

## Expression key: M= method, E= English

+M good idea, good link, good example -M unclear, wrong, copied from text  
+ E a complex form well used -E simple mistake -E the most serious mistakes

-E 1. Conjugation, pronouns

-E 2. adjectives are invariable / each + singular/ this-that-these-those/ to-for / who-which

**Best Centrale:** Anton, Timothée; **Best CCINP:** Nine ; **Best Polytechnique:** Alexandre

## Key words

Independence, THE past, THE US, THE Trump administration, commission, ø American identity, ø American history, American(s)

## Type of document/ point of view

1. article, ironic in parts : US division is worse than before 2. opinion piece, ironic in parts, American values  
3. historic extract 4. 2 verses of national anthem 5. 2022 poll/ survey/ graph/ bar chart showing greater unity than division about American history: website.

## The fight over American values, 250 years on

This year, the US will celebrate the 250th anniversary of its Declaration of Independence. What does this milestone reveal about American values, both past and present? This set of five documents explores this question. Both 2025 documents — an article from The Economist and an opinion piece from The Wall Street Journal — address the anniversary itself. A 2022 survey posted on the More in Common website examines attitudes to the teaching of American history. Lastly, two historic documents — an extract from The Declaration Of Independence and two verses of the national anthem Stars and Stripes written in 1814 illuminate past values.

From the very beginning of the US's conception and establishment, the value of freedom has been celebrated. The excerpt from the US's founding document — The Declaration Of Independence — promises freedom as well as personal fulfillment ("Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"). The desire for freedom as a fundamental value is also echoed in the repeated chorus of the national anthem in which the American homeland is associated with liberty. Indeed, being American begins with freedom, argues Andy Kessler in The Wall Street Journal. During the bicentennial anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 1976, The Economist reports that a train of freedom travelled around the country with documents linked to the US's founding. Freedom is thus an intrinsic part of American identity and values.

Freedom also signifies the freedom to fight — against both external and internal enemies. The national anthem for example is a rallying cry, celebrating the nation's resilience against external attack. But conflict is also present within the US itself. Both articles portray the organisation of the 250th anniversary as a fight — though in a slightly comical way. Not only is there conflict in its set-up (two rival commissions are in charge according to The Economist) but also, there are clashes over which side is the most patriotic, adds Kessler. Yet expression of conflict can itself be patriotic: we see that a majority of Republicans agree that protest is sometimes necessary in the More in Common graphs. Are the values extolled in the founding text of the US still relevant in today's polarised atmosphere?

The Declaration of Independence asserts that equality is a prime value: it is an affirmation which contrasts with the less glorious realities of the American founding, such as slavery. Should the 250th anniversary focus on US valour — exemplified by Trump's plans for a garden of 250 statues of American heroes (Kessler) — or its shame, as an exhibition on Washington's relationship to slavery suggests (The Economist)? Each side also accuses the other of trying to rewrite history: Trump has removed references to slavery from some national parks for example (The Economist). Yet as Kessler points out, The New York Times has done the same, claiming that the US's origin story should start in 1619, the year slavery came to America. The graphs from More in Common show a path towards unity: not only is there broad agreement between Republicans and Democrats about the highs and lows of US history in terms of inequality and racism, but there is also non-partisan support for a common teaching curriculum of this history. The American experiment thus lives on. (539 words)