Dig Deeper: With an adult’s permission, use the internet to research these topics.



What is the U.S. semiquincentennial, and how is it being commemorated? Research the events and initiatives planned for 2026. What stories, ideals, and values do they celebrate? What event or initiative would you plan to celebrate, and why?



How have American ideals changed over time? The Declaration of Independence states that “all men are created equal.” What did that mean in 1776, and how has that idea expanded since then? Research how equality has developed since the founding.



How do other nations mark their independence? Choose a country and research its history. When did it become independent, and from which other country? How do citizens commemorate their independence day, and how do those traditions compare to those in the U.S.?



Directions: Read about the American flag below. Then, plan and design your own flag on the following pages!

History of the American Flag

When the United States declared independence in 1776, its flag looked very different from the one we see today. The original design had just 13 stars and 13 stripes, which stood for each of the 13 original colonies.



The origin of the flag’s design remains unknown, but many historians believe a seamstress from Philadelphia named Betsy Ross helped to sew the very first one. On June 14, 1777, Congress made the flag official, and we now celebrate that day as Flag Day.

As the nation expanded, stars were added to the flag to represent each new state. The 50th and final star was added in 1960 when Hawaii officially became a state. The 13 stripes are still there to honor the original 13 colonies.

Blue stands for vigilance, perseverance, and justice.



Red stands for valor and bravery.
White stands for purity and innocence.

Iconic American Flag Moments



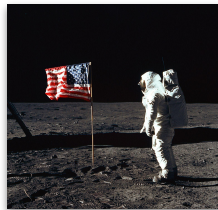
1776

General George Washington and his troops cross the Delaware River during the Revolutionary War.



1945

U.S. Marines raise the flag after a battle during World War II.



1969

Buzz Aldrin stands beside the flag on the surface of the moon.



2001

A flag flies over the rubble following the September 11 terrorist attacks.



2016

Team U.S.A. enters the opening ceremony of the Summer Olympics.

What words or ideas come to mind when you see these iconic moments?



Directions: You’ve just learned about how the American flag represents important values using colors and symbols. Now, it’s your turn to design a flag inspired by American values! Follow the steps below to decide which values, colors, and symbols will be represented in your flag’s design.

Choose the three American values that are most important to you.		
Value 1:	Value 2:	Value 3:
Explain why each value is important to you.		
Choose a color to represent each value on your flag.		

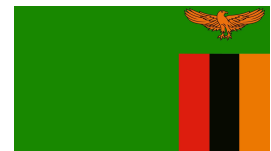
Countries often incorporate meaningful symbols on their flags.



Mexico: The eagle, snake, and cactus come from an Aztec legend.



Canada: The maple leaf is a symbol tied to the country’s natural landscape.



Zambia: The African Fish Eagle represents the nation’s pride and hope following its independence.

What is one symbol you will add to your flag? What will it represent?



Directions: Design your own flag below! Use all three colors and the symbol(s) you chose.
Feel free to add patterns, shapes, or other creative details.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for students to draw their own American-inspired flag design.



Directions: You are about to become a magazine writer! In this project, you will research one of the 50 United States and use what you learn to create your very own state magazine cover.



Here is how to complete this project:

1. Choose any state in the United States that interests you. It does not have to be the state where you live.
2. Ask a trusted adult to help you search online or visit your local library to find accurate and reliable information.
3. Use your research to answer the questions on this page and the next. Once you have completed your research pages, use what you learned to design your very own state magazine cover on the last page of this activity!

The state I chose to research: _____

History

When did this state join the Union? What number state was it? _____

What is one important historical event that took place in this state, and how did it shape who they are today? _____

Geography

How does this state's geography influence the way people live and work there? _____

What are some major physical features of this state, such as rivers, mountains, or lakes? _____



Symbols



What is the state bird? _____ What is the state flower? _____

What is the state nickname? _____

Choose one symbol above and explain what it reveals about the values or history of the state. _____

Economy

What is the most important crop or product this state produces? _____

How has this state's economy changed or grown over time? _____

How does this state's geography influence its economy? _____

Culture

What traditions or celebrations is this state known for? _____

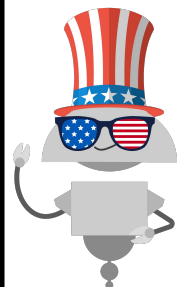
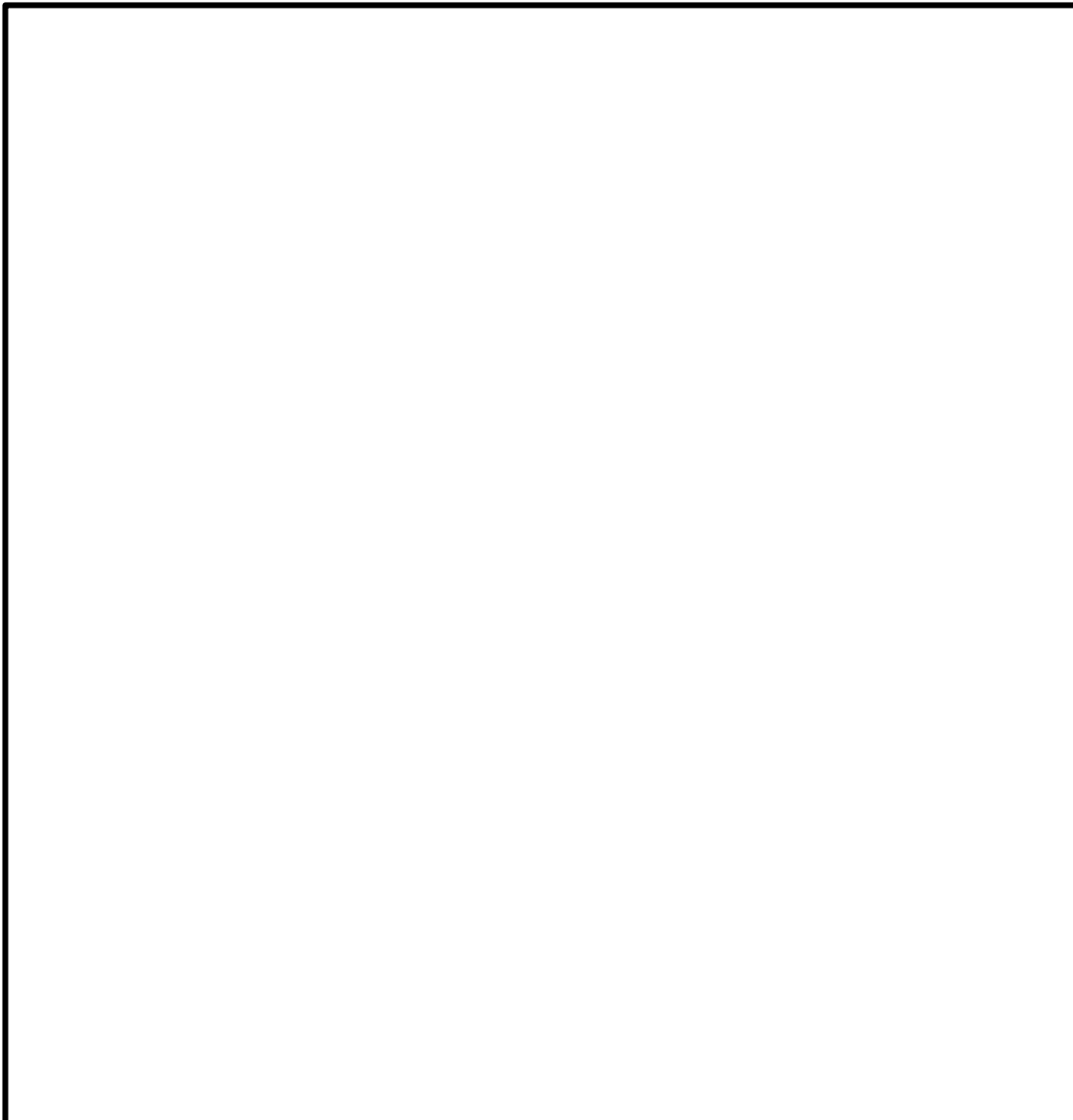
Name one famous person from this state and explain why they are important to history or society. _____

What makes this state unique compared to other states in the country? _____



Directions: Now it is time to get creative. Use everything you learned about your state to design a magazine cover that truly represents it. Use the space below or grab a blank sheet of paper if you need more room!

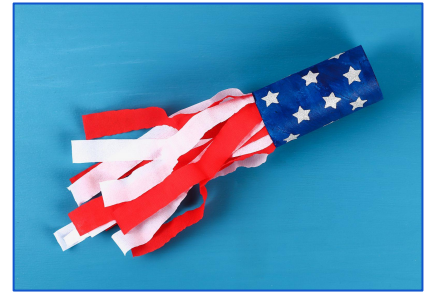
1. Write the state's name as the magazine headline at the top of the cover.
2. Illustrate the cover with your own unique interpretation of what makes the state stand out. Think about landmarks, notable people, culture, or anything that tells the state's story in a way only you can!
3. Add a cover line. A cover line is a short catchy phrase that would make someone want to read more.
4. This is your chance to show what you know and express your creativity. Make it bold, make it beautiful, and make it yours!





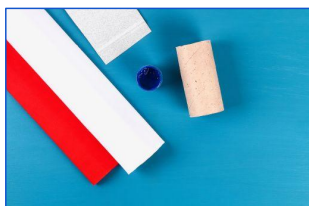
What You Will Need:

- Toilet paper roll
- Paint and paintbrush
- Tissue paper in various colors, such as red, white, and blue
- Scissors
- Glue
- Decorations such as stickers, glitter, sequins, gems, or buttons
- Markers or crayons



Directions:

1. Paint the outside of your toilet paper roll any color you'd like and let it dry completely.
2. While you wait, cut your tissue paper into long strips. Try to cut an equal number of strips in each color!
3. Once your roll is dry, decorate the outside of the roll however you'd like! You can draw on it, add stickers, glitter, sequins, buttons, or anything that makes it sparkle and shine.
4. Place glue around the inside edge of your toilet paper roll.
5. Press your tissue paper strips into the glue one at a time, working your way around the inside of the roll. Add more glue as you go if you need it!
6. Your firework is complete! Display it proudly and celebrate America's 250th birthday in style!





This summer, why not whip up some cool treats to share with family and friends? These recipes are delicious, simple, and easy to scale for bigger or smaller batches. **Remember to check with an adult before you start cooking.**



Caprese Skewers

This handheld take on a classic Italian salad makes for a refreshing side dish that's easy to share.

Ingredients

- 1 pint of cherry tomatoes
- 12 mozzarella balls (look for the size called "ciliegine")
- 1 bunch of fresh basil leaves
- Olive oil
- Salt (optional)
- Balsamic vinegar (optional)
- 12 skewers

Directions:

1. Wash the cherry tomatoes and basil and drain the mozzarella balls.
2. Thread the ingredients onto each skewer, placing basil leaves between the tomatoes and the mozzarella. Fold the basil leaves in half if they are large.
3. You can put as many ingredients onto each skewer as you'd like. One tomato, one basil leaf, and one cheese ball will make a small, tasty snack.
4. Place the skewers on a plate or bowl and drizzle about a tablespoon of olive oil over them.
5. Sprinkle them with salt or a dash of balsamic vinegar if you'd like. Then eat and enjoy!



Frozen Yogurt Bark

This sweet treat has some red, white, and blue patriotic flair.

Ingredients

- 2 cups of vanilla Greek yogurt
- ½ cup of sliced strawberries
- ⅓ cup of blueberries
- ⅓ cup of raspberries
- ¼ cup of granola
- Baking sheet
- Parchment or wax paper

Directions:

1. Take a rimmed baking sheet and line it with parchment paper or wax paper. The paper should stick out an inch or two over the sides.
2. Spread the yogurt in a thin, even layer in the baking sheet. Aim to create a ¼-inch-thick layer.
3. Sprinkle the fruit and granola evenly over the top. For extra fun, try making an American flag design by using the berries to create stars and stripes.
4. Place the baking sheet into the freezer for about three hours, or until it's frozen solid.
5. Lift the parchment paper out of the pan. Cut the frozen yogurt bark into pieces and enjoy!

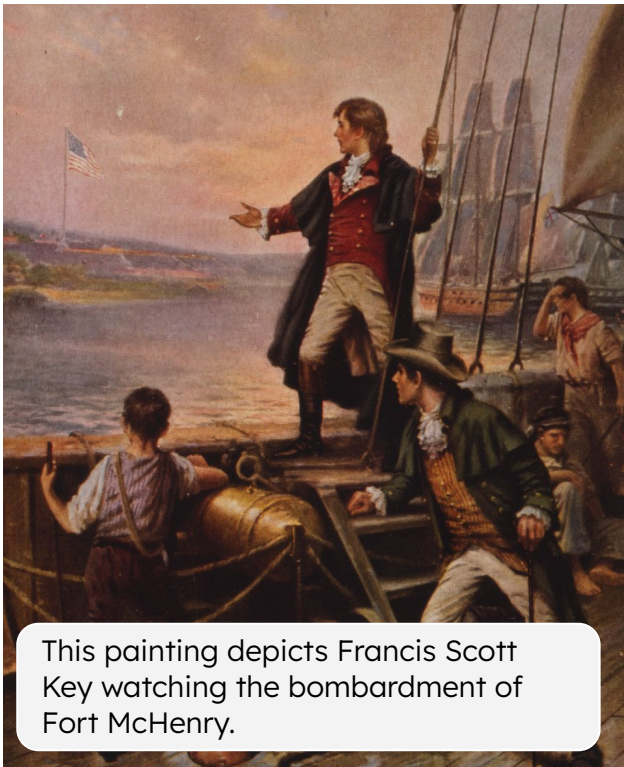


Americans have long used songs to celebrate their country and its history. Read the fun facts below, then scan the QR code to listen to the first verse of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” performed by the United States Army Field Band, while you follow along with the lyrics!



Fun Facts About “The Star-Spangled Banner”

- ★ Francis Scott Key didn’t write “The Star-Spangled Banner” at a desk. He scribbled the first verse on the back of a letter while watching the British bomb Fort McHenry from a ship during the War of 1812. He finished it the next morning when he saw the American flag still flying.
- ★ “The Star-Spangled Banner” wasn’t officially adopted as the national anthem until 1931, over 100 years after it was written. Before that, “Hail, Columbia” and “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” were used at official events.
- ★ During the 1918 World Series, a Navy band spontaneously played “The Star-Spangled Banner” during the seventh inning stretch. A player on furlough from the Navy snapped to attention and saluted, the crowd erupted, and the anthem was played before every remaining game. The tradition has stuck ever since!



This painting depicts Francis Scott Key watching the bombardment of Fort McHenry.

“By Dawn’s Early Light” (1912) from Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:By_Dawn%27s_Early_Light_1912.png

“The Star-Spangled Banner,” Verse 1

O say can you see, by the dawn’s early light,

What so proudly we hailed at the twilight’s last gleaming?

Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,

O’er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?

And the rockets’ red glare, the bombs bursting in air,

Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.

O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave

O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave?



Now that you've listened to the song and read the lyrics, answer the questions below!

1. Key wrote this verse while watching a real battle unfold, not knowing whether America would survive the night. How does that context change the way you read lines like “the rockets’ red glare” or “gave proof through the night that our flag was still there”?
2. The verse ends with a question rather than a statement. Why do you think Key made that choice? What does it tell you about how he was feeling in that moment?

Key ended his verse with a question: Does the star-spangled banner still wave over the land of the free and the home of the brave? How do Americans today celebrate their freedom and show bravery in their everyday lives? Answer his question by completing the verse below!

O say can you see, in America today,

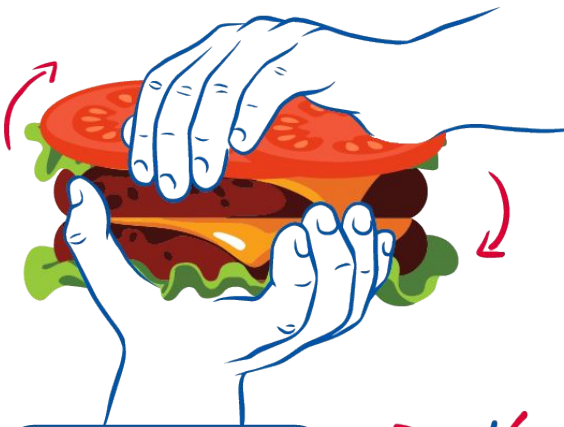
(What do you see?)

(How do Americans show bravery?)

(How do they celebrate freedom?)

And the star-spangled banner still waves with dignity,

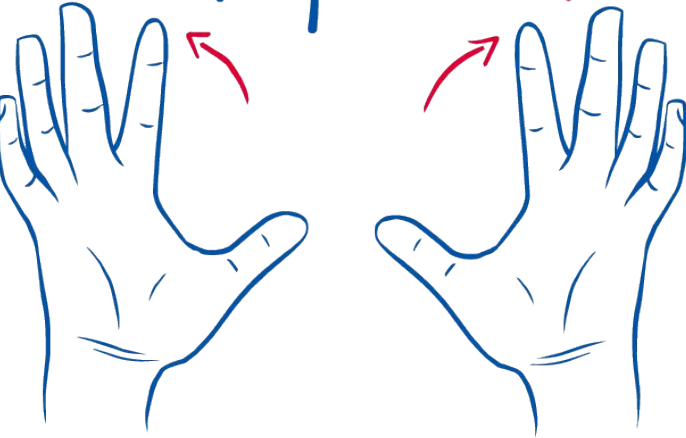
O'er the land of the brave and the home of the free!



Hamburger



Flag



Fireworks



Baseball



Family