

# TEACHING *America 250* AWARDS

## *Sample Project Proposals*

### **Project #1: Field Trip**

*Mock example from the perspective of a 10<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. history teacher in Boston.*

#### **Project Description (500-750 words):**

When you hear Boston, revolution comes to mind. The Boston Tea Party. The Intolerable Acts. Paul Revere's and William Dawes' midnight rides. Sure, the Declaration of Independence officially declared the original thirteen colonies independent of Great Britain, but Boston was at the forefront of colonial resistance. The project I propose would allow my U.S. History classes (AP and On-Level) to explore how Boston, and more importantly the PEOPLE of Boston, reflected the values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness early in the movement towards American Independence.

This project takes part in two phases. Phase one will be an interactive, private tour along the 2.5-mile Freedom Trail, led by a costumed guide. At the start of the school year, I will let students know that on a Monday or Friday of early October, a field trip along the Trail be planned. A day will then be chosen, and the private tour(s) will be scheduled, not exceeding 25 students per tour. Along the tour, the guide(s) will spend time discussing the legacy of Boston as it relates to the Revolution, as well as the individuals who helped define that legacy. This discussion of individuals will be the catalyst for my students, who will pick an individual mentioned along the tour to conduct a research presentation on. The ideal route for the tour starts at the Bunker Hill Monument and ends at the Boston Common, where a picnic lunch will be held for the students. If students are absent on the day of the walk, there will be a make-up assignment incorporating The Freedom Trail Foundation's virtual resources.

Phase two takes place in the classroom, where students will have time to work on and then present their research projects on the individuals who stood out to them during the tour. Students will be given the option to work alone or partner up, with a max group size of three students. This project will last the week following the field trip, and students will be given two days to research and three days to present. Their presentations, while centered on individuals, must answer these key questions:

1. Who is this individual and how did they contribute to the revolutionary effort?
2. How is this individual remembered today? How does their story reflect a fight to secure the principles stated in the Declaration?
3. Why did you pick this individual? What about their story appealed to you?

Through these questions, my goal is for students to realize that while Boston as a city was the catalyst of the American Revolution, it was the people of Boston who drove the city into action. Without the ideals and desires for freedom and representation held by their fellow Bostonians like Paul Revere, Abigail Adams, and Crispus Attucks, the American Experiment might not have started. I want my students to feel, at this important milestone in American history, that they are not far removed from the individuals who founded this nation. While the years have passed, Boston and the people within the city have held true to the principles of resilience, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness that serve as the cornerstone of this nation.

A majority of the program budget will go to paying for the tours and lunch. Any remaining funds will be used for potential prizes (pocket constitutions) or snacks during the week of the presentation.

### **Project Goals:**

Students who participate in this project will:

1. Explore Boston's history as a revolutionary city
2. Learn about and discover the individuals who sparked revolution in Boston
3. Connect to their past as Bostonians and explore how the city has continued to serve as a place of revolution and liberty

### **Project Timeline:**

Program Announcement: August 2026

Field Trip Planning: September 2026 to first or second week of October 2026

Field Trip: Friday or Monday in October 2026

In-Class Presentations: Week following field trip

Program End: Final day of presentation week

### **Project Budget:**

Project Total = \$5,000

*ASSUMING 100 STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO ATTEND THE TOUR*

EXPENSE	PURPOSE	COST PER ITEM	TOTAL COST
Private Tour	Pay for tour along Freedom Trail	\$250 per Tour	\$1,000

Water Bottles	Water for walking tour	\$5 per 24 pack of water bottles (2 per student)	\$50
Lunch	Meals on Field Trip	\$20 per Lunch	\$2,000
Bus Fee	Transportation	\$250 per Bus	\$500
Driver Fee	Transportation	\$250 per Driver	\$500
Director Honoraria	Director Compensation	\$425 per Director	\$950

## **Project #2: Field Trip**

*Mock example from the perspective of an 8<sup>th</sup> grade history teacher from North Texas.*

### **Project Description (500-750 words):**

The plan I propose would be a 5-day long unit for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. history classes at my middle school (200 students) focusing on the Executive Branch, specifically how the powers and checks on the President emerged from the list of grievances against King George III present within the Declaration. Throughout the week, myself and the other 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies teacher will focus on the foundations behind the presidency, as well as the fears that the Founders had about a strong executive branch. The “main event” will be a trip to the George W. Bush Presidential Library in Dallas, Texas, where students would be assigned a scavenger hunt to see where the checks and balances established during the Founding applied to the Bush presidency.

Wednesday and Thursday of the selected week will be used as a lecture reviewing the context of the Declaration, as well as exploring how the grievances listed against the king appear in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Over these two days, particular grievances, specifically those regarding consent of the people and the legislature, will be highlighted and tied into how the Constitution structures the national government. Thursday will conclude with a discussion of strong presidential power as seen with Dwight D. Eisenhower (i.e. Deployment of the Arkansas National Guard to protect the Little Rock 9) and Franklin D. Roosevelt (i.e. Executive Order 9066) and whether their actions are justified within the Constitution. These two days will be used as the foundation on which the students’ analysis of the powers of the executive branch will be formed.

Friday of that week will be the field trip day to the Bush Library. During the field trip, students will be tasked with conducting a scavenger hunt to find mentions of executive checks and balances throughout the exhibits highlighting the Bush Presidency. At lunchtime, it would be great to see if JMC Scholar Dr. Shilo Brooks, who is the CEO of the Bush Presidential Center, could talk to the students about the presidency and the separation of powers. Notes taken during the field trip, both through the scavenger hunt and the discussion with Dr. Brooks, will be used to support the discussions hosted in each class the following week. This field trip would utilize a majority of the budget, paying for transportation, chaperones, lunch, and Project Director(s) time.

Monday and Tuesday of the following week will culminate in a class deliberation of the Executive Branch. The class will spend a day and a half discussing whether the executive branch has become too centralized, like King George, or has remained within the intentions of the Founders, using the examples of checks and balances found within the Bush Library to form the arguments of each side. To avoid potential partisan spirals, the debate will not solely focus on the actions of Bush, but also the debates around Eisenhower and FDR during their presidencies and

how, if any, their actions have been checked. The debate will end with treats provided through the remaining budget.

Overall, this project seeks to get students to engage with the root grievances within the Declaration of Independence and how those grievances impacted the creation of the presidency. The majority of their grade will come from active participation, including engaged listening and productive questions, throughout the week. The weeklong program will conclude with a post-deliberation essay gauging student understanding of the checks and balances system and the powers of the Executive.

### **Project Goals:**

Students who participate in this project will:

1. Know the root causes of why the United States declared Independence from Britain
2. Understand the system of checks and balances built into the Constitution
3. Explore how presidents have had to circumvent the checks and balances in times of crisis

### **Project Timeline:**

Program Start: October 7, 2026

Field Trip Date: October 9, 2026

Program End: October 13, 2026

### **Project Budget:**

Project Total = \$5,000

<b>EXPENSE</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>COST PER ITEM</b>	<b>TOTAL COST</b>
Lunch	Meal on Field Trip	\$10 per Student	\$2,100
Bus Fee	Transportation	\$166 per Bus	\$500
Driver Fee	Transportation	\$300 per Driver	\$900
Chaperone Payment	Chaperones	\$100 per Chaperone	\$700
Director Honoraria	Director Compensation	\$300 per Director	\$600
Treats (Post-Unit)	Surprise Snacks for class	\$200 flat cost	\$200

### **Project #3: School Assembly**

*Mock example from the perspective of a high school U.S. government and history teacher in Salt Lake City. Local professors are a great choice of speakers to invite for school assembly events, but we also recommend considering other local officials and leaders, such as your mayor, a member of your city council or school board, or a leader from a local VA branch.*

#### **Project Description (500-750 words):**

To celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and its enduring influence, I propose hosting a school-wide speaker event during one of our Wednesday free periods in April. The event would focus on the Declaration, its origins, drafting, and implementation, as well as its enduring influence on politics, both locally and globally. The event would run for the whole 90-minute period, and I will include discussions in my own classes following the event.

I propose inviting Professors Robert J. Burton and Verlan Lewis from Utah Valley University, two leading regional scholars with expertise in the Declaration of Independence and American political institutions, to serve on the event's panel. I will moderate the 90-minute panel. Students will receive a pocket-sized copy of the Declaration upon entering the auditorium for the event.

The panel will begin with me reading the Declaration of Independence after introducing the two scholars. I will raise the question, "what is this document and how did we get it?" A microphone will be brought around for students to share their thoughts. After a few students have shared, I'll turn to Dr. Burton to respond and talk about the political and historical background of the document. I'll then direct students to the Declaration's second paragraph and ask about any principles stated, what they might mean, and what impact they might have had on America. Time will be allowed for students to answer before I turn to Dr. Lewis to clarify the meaning of the principles and to talk about the Declaration's influence on America's Constitution, institutions, and history, highlighting its role for figures like Abraham Lincoln, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Martin Luther King, Jr. I'll then turn to the global lens of the Declaration, inviting Dr. Burton to talk about its influences, ranging from Cicero to John Locke. Then, Dr. Lewis will be asked to discuss its global impact on independence movements in nations like Argentina and Vietnam.

To conclude the panel, I will ask the whole assembly to consider and answer the questions: 1) What do the Declaration's principles mean for us as a school, community, country, and world in 2026? 2) Should we celebrate and continue to cherish these principles 250 years after their writing? If so, how? 3) What does living up to these principles look like for us? Does it require any virtues? Sacrifices? Remember that the Declaration ends with a "pledge to each other [of] our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor." I will encourage Drs. Burton and Lewis to share their thoughts on these questions as well. If time permits, I will read a few questions for the scholars to answer submitted by my students from the prior day's classes.

On the day following the event, I will continue the conversation in my U.S. Government and History classes. I will ask students to reflect on the panel and highlight one thing that they

learned for the first time, one thing they gained more information and clarity on, and one question they still have. I will encourage them to ask their questions to the class and we will discuss them as a group. To conclude the activity, I will assign a short essay asking: “Have we as a country lived up to the principles in the Declaration? Use the texts and content we have covered throughout the year to answer the question.”

### **Project Goals:**

Students who participate in this project will:

1. Receive an in-depth, scholarly overview of the Declaration of Independence’s historical and philosophical roots, key principles, and influence on both American and foreign freedom, equality, and independence movements.
2. Grapple with and discuss questions relating to why these principles still matter, how to acknowledge and celebrate them, and how to live up to them as individuals, a school, community, country, and world.
3. Receive a pocket-size copy of the Declaration to be able to quickly reference and to serve as a reminder of the enduring legacy of the document.

### **Project Timeline:**

Receive final admin approval, settle on a date, invite speakers: February 2026

Share details with students and teachers, order pocket Declarations: March 2026

Execute event: April 2026

### **Project Budget:**

Project Total = \$5000

<b>EXPENSE</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>COST PER ITEM</b>	<b>TOTAL COST</b>
Speaker Honoraria	Pay visiting professors	\$1,000 per Professor	\$2,000
Pocket Declarations	Handouts for students	\$5 per Booklet	\$1,500
Director Honorarium	Director's compensation	\$500 flat cost	\$500
Snacks	Snacks during panel	\$1,000 flat cost	\$1,000

#### **Project #4: Community Art Exhibit**

*Mock example of a district-wide program to create an art show in Central Missouri. The effort is led through a collaboration with art teachers and social studies chairs across the district.*

#### **Project Description (500-750 words):**

Thomas Jefferson romanticized the West and upon the purchase of the Louisiana Territory in 1802, that idealized dream became a potential reality. He envisioned American expansion westward as the creation of “an empire of liberty,” with settlers carrying forth the defining features of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness included in the Declaration of Independence written 250 years ago. Despite these ideas however, westward expansion resulted in questions of freedom and equal representation under the law. Slavery and its movement west plagued the United States until the Civil War exploded in the 1860s. While the Civil War ended in 1865, conflicts still raged throughout the West, as Native Americans fought for ancestral lands and for representation under the law.

At the center of all these narratives sits Missouri, the “Gateway to the West.” Missouri represented the transition between established America and the uncharted, untamed wilderness west of the Mississippi. From Missouri, individuals and families ventured out into the unknown in an attempt to make a name for themselves and live out a life of freedom and liberty away from the demands of an ever-industrializing East. Enslaved individuals who were moved through free states before being moved into neighboring Missouri, like Dred Scott, started their legal fights for emancipation in Missouri’s courts on the grounds that they were free individuals under the law of those free states. Indigenous tribes, forced out by the rush of American settlers, were directly impacted by the offering of prosperity and land those traveling through Missouri took to heart.

As the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration approaches, it is vital that students in Missouri take time to explore how their state’s unique geographic and political position as a “Gateway to the West” offered many the chance to seek a new life and new liberties all in the pursuit of happiness. My proposal is for a district-wide Fine Arts Exhibit where students can design art pieces based on the question: “How does Missouri reflect the ideals of America?”

Under this prompt, students will have the option to create paintings, sculptures, movies, poems, and other forms of art showcasing Missouri’s historical link to the ideals of freedom, liberty, and opportunity. Along with each project, a bio will be submitted answering the question above. Students, upon completion of their project, will hand their project over to a campus representative (a designated teacher at each campus involved in the project) who will hold on to the work. Once all the art is collected, each representative will select a piece from each grade level at their school to be showcased at the art show.

The art show would take place in early December of the 2026-27 school year, with the program being announced at the start of the school year in Social Studies, English, and Art classes. Within



these classes, a theme or facet of the Declaration's signing can be analyzed, allowing for a multidisciplinary effort. All grades can submit artwork, and a winner from each grade at each school will be selected to showcase their art in an art show open to the public. Students who have projects present at the show will have the option to discuss their art to passersby or rely on their previously submitted bio to convey the meaning behind their piece.

The event will ideally be held at the State Historical Society of Missouri (SHSMO) in Columbia. Food and beverages will be provided for those that attend in an effort to generate discussion and community around the art and the meaning behind each piece.

This art show is not just a way for students to engage with Missouri's history but also to convey the way they perceive the state and the values of this nation to their community. This art show provides an opportunity to students and community members to discuss how Missouri's history is a vital part of the continuation of the ideals set forth in the Declaration 250 years ago.

### **Project Goals:**

1. Allow students to creatively express America's founding values as they relate to Missouri's history
2. Prompt discussion and thought about how Missouri fits within the American experiment
3. Create stronger bonds between the district and community by providing an event to the public about America 250

### **Project Timeline:**

Program Announcement: August 19, 2026

Art Submission Deadline: November 6, 2026

Project Conclusion/Community Art Show: December 11, 2026

### **Project Budget:**

Project Total = \$5,000

EXPENSE	PURPOSE	COST PER ITEM	TOTAL COST
SHSMO Rental	Event Space	\$1,000 flat cost	\$1,000
Food/Beverage	Provide refreshments during art show	\$2,000 flat cost	\$2,000

Marketing	Advertise art show at campuses across district	\$500 flat cost	\$500
Art/Media Supplies	Provide students with additional supplies to create projects	\$1,500 flat cost	\$1,500