BC HC
BASTROP COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

2026 High School History Essay Contest
Rules and Guidelines

Sponsor
The Bastrop County Historical Commission (BCHC) is pleased to announce the 2026 High School History Essay Contest. To celebrate the 250th birthday of the United States, the BCHC high school essay contest will highlight students' views on which stakeholders have helped to maintain the Declaration of Independence.

Your essay is a written format for presenting your historical argument, research, and interpretation of your subject's significance in history.

Theme
What individual or group do you believe has made the most significant contribution to promoting the principles in the Declaration of Independence? Please provide your reasoning for your choice.

- Your essay must be your original creation.
- Your essay must represent your historical research and analysis.
- Your essay must be grammatically correct.
- Your essay must conform to all general rules.
- Your essay and name will be used in BCHC advertising and promotional material.

Submission Deadline
The Deadline for Submission is **April 24, 2026, 5:00 p.m. CST**. Any essays received after this time will be automatically disqualified.

Eligibility Requirements
The contest is open to high school students who meet the following criteria:

- Attend a public, private, parochial school, or registered home-study program in Bastrop County, Texas.
- Maybe enrolled in a United States history class at a county school or studying United States history at home.
- Submit all required paperwork.

Word Count Requirements
Your essay must be between 1,000 and 2,000 words. The word count does not include your bibliography and list of sources. Essays that do not meet this requirement will not be considered.

Content and Style Guidelines
Entries must be printed on plain white 8.5" X 11" paper; double-spaced, with no extra gaps between paragraphs; 12-point font; 1-inch margins on all sides (top, bottom, left, and right); doubled-sided. Indent the first line of every paragraph by 0.5 inches. Place the page number in the upper right corner of each page. Center your title on the first page of your text. Capitalize it using standard title case, and avoid applying bold, italics, or underlines. Correct formatting and proper citation of sources (in-text

citations, cited works, and bibliography) are required. You must cite at least three sources. You are encouraged to use the Modern Language Association (MLA) Handbook as a reference. The MLA Handbook may serve as an essential guide for organizing your research and properly crediting your sources, helping you build a strong, credible argument in your writing.

General encyclopedias, such as Wikipedia, are not acceptable sources and using them will result in disqualification. It's important to use more than just websites as sources and to ensure that every online reference is cited appropriately. Plagiarism or using AI to compose your essay is not allowed in any case.

How to Submit Your Essay

- Applications and essays must be submitted electronically.
  Fill out the application form and attach it with your essay. All fields on the form are required.
- Application forms must list the name of your teacher or sponsor. Your teacher/sponsor may review the submitted essay and serve as the key contact between you (participants) and be BCHC. It is to your advantage to have a teacher/sponsor review the essay to make sure it is complete and has the necessary format and is free from typographical and grammatical errors and fully addresses the topics.
- Do not place your last name or your school's name on any of the pages of the essay.
- Ask your teacher or sponsor if you can submit the essay to her/him for submission. If that is not appropriate, email the application and your essay to the following email address: bastrophistoryessay@gmail.com

Judging & Criteria

- Your essay will be evaluated based on the depth of analysis, quality of research, and the clarity of writing, including style and mechanics.
- Your essay must fully address every part of the prompt and show a strong understanding of the topic.
- All decisions by the Judges are final.

Winner Announcement

The BCHC will notify the winner's school and teacher. The winner's name and photo (likeness), and entry (essay) will be used for the purpose of promoting the Commission's goals and for the promotion and observance of the 250th year anniversary celebration of the United States of America. Winners may be asked to attend a special ceremony in observance of America's 250th Celebration.

Prizes

The Bastrop County Historical Commission has the sole authority to determine the winner and issue the prizes. Prizes are 1st Place Winner-$500; 2nd Place Winner-$300; and 3rd Place Winner-$200. Prizes will be awarded at the time of the announcement of winners or/and at the special designated program in Celebration of America's 250th Birthday.

BCHC Contest Contact Information

For additional information, please feel free to contact the BCHC Essay Contest Administrator, Dr. Marilyn Jones, marilynjones00614@gmail.com or Ken Kesselus, ken.kesselus@gmail.com or https://www.facebook.com/bastropcountyhistoricalcommissiontexas/

APPLICATION FORM

Bastrop County Historical Commission

2026 High School History Essay Contest

Personal Information			Control Number:
Last Name	**First Name**		**Middle Initial**
Student Email Address			**Student Cell Phone**
Address	**City**	**State**	**Zip**
Parent's Name			**Phone**
Academic Information			
Name of High School	**School Address**		
City	**State**	**Zip**	**School Phone**
Name of Teacher			**Student Grade Level**
Title of Essay			**Essay Word Count**
Acknowledgement			
I have read and understood the essay rules and guidelines. I agree to abide by all the rules and guidelines established by the Bastrop County Historical Commission.			
Student Signature			**Date**

Please attach your application and essay to the following email:

bastrophistoryessay@gmail.com