


America 250

Reflections Through Art



The United States is turning 250! As we mark this historic milestone, we invite young artists to reflect on what America 250 means to them—not just in history books, but in their own lives, communities, and imaginations. What emotions or ideas come to mind? What stories do you want to tell? This is your chance to be bold, thoughtful, and honest. Through your art, help us explore the past, understand the present, and dream about the future. Let your creativity speak from the heart.

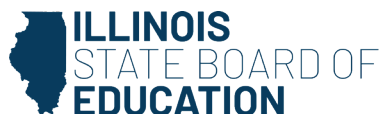
ART CONTEST

ANY ILLINOIS K-12 STUDENT IS ELIGIBLE TO ENTER

ALL ENTRIES MUST BE POSTMARKED BY FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2025.

FOR RULES AND INFORMATION VISIT:

bit.ly/ALPLM-ArtContest OR ISBE.net/artcontest



The 44th annual Illinois Arts Education Week is March 9-13, 2026. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) have collaborated to create more visibility for young Illinois artists and showcase their talent, as well as reinforcing the importance of the arts in the growth and development of our students.

The theme for the 2026 contest is:
America 250-Reflections though Art

The contest includes four entry levels: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. A panel of judges will select a winner and two runners-up in each entry level. All winners and runners-up will have their original work displayed at the ALPLM from March 9, 2026 to May 8, 2026. The winning students in each entry level will have their work featured on a poster to celebrate Illinois Arts Education Week.

Entries can be delivered by hand or mailed to:
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum
Arts Contest - Education Department
112 North Sixth St.
Springfield, IL 62701

Please indicate number of entries sent with return address.

Questions

ALPLM
Abigail Bussey
ALPLM.Education@Illinois.gov
217-685-9799

ISBE
Dr. Leslie Ward-Lamina
lwardlam@isbe.net
312-814-8988

Contest Rules

- Your work must reflect or interpret the theme “America 250 - Reflections through Art” You are not required to incorporate the words of the theme into the work, just the concept.
- You must submit a brief written Artist’s Statement with your entry that describes how the theme relates to your creation.
- Two-dimensional entries must be no larger than 11” x 14” inches and flat (not folded). Folded entries will not be judged.
- Only Illinois students, in grades K-12 at a public, private, alternative, or home school, may enter the contest.
- All art must be your original work and not include copyrighted images.
- If your entry includes glitter, it must be static and securely adhered to the piece.
- If you choose to use chalk or pencil, please make sure your work is able to be reproduced and encase it in a sleeve to prevent smearing when mailed.
- If your artwork is abstract, please mark the TOP with an “X” on the back.
- A work that was submitted to the contest in previous years may not be resubmitted.
- There is no limit on the number of entries per school; however, each student may only submit one entry.
- You must submit a hard copy of your work to the address provided. This includes original artwork or a printed copy of a photograph or digitally created image.
- All entries must be postmarked no later than Friday, December 19, 2025.
- All entries not mailed back to the artist/school will be disposed of at the end of the following contest year. (i.e. 2025 entries will be disposed of in December 2026.)

Don’t Forget...

- ☐ Include a self-addressed envelope with the appropriate postage, if you want your original artwork to be returned.
- ☐ Fully complete and securely attach the Authorization Form on the back of your entry. If you are home schooled, please put “Home School” for your district and “N/A” for the principal.
- ☐ Artist’s Statements and Authorization Form must be included with each entry, or your work will be disqualified. Please securely attach statements and authorization forms to the back of two-dimensional entries.”

2026 Authorization Form

I hereby authorize the Illinois State Board of Education and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum to use, reproduce, publish, distribute, adapt and publicly display, the artwork of the student named below for purposes related to the 2026 Art Contest, in any and all languages and editions, including electronic/digital languages.

Student name (please print)		Student age	Student grade level
Parent/Guardian name (please print)		Parent/Guardian signature	
Phone	Date	Student signature	
Home address		City/State/Zip/County	
School & district or organization	School phone	Principal or organization representative	
Art teacher		Email of art teacher	

Certification and Release. I hereby certify and represent that, to the best of my knowledge, the artwork of the student named below is an original work of authorship personally created by the student to which the student is entitled copyright protection under 17 U.S.C. § 101 and that it is not copied from, nor does it include, any other person’s copyrighted work in part or in whole. I further affirm that the artwork was not created using any generative artificial intelligence (AI).