



# ESSAY CONTEST

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Where's the one place in the United States that truly inspires you? Maybe it's captured in the hometown you love, or the special memories you have about a place you've visited. Or, maybe it's even a landmark that's meaningful to you.

**Let us know and you can win a free NOOK Tablet™, have your essay published in an eBook, earn a trip to Washington, D.C., and even receive a \$10,000 college scholarship!**

If you are a student in grade 7 through grade 12, this writing opportunity is for you! The "America the Beautiful" contest gives you the opportunity to explain what you love about your country, your community, or your neighborhood.

So grab a keyboard, fire up your creativity, and let us know what makes America beautiful!

**PLEASE NOTE:** Your teachers must sign up for the program and submit essays for their students. So when you've written your essay, send it to your teacher and ask him or her to register and upload your document.



## The Rules

### What should I write about?

Tell a story about a specific place. Write about what inspires you about that place – the great people, the beautiful scenery or the memories that you have. Think about a place where you have lived or visited. Which place stands out as your favorite and why is it special to you?

### How should I write it?

Write in your own voice. Your essay should be written in a way that would be natural for you to read aloud.

Create a sense of place for you reader. Use sensory words, imagery, and figurative language to help readers visualize the place you are writing about.

### Be positive!

We want you to share your ideas about the most beautiful place in America. But keep in mind that we cannot accept any essays that includes any language that is inappropriate or hurtful to other groups of people, including groups organized by gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or age. If your essay includes this type of language, it will be disqualified.

### What format should I use?

The essay needs to be written and submitted as a Microsoft Word document or a text file. When completed, send your essay to your teacher. Your teacher can then send the essay on to us by uploading/submitted the work on the America the Beautiful site.



## Please make sure that you follow these rules before sending your essay to your teacher:

1. Write your essay using Microsoft word (both .doc and .docx format) or txt. PDFs are not an acceptable format.
2. Your essay should contain the following information on the first three lines (not counted toward your word count):

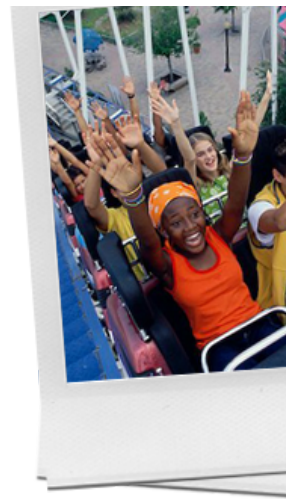
**Your name**

**Your teacher's name and class grade level**

**Name of your school**

**If you don't include this information, your essay will be disqualified.**

3. 12 pt. Times Roman font
4. Single spaced
5. Between 400 and 600 words in length, not to exceed 1 page
6. 1-inch margins all around
7. Personal narrative
8. Include a title



## FAQs

### How do I enter?

Your essay must be submitted by a teacher on your behalf. Teachers need to register for the program at [bestoftheroad.com/education](http://bestoftheroad.com/education). When you've written your essay, send it to your teacher and ask him or her to register (if they haven't already) and upload your document.

### The essay is supposed to be a personal narrative. What is that?

A personal narrative is a story about you. We're giving you the opportunity to be heard! Tell us about a place in the United States that's important to you. This means that you'll write in the first person. You'll share your opinion, writing what you think about a place and how you feel about it. Your writing should be conversational in tone.

### Should my writing sound formal?

When you write this essay, write in a way that is natural to you, as if you were telling a story about something you experienced. If you aren't comfortable reading your essay aloud, then you probably haven't used your natural voice.

### What are two things I can do to make my writing more interesting?

- (1) Use descriptive words and strong imagery to give your readers a sense of the place you're describing. Think about what makes the place special, and why you chose to write about this place above all others.
- (2) Spend time organizing your ideas. Think about the main message you want to share with your readers. Then add interesting details to make the main idea come alive.

### Sometimes I have a difficult time getting started. What should I do?

Writing can be challenging at first. Maybe you have lots of ideas and don't know which one to choose. Or maybe you're having trouble coming up with even one good idea. This happens to all writers! Slow down and spend time thinking of topics and organizing your ideas. Brainstorming really does work, but it works best when you just write what comes to your mind without stopping to edit.



### How long should the essay be?

The essay should be one typed page between 400 and 600 words in length.

### When do the essays have to be submitted?

The deadline for submitting essays is May 14, 2012.

### How will I know if I've won?

The teacher who submitted your essay will be contacted. There are a variety of great prizes – be sure to visit the prizes overview on this web site.

### Do I have to be in a certain grade to participate?

This contest is open to U.S. residents who are 13 to 20 years old, enrolled in grades 7 – 12. We'll be reviewing the essays in two groups: 7th to 9th grade and 10th to 12th grade, and providing prizes for each pool of entries.

**Last helpful hint:** Be patient with yourself. Write down your ideas as you think of them. You can change them or edit them later. You can work with a partner to test and refine your ideas.



## The Prizes!

We know you're already inspired about the place you're writing. Here are some items to inspire you further!



### 100 Semifinalists students

(50 students from grades 7-9 and 50 students from grades 10-12) will receive:

- A free Barnes & Noble NOOK Tablet™ (8 GB)
- And have their essay published in an "America the Beautiful" eBook on NOOK.com

### 10 Finalist students

(5 students from grades 7-9 and 5 students from grades 10-12) will receive:

- A trip to Washington, D.C. for a ceremony announcing the winners, along with a parent/guardian





**2 Winning students**  
**(1 student from grades 7-9 and 1 student from grades 10-12) will receive:**

- A \$10,000 College 529 Savings Plan

In addition, your teachers who participate – and your school – can win prizes as well!

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