



Drawn Together.

Southwest Florida Celebrates America 250

Category Themes & Historical Resources

Pioneer ★ Explorer ★ Innovator

presented by:



Pioneer: Grades (K-4)

Choose a theme that feels exciting or special to you. Then create your own original two-dimensional artwork, filling the whole page with your amazing ideas! Don't forget to include a short artist essay (no more than 500 words) explaining your artwork and how it connects to the theme you picked.

What does America's 250th anniversary mean to you?

America is having a big ol' celebration that honors the past but also dreams of the future.

Express your excitement of growing up in a place where dreams can take shape and ideas can turn into reality.

You can show how your family is celebrating the occasion.

Here are some historical fun facts about America's Anniversary:

The celebration honors the 1776 adoption of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia.

The 250th anniversary marks the United States as the longest-surviving republic with a written constitution in the world.

The Second Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, voted for the independence of the United Colonies by passing the Lee Resolution on July 2, 1776.

The United States Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016 directs the United States Government to make special coins and stamps, and even name some ships to help celebrate.

America's 250 Southwest Florida Postage Stamp

Design a postage stamp that reflects your journey to Southwest Florida.

Did your journey involve a trip? Was it exciting, sunny, peaceful, or full of new discoveries?

Use colors, symbols, or small scenes that show your connection to SWFL. Let your stamp capture a moment, a memory, or the spirit of what this place means to you.

Here are some historical fun facts about postage stamps:

The first official U.S. adhesive stamps were issued on July 1, 1847, featuring Benjamin Franklin (5 cents) and George Washington (10 cents).

The U.S. Postal Service celebrated 250 years of operation on July 26, 1775 when Benjamin Franklin was appointed as its first American Postmaster General.

The world's first adhesive postage stamp, the "Penny Black," was issued in Great Britain in May 1840 to standardize mail prepayment.

Explorer: Grades (5-8)

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My family's journey to SWFL

Create a piece that tells the story of your family's journey to Southwest Florida.

You can highlight the modes of transportation that reflect your journey. Was it by car, plane, boat, or something out of this world? Get Creative!

You can show how your family connected with the community upon arriving in SWFL. Did you travel from another state, country, or were you born in SWFL?

Here are some historical fun facts about the journey to Collier County:

The Seaboard Air Line Railway's Orange Blossom Special was the first passenger train to arrive in Naples on Jan. 7, 1927, connecting the town to Northern cities.

The Tamiami Trail, connecting Tampa to Miami through the Everglades, officially opened on April 26, 1928 opening the region up.

A bridge and highway replaced the ferry to Marco Island, ending its reliance on water-only access.

The U.S. Army activated the Naples Army Air Field during World War II, bringing air transport to the area.

Swamp Buggy Redesign

Reimagine the iconic swamp buggy with a fresh design that reflects the spirit of America's 250th.

Your creation should honor the tradition of swamp buggies while introducing new ideas that symbolize innovation, resilience, and community.

Think about how transportation connects people and places, and how your redesigned swamp buggy could represent both Southwest Florida's unique landscape and America's enduring story.

Here are some historical fun facts about Swamp Buggies:

Ed H. Frank is widely recognized as the inventor, building the first buggy in the 1920s at his garage in Bonita Springs using Model T parts.

They were created out of necessity to cross deep mud and wetlands in the Everglades, acting as a "cow pony" for hunters and land surveyors. Originally used for hunting trips, they evolved into racing machines in the late 1940s when hunters began competing for prizes like shotguns and turkeys.

While early models were built from junked trucks, modern swamp buggies are heavily modified, high-power custom vehicles built for racing.

Innovator: Grades (9-12)

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America: A tapestry of culture

Create artwork that shows how America expresses a tapestry woven from many cultures, traditions, and stories. What is your personal story?

Like a tapestry, the country is strongest and most beautiful when all of its unique threads are woven together. Represent your heritage and your journey to SWFL.

Here are some historical fun facts about Southwest Florida's Cultural Heritage:

The Calusa were a powerful, non-agricultural maritime society that created immense, complex shell mounds (middens) at sites like Mound Key and Mound House in Fort Myers Beach.

In the mid-19th century, Punta Rassa served as a primary port for shipping cattle to Cuba and the Florida Keys, with inland trails leading from across the state.

Pioneers established homesteads, like the Hendry House, and grew vegetables like eggplant and tomatoes for northern markets, particularly on Sanibel and Captiva islands.

Punta Gorda was uniquely integrated, with its downtown developing through a mix of cultures, specifically around the historically significant African American businesses on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

America Illustrated:

Tell your personal story while drawing inspiration from American Artists and Art Movements.

Look at their technique, colors, styles, shapes, expressive lines, is it realistic or abstract? Blend those artistic influences with moments from your own life to create a piece that feels uniquely yours.

Here are some American Artists to inspire you:

Local Artists: E. George Rogers & Robert Lee Storter, Jr.

Robert Lee Storter, Jr. (1894-1987) was born in the town of Everglade to the pioneering Storter family who had come to the region from Alabama in the late 1800s. He is remarkable for the journals, drawings, paintings, and carvings he produced from 1957 until his death. With these he chronicled daily life and nature's bounty in southwest Florida.

E. George Rogers (1891-1992) was born in Winchester, England who came to the United States in 1913. He was a prolific painter who was one of the artists who founded the Naples Art Association. He taught art in the local schools and in and around the community.

American Artists: Andy Warhol, Grant Wood, Georgia O'Keeffe, Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Basquiat, Keith Haring, Norman Rockwell, Mary Cassatt, Winslow Homer.