



CLOVIS
VETERANS
MEMORIAL DISTRICT

2026 Veterans Day Essay Contest Teacher's Guide- MIDDLE/INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

2026: “Happy Birthday America”

The mission of the Clovis Veterans Memorial District (CVMD) is to provide a permanent living memorial honoring U.S. Military and Veterans; provide facilities and support programs to promote a legacy of service for preserving our community's and country's foundational ideals. Veterans Day is an opportunity to honor and give thanks to those who have served or are serving in the military, those who preserve the American way of life.

The resources included in this Teacher's Guide can be used to talk to your class about the history of Veterans Day and introduce them to this year's theme: “Happy Birthday America.”

History of Veterans Day:

Veterans Day is held on November 11th, which began as a celebration of peace after World War I ended. It was originally called Armistice Day, to celebrate the truce signed between America and Germany during World War I. In 1954 the name was changed to Veterans Day, to honor all veterans.

Resources for teaching your students about Veterans Day:

[Veterans Day and the Meaning of Sacrifice](#)

[History of Veterans Day](#) (Video)

[The History of Veterans Day](#)

Why is America celebrating its 250th birthday?

On July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence announced the birth of the United States of America. In 2026, our nation marks 250 years since that historic moment. The theme “Happy Birthday America” invites students to reflect on the people, events, ideals, and sacrifices that have shaped our country across two and a half centuries. Veterans are an important part of that story. For generations, U.S. service members have defended the nation and the freedoms Americans celebrate. As we recognize America's 250th anniversary, we also honor the veterans whose service has helped preserve those freedoms for future generations.

What is the history of the Clovis Veterans Memorial District?

The Clovis Veterans Memorial District was created in 1946, just after World War II, when the people of Clovis wanted a special place to honor those who had served and sacrificed for our country. Over the years, the District has grown into a center for the community, providing space for veterans' organizations, civic groups, schools, and families to gather. Its mission is centered

on honoring veterans, educating the community, and inspiring future generations. In 2026, the District celebrates 80 years of keeping that promise by hosting events like Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies, supporting local veterans, and sharing history through exhibits and programs at the Community Heritage Center.

Starting a conversation...

Introduce Veterans Day to your students and discuss why we celebrate our veterans. Review the meaning of America's 250th anniversary, this year's theme "Happy Birthday America," and the history of the Clovis Veterans Memorial District. Encourage students to consider how military service and sacrifice are connected to the freedoms and ideals our nation has carried forward for 250 years.

Discuss with the students.

- What does "Happy Birthday America" mean to you and your generation?
- What people, events, symbols, or ideals would you highlight when celebrating 250 years of America?
- How have veterans and military service members helped protect the freedoms Americans celebrate?
- What can we learn from the service and sacrifice of veterans as America looks toward its next 250 years?
- How can students help carry forward the ideals of service, citizenship, and community for future generations?

Resources

[National Constitution Center](#)

[Library of Congress Veterans History Project](#)

[This is What Democracy Looks Like](#)

"Happy Birthday America" Prompt:

In 2026, the United States celebrates its 250th anniversary, marking 250 years since the Declaration of Independence. Across those two and a half centuries, generations of Americans have served, sacrificed, built communities, and worked to preserve the freedoms and ideals of our nation. Veterans are an essential part of that history. This year's theme, "Happy Birthday America," asks us to celebrate our country's past while reflecting on the service that has protected its freedoms and considering the responsibility each generation has in shaping America's future.

Write a 2-4 page essay around the theme “Happy Birthday America.” Consider what America’s 250th anniversary means to you, how veterans have contributed to our nation’s story, and what lessons from the past can guide the next generation.

How to Enter:

Submit your essay with Entry Form to the Clovis Veterans Memorial District, 808 Fourth Street, Clovis, CA 93612. If you have any questions regarding the contest, please call the Clovis Veterans Memorial District at (559) 299-0471.

Related Common Core Standards:

7th Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2b

Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.7

Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generate additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

8th Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis and research.