

America 250

This year the United States of America will celebrate the 250th Anniversary of its founding and the signing and adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. To mark this Semiquincentennial national event, the Town of North Hempstead, Department of Community Services, has chosen the America 250 theme for its Spring Festival School Project. The Town has chosen a reading that will focus on understanding our uniqueness; the civic engagement and volunteerism that made America special and our individual and collective dedication to creating a better future for our country and our world.

Recommended Book:

What Does It Mean to be American? – by Rana DiOrio & Elad Yoran, illustration by Nina Mata.

This children's book introduces an important topic to younger children bringing to light the essence of what it means to be American. The book provides an opportunity to start meaningful conversations with students K – 12 about many aspects of our identity, with thoughtful questions to share.

The reading walks us through the idea of American identity and the seminal concept of our many freedoms (of speech, to worship), our liberties (the rights under the law), our beliefs (in equality) and the pursuit of happiness (to dream, work and succeed). It opens a pathway to the discussion of the guaranteed freedoms under the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights – the first ten Amendments that establish the framework of our country's government.

The goal of these lessons is to foster pride in America, value the ideals and the bountiful natural resources of our country and to raise awareness of our history through the contributions of many. We hope that our school project will inspire our students to continue to build a united community from a beautiful mosaic of *"We the People"*.

IMAGE Heartland

Farmland

The Town of North Hempstead's Department of Community Services is proud to present **America 250, "Civic Engagement and the Volunteer Spirit"**, in celebration of the 250th Birthday of our nation.

The craft will be a 4.18" wooden star and the discussion will center around this iconic symbol of our nation's flag. The flag's 13 red and white stripes represent the original colonies. Its 50 white stars on a blue field, represent the 50 states of the Union (also as a symbol of excellence); the colors, red (valor and bravery), white (purity – a new nation) and blue (vigilance, perseverance and justice).

A fuller color palette should also be encouraged, (i.e., "*America the Beautiful*" - blue skies, green trees, purple mountains, yellow wheat fields, etc.)



TONH Community Services will deliver **wooden stars** for your class to decorate. Once the **stars** are returned to us, the Town will create a **MOSAIC OF**

STARS to be displayed at our annual Spring Festival on Saturday, May 2nd, at Clark Botanic Garden (flyer to follow). For the CONTEST, several **stars** will be chosen to be specifically displayed and recognized at the event.

Directions:

1. Please review the attached lesson plans for our America 250 Day initiative.
2. To participate in the Town's craft project, please register for the craft at **TONHAMERICA250** or by scanning the QR code #####.
3. Please have st contact the Department of Community Services at **MALITOM@NORTHHEMPSTEADNY.GOV** and **GRAZIOSID@NORTHHEMPSTEADNY.GOV** or at 516 869-2431.

Thank you for participating in the Town of North Hempstead

AMERICA 250 CELEBRATION

Request for Crafts Deadline: Friday April 19th, 2026

Teachers will be contacted directly for craft drop-off arrangements



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Additional reading materials and a “word source” are provided for your lesson plan and convenience: AMERICA 250

1776	FOREFATHERS	SACRIFICE
ANTHEM	FREEDOM	SAFE
BANNER	GRATEFUL	SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL
BEAUTIFUL	HELPING	SETTLERS
BELL	HOPES	SOCIETY
BELIEFS	IMMIGRATION	STARS
BILL OF RIGHTS	INDEPENDENCE	STATES
BIRTHDAY	LIBERTY	STATUE OF LIBERTY
BRAVE	LOVE	STRIPES
BUILD	MONUMENTS	SYMBOLS
BOUNTY	MOSAIC	THANKSGIVING
CELEBRATION	NATION	UNITY
CIVIC	NATURE	VISION
CONSTITUTION	PATRIOTIC	VOLUNTEER
COUNTRY	PEACE	VOTING
COURAGE	PRESIDENT	WAR
DEMOCRACY	PROTECT	WE THE PEOPLE
DREAM	RED, WHITE, BLUE	WISE
EAGLE	RESOURCES	WORK
EDUCATION	RESPONSIBILITIES	WORSHIP
ELECTIONS	REVOLUTION	
FLAG	RIGHTS	

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The following excerpts (abridged) provide the basis for the lesson plans and craft activities.

- **Being American means believing that all people are equal, and should have the opportunity to be happy.**

The ideal of equality is the foundational American value as first articulated in the Declaration of Independence.

- **Being American means following our dreams, and working hard to achieve them.**

Throughout history, Americans have come from humble beginnings to lead extraordinary lives. Give some examples of individuals in history or in your own life who have done extraordinary things.

- **Being American means having the freedom to choose whom we love, what we believe, what we do, and where we live, and to change our minds if we want.**

What are some of the freedoms articulated in the Bill of Rights – (the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution)?

- **Being American means knowing all Americans follow the same rules.**

We are a country of laws. Our states, cities and villages may sometimes have different local laws or ordinances but our federal laws are outlined by the U.S. Constitution. The preamble to the Constitution encapsulates the vision of our forefathers:

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America”.

What are some of rules you must follow at home? At school? In your community?

- **Being American means honoring those who protect and serve us.**

Honoring the bravery and solemnity of our fallen soldiers was captured in President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address at the end of the Civil War in 1863. National holidays such as Memorial Day and Veterans Day remind us of the sacrifice made by Americans from the days of the American Revolution to present day.

What does "Freedom is not Free" mean? Who in your community is sworn to protect and serve to keep residents safe?

- **Being American means cherishing our abundant natural resources, and enjoying time spent outdoors.**

"America the Beautiful"

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From Sea to shining Sea!

Consider the activities of past Earth Day celebrations. How do you plan to maintain, preserve and dedicate yourself to the good health of your environment? Your home? Your community? Your planet? **America 250?**

- **Being American means being grateful all year for our many blessings.**

Thanksgiving is a national holiday established in 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln. During this period many people commit to a day of service by volunteering their time to an important and meaningful cause.

During a year of celebration for the Birth of America what gifts of service do you wish to give to demonstrate your gratitude?

- **Being American means leading by example to take action when people need help.**

What are some of the ways that you can help others? Historic examples, i.e. Clara Barton, The Red Cross. What is civic engagement? In present day, who are “first responders”?

- **Being American means welcoming people from other countries and helping them learn what it means to be American...and appreciating that our differences make us kinder, smarter, healthier, and stronger.**

The Statue of Liberty has been a welcoming symbol to millions of immigrants worldwide for over 100 years. This monument sits majestically in New York Harbor. Over 700,000 people become naturalized as citizens of the United States each year. The American ideal is embodied in the Emma Lazarus poem, “The New Colossus”.

IMAGE STATUE OF LIBERTY

“The New Colossus”

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”*

- **Being American means using our imagination and creativity to invent new things and our curiosity and courage to explore new frontiers...and being proud of all we have accomplished and humble about all we still need to learn.**

What is the pioneer spirit in American history? Name some Americans through whose Innovation, creativity, imagination, invention, exploring physical space and the regions of science and medicine, the arts, writing they rose in prominence and changed the world. Trace origins of technology, advances, possible improvements to design and function.

- **Being American means having the right to become your best self and the obligation to help others do so too.**

Name some responsibilities or obligations you have to contribute to our society to make the lives of others better.

Lesson Plan #1

Grade Level: Elementary School (grades K-2)

Curriculum Connections: Social Studies, Science, Reading

Class Time: 45 minutes to an hour

What Does It Mean to Be an American? By Rana Di Orio, Elad Yoran,
Illustration by Nina Mata

Introduction: The lessons use these readings to introduce students to concepts related to the founding of the United States of America, the natural bounty of America and, the freedoms and responsibilities of an American.

Objectives:

- After completing this lesson, students will be able to:
- Form reactions and ask questions in response to the book.
- Establish importance of learning and understanding the founding of America through the introduction of the Declaration of Independence, U. S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.
- Discuss ideals, freedoms and responsibilities.
- Discuss the ways to express gratitude.
- List ways to contribute to preserve and defend the principles established in our living documents.
- List ways to respect and protect the well-being of our planet and natural resources.

Materials Needed:

• **What Does it Mean to be American? By Rana Di Orio, Elad Yoran**
By Rana Di Orio, Elad Yoran, Illustration by Nina Mata

Information:

What is the central message of the book? What is the central message of the book?

American identity is shown to be defined by what unites Americans in a commitment to the ideals upon which our nation was founded. However, the guarantee of freedoms and rights, choice, protections, the opportunity to work, the pursuit of happiness, and the enjoyment of the bounty and beauty of our environment is fragile if not for the constant vigilance and work of the individual. Thus, from our earliest years of the birth of this democracy, civic engagement and volunteerism has and will continue to be essential elements to the preservation of our liberty and the enjoyment of all freedoms. Equally, respect and engagement with the environment and all living creatures will sustain, preserve and protect the natural world for ourselves and future generations.

Activity One: Reading “What Does it mean to be American”, by Rana DiOrio & Elad Yoran, illustration by Nina Mata.

1. Read to your students and share the illustrations and artwork.
2. Review the excerpts, explore the answers, “Being American means...”.
3. Eleven statements explore the significance of the Declaration of Independence, The U. S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. The reading includes the lyrics to “America the Beautiful” and the Emma Lazarus poem, “The New Colossus”, defining our unique “American” identity.

Activity Two: What Did You Learn?

1. Discuss the book with your students. Ask them if there was anything that they did not understand.

2. Ask students what they learned from the book and write it down using a chalkboard, whiteboard, easel pad, etc. Use prompt questions such as:

Craft Activity: Putting it into Words and Pictures:

1. Pass out a “wooden star” to each student.
2. Have students write down or draw a picture of what they would say if their “star” was a personal but uniquely “American” symbol of their ideals, commitment, patriotism. If possible, please do not use water-based markers as these may be displayed outdoors).
3. Have the students share their ideas and their finished crafts with each other.

Conclusion:

By reading and discussing the book, students will learn and examine the importance and learn about:

- a. the defining documents of our nation
- b. the unifying ideals and beliefs of all Americans.
- c. individual and collective responsibility for a great society.
- d. protecting and preserving the laws of both man and nature.

Possible Follow Up Activities:

1. Find ways to contribute as a volunteer through community, school, faith- based organizational engagement.
2. Assist in a Community clean up, plant a Garden, Study Recycling

Lesson Plan # 2

Grade Level: Elementary School (grades 3-5)

Curriculum Connections: Social Studies, Science, Reading

Class Time: 45 minutes to an hour

Introduction: The lessons use these readings to introduce students to concepts related to the founding of the United States of America, the natural bounty of America and the freedoms and responsibilities of an American.

Objectives:

- After completing this lesson, students will be able to:
- Form reactions and ask questions in response to the book.
- Establish importance of learning and understanding the founding of America through the introduction of the Declaration of Independence, U. S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.
- Discuss ideals, freedoms and responsibilities.
- Discuss the ways to express gratitude.
- List ways to contribute to preserve and defend the principles established in our living documents.
- List ways to respect and protect the well-being of our planet and natural resources.



Materials Needed:

What Does it Mean to Be an American? By Rana Di Orio, Elad Yoran,
Illustration by Nina Mata

Information:

What is the central message of the book? What is the central message of the book?

American identity is shown to be defined by what unites Americans in a commitment to the ideals upon which our nation was founded. However, the guarantee of freedoms and rights, choice, protections, the opportunity to work, the pursuit of happiness, and the enjoyment of the bounty and beauty of our environment is fragile if not for the constant vigilance and work of the individual. Thus, from our earliest years of the birth of this democracy, civic engagement and volunteerism has and will continue to be essential elements to the preservation of our liberty and the enjoyment of all freedoms. Equally, respect and engagement with the environment and all living creatures will sustain, preserve and protect the natural world for ourselves and future generations.

Warm Up: Introducing the Book Introduce the book to the students by giving a brief description on what the book is about.

Activity One: Reading

Activity Two: What Did You Learn?

1. Discuss the book with your students. Ask them if there was anything that they did not understand.
2. Ask students what they learned from the book and write it down using a chalkboard, whiteboard, easel pad, etc. Use prompt questions such as:

Craft Activity: Putting it into Words and Pictures:

1. Pass out a “wooden star” to each student.
2. Have students write down or draw a picture of what they would say if their “star” was a personal, but uniquely “American” symbol of their ideals, commitment, patriotism.
3. If possible, please do not use water-based markers as these may be displayed outdoors).
4. Have the students share their ideas and their finished crafts with each other.

Conclusion:

By reading and discussing the book, students will learn and examine the importance and learn about:

- e. the defining documents of our nation
- f. the unifying ideals and beliefs of all Americans.
- g. individual and collective responsibility for a great society.
- h. protecting and preserving the laws of both man and nature.

Possible Follow Up Activities:

1. Find ways to contribute as a volunteer through community, school, faith- based organizational engagement.
2. Assist in a Community clean up, plant a Garden, Study Recycling

Lesson Plan # 3

Grade Level: Secondary (grades 6-12)

Curriculum Connections: Social Studies, Science, Reading

Class Time: 45 minutes to an hour

America 250

What Does it Mean to be American? By Rana Di Orio, Elad Yoran,
Illustration by Nina Mata

Introduction:

The lessons use these readings to introduce students to concepts related to the founding of the United States of America, the natural bounty of America and the freedoms and responsibilities of an American.

Objectives:

- After completing this lesson, students will be able to:
- Form reactions and ask questions in response to the book.
- Establish importance of learning and understanding the founding of America through the introduction of the Declaration of Independence, U. S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.
- Discuss ideals, freedoms and responsibilities.
- Discuss the ways to express gratitude.
- List ways to contribute to preserve and defend the principles established in our living documents.

- List ways to respect and protect the well-being of our planet and natural resources.

Materials Needed:

What Does it Mean to be American? by Rana DiOrio & Elad Yoran,
illustration by Nina Mata.

Information: What is the central message of the book?

American identity is shown to be defined by what unites Americans in a commitment to the ideals upon which our nation was founded. However, the guarantee of freedoms and rights, choice, protections, the opportunity to work, the pursuit of happiness, and the enjoyment of the bounty and beauty of our environment is fragile if not for the constant vigilance and work of the individual. Thus, from our earliest years of the birth of this democracy, civic engagement and volunteerism has and will continue to be essential elements to the preservation of our liberty and the enjoyment of all freedoms. Equally, respect and engagement with the environment and all living creatures will sustain, preserve and protect the natural world for ourselves and future generations.

Warm Up: Introducing the Book

Introduce the book to the students by giving a brief description on what the book is about.

Activity One: Reading

Activity Two: What Did You Learn?

1. Discuss the book with your students. Ask them if there was anything that they did not understand.

Craft Activity: Putting it into Words and Pictures: Pass out a “wooden star” to each student.

1. Have students write down or draw a picture of what they would say if their “star” was a personal, but uniquely “American” symbol of their ideals, commitment, patriotism.
2. If possible, please do not use water-based markers as these may be displayed outdoors).
3. Have the students share their ideas and their finished crafts with each other.

Conclusion:

By reading and discussing the book, students will learn and examine the importance and learn about:

- a. the defining documents of our nation
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- c. individual and collective responsibility for a great society.
- d. protecting and preserving the laws of both man and nature.

Possible Follow Up Activities:

- Host a Mock-Trial or Mock-Town Board Meeting
- Consider recommending, amending, strengthening local laws with which you agree/disagree.
- Do a research project on Environmental Science
- Write a speech advocating for or against environmental regulations.



