



# Good as Gold Writing Activities

for Grades 3–4

## Teacher Instructions

### Let's Celebrate

**Objective:** Practice explanatory writing by inventing a new US holiday

**Time needed:** 30 to 45 minutes

**Materials needed:** copies of the “Let’s Celebrate” student activity sheet

**Skills supporting learning standards:** explanatory writing, brainstorming, participation in group discussions, presentation development

### Getting Started

1. Ask students about the holidays they celebrate and what these holidays represent. Write their responses on the board.
2. Explain to students that many countries and families celebrate holidays that honor their nation’s heritage, history, and people.
3. Review the list and ask students which holidays honor the US, America’s history, or Americans. Examples include the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, etc. Explain to students that other countries have their own versions of some of these holidays to honor their heritage as well, such as Thanksgiving and Veterans Day.
4. Distribute the student activity sheet and review it with students. They may work independently or in teams to create a new US holiday to celebrate America. Students should use the prompts on the activity sheet to brainstorm a holiday, as well as why, when, and how it is celebrated, etc.
5. Once done, invite students to present their holiday proposals to the class. Write a list of the holidays on the board and then have students vote on which one should be added to the calendar of American holidays. Each student can cast three votes. Voting should be done anonymously. Provide students with a ballot or have them put their heads down and raise their hands as you call out each holiday name.
6. Have students tally the scores to determine the winning holiday.

### It's Nice to Meet You

**Objective:** Practice narrative writing by describing an imaginary visit with the President

**Time needed:** 45 to 60 minutes

**Materials needed:** copies of the “It’s Nice to Meet You” student activity sheet

**Skills supporting learning standards:** narrative writing, sequencing events, sentence and paragraph formation, vocabulary development, participation in group discussions

### Getting Started

1. To start this activity, display pictures of the White House in your classroom and invite students to share facts that they know about the President of the United States and the White House. Then share the following fun facts with your class with a True/False quiz. Explain to students:
  - ★ *You know that the President of the United States lives and works in the White House in Washington, DC. We’re going to play a True/False game to see what other facts you know about the White House.*
  - ★ **True or False:** There are 32 rooms in the White House. (False. There are 132 rooms, 35 bathrooms, and 6 levels in the White House.)
  - ★ **True or False:** George Washington was the first president to live in the White House. (False. John Adams was the first president to live in the White House.)
  - ★ **True or False:** There is a bowling alley at the White House. (True. The White House has its own flower shop, tennis/basketball court, jogging track, movie theater, and bowling alley.)
  - ★ **True or False:** The White House receives thousands of visitors a day. (True. Imagine that many people coming to your home each day!)

For additional information to share with students, visit Ben’s Guide to the U.S. Government ([bensguide.gpo.gov](http://bensguide.gpo.gov)) and the kids’ portal for the US government ([kids.gov](http://kids.gov)).

2. Next, ask students what they think it would be like to visit the White House and meet the President of the United States. What would they do during their visit? What would they talk about?
3. Distribute the student activity sheet and read it with your students. Students might work independently or with a partner to write stories about a day at the White House. The sheet includes prompts to help them identify who they will meet (the characters), where they will go in the White House (the setting), and what they will talk about.
4. Remind students that the story is imaginative, so it can be serious, funny, or adventurous. They also need to include descriptive language and a plot—something needs to happen. Remind them that they are writing stories, not just descriptions of the White House.
5. Review how to write dialogue with quotation marks when featuring conversations with the President or other characters.
6. Once done, have students share their stories with the class.

# Teacher Instructions | Grades 3–4

## Innovative Inventions

**Objective:** Practice explanatory and persuasive writing by creating a new invention

**Time needed:** Two 30- to 45-minute sessions

**Materials needed:** copies of the “Innovative Inventions” student activity sheet, markers, crayons, blank paper

**Skills supporting learning standards:** informative/explanatory writing, persuasive writing, research, analytical thinking, presentation development, participation in group discussions

### Getting Started

1. Start this activity with an invention challenge. Ask students the following questions:
  - ★ *Who invented the telephone?* (Alexander Graham Bell)
  - ★ *Who invented the gasoline-powered automobile?* (Karl Benz is believed to have created the first gas-powered car.)
  - ★ *Who invented peanut butter?* (Aztecs and Incas made an early version of peanut butter. In the US, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, the creator of the cereals, patented a process for making peanut butter from peanuts as a protein source for people who couldn't chew well.)
  - ★ *Who invented the pencil?* (Many credit the English in the 16th century.)
2. Next, ask students to identify inventions that have helped society and if they know how any of these inventions got their start. Explain that inventions start with ideas and determination.
3. Distribute the activity sheet and review it with the class. Assign students to teams of three or four. Explain that each team is going to brainstorm and sketch an invention, write an informative description of the invention and what it does, and then create a pitch or presentation to persuade people that the item will help them.
4. Provide students with class time to develop their ideas using the prompts on the activity sheet and to rehearse their presentations. Students should create sketches of their inventions for their presentations.
5. Invite each group to present its invention. After each presentation, ask students why they chose the item they created.
6. As a follow-up activity, have students research American inventors and write a paragraph describing the inventor and what he or she created. For example, the student activity sheet includes the following inventors:
  - ★ George Washington Carver—invented more than 300 uses for peanuts
  - ★ Thomas Edison—patented the incandescent lightbulb
  - ★ Mary Anderson—invented the windshield wiper

## Come Visit

**Objective:** Practice narrative writing and vocabulary development by creating a poem celebrating a US community

**Time needed:** 30 to 45 minutes

**Materials needed:** copies of the “Come Visit” student activity sheet

**Skills supporting learning standards:** narrative writing, vocabulary development, participation in group discussions

### Getting Started

1. Ask students what they like about their communities. Also ask if they've visited or lived in any other places in the US that they like.
2. Explain to students that they are going to write poems about their favorite place in the US.
3. Distribute the activity sheet and read the directions and question prompts to the class. Students should answer each prompt to help them generate ideas to use in their poems.
4. Emphasize to students that the goal of the poem is to make their favorite place sound spectacular so that others will want to visit. This means using lots of descriptive words and phrases.
5. Review similes with students. A simile is a phrase that compares two things that are different using the words “like” or “as.” For example: wise as an owl, gentle as a lamb, and clouds like cotton. Remind students that saying “I like clouds” is a statement, not a simile, since it is not a comparison.
6. After they complete the prompts, students should write their poems on separate sheets of paper in a style of their choice. Provide students with word or line counts if necessary.
7. Once done, invite students to share their poems. They might also draw pictures to showcase their favorite places.

#### Sources:

It's Nice to Meet You  
[whitehouse.gov/about/inside-white-house](http://whitehouse.gov/about/inside-white-house)  
[whitehouse.gov/interactive-tour/flower-shop](http://whitehouse.gov/interactive-tour/flower-shop)  
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[scholastic.com/teachers/article/white-house-facts](http://scholastic.com/teachers/article/white-house-facts)  
[whitehouse.gov/about/inside-white-house/rooms](http://whitehouse.gov/about/inside-white-house/rooms)

Innovative Inventions  
[pbs.org/transistor/album1/addlbios/bellag.html](http://pbs.org/transistor/album1/addlbios/bellag.html)  
[loc.gov/rr/scitech/mysteries/auto.html](http://loc.gov/rr/scitech/mysteries/auto.html)  
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[bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/AKHAcJoNQQ-DaYEz1dvZ9Q](http://bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/AKHAcJoNQQ-DaYEz1dvZ9Q)  
[energy.gov/articles/history-light-bulb#Incandescents](http://energy.gov/articles/history-light-bulb#Incandescents)  
[women-inventors.com/Mary-Anderson.asp](http://women-inventors.com/Mary-Anderson.asp)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Let's Celebrate

In the United States, we celebrate many holidays. Some holidays celebrate our family heritage. Some holidays honor Americans or America's history, such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, the Fourth of July, and Thanksgiving.



**Directions:** You've been asked to join a committee to create a new American holiday. What should the US celebrate and why? Answer the questions below. Then prepare a summary to present to your class.

## A US Holiday Proposal

Holiday name: \_\_\_\_\_

When is the holiday celebrated?

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What or who does the holiday celebrate or honor?

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Why will people celebrate the holiday?

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How will the holiday be celebrated? (Identify any customs or traditions people will participate in on this special day.)

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Why should this holiday be added to the US calendar? (This is where you make your case. Be convincing!)

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# It's Nice to Meet You

You've been invited to the White House! You are going to meet the President of the United States. What will your visit be like?



**Directions:** Write a story about a trip to the White House to meet the President. Before you write, plan your story. Answer the questions below to help you.

1. Thousands of people work at the White House. Who will you meet during your visit?

Circle your answers. They will be the characters in your story.

- The President
- The First Family
- Advisors (people who help the President make decisions)
- A chef
- A gardener
- A reporter
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. Where will you go at the White House? Circle your answers.

This will be the setting for your story.

- Oval Office (the President's office)
- Rose Garden/South Lawn (*Marine One*, the presidential helicopter, lands and takes off there)
- Library
- State Dining Room (up to 140 people can dine in this room)
- Green Room (you can have tea by a fireplace there)
- Bowling alley
- Basketball/tennis court
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. What will you talk to the President about? List three questions you will ask.

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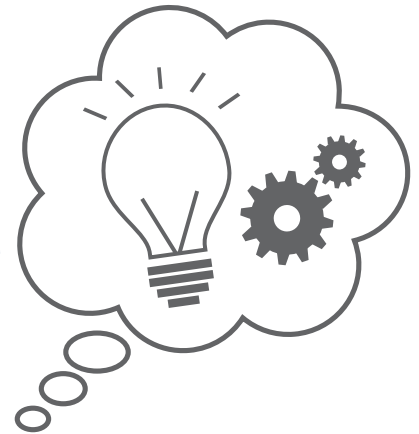
**Time to Write!** Include details about what you do and see on your visit. Also describe who you meet and what you discuss with the President. Remember to include a strong beginning, middle, and end to your story.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Innovative Inventions

Throughout history, American inventors have created products or made discoveries that have impacted our lives, from George Washington Carver to Thomas Edison to Mary Anderson, to name just a few. Could you be the next great inventor from the US?

**Directions:** Work with your team to brainstorm an idea for a new invention. Use the questions below to help you plan your creation.



**WHAT** is your invention? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT** is it called? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT** does it do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT** does it look like? (Draw a picture on the back of this page.)

**HOW** does it work? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**WHY** will people want to use it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**HOW** much does it cost? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Pitch It!

Once you've answered the questions, create a 15-second presentation or summary about your invention. Your goal is to convince people (consumers) to use it. Be persuasive. Let them know how your product will help them.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Come Visit** There are a lot of great places in the US! What's your favorite place? Is it where you live? Is it a place you've visited?

**Directions:** Write a poem about your favorite place in the US. Use spectacular descriptions and details so other people will want to come visit! Use your answers to the questions below to write your poem on the back of this sheet. Use any poem style you would like.



**1. WHAT** is your favorite place in the US? \_\_\_\_\_

**2. WHERE** is it? \_\_\_\_\_

**3. WHAT** do you like about this place?

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**4. DESCRIBE** this place.

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**5. LIST** four exciting adjectives that describe this place. (Consider your senses. What does this place look, sound, and smell like?)

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**6. WHAT'S** a good simile to describe this place? (Hint: A simile uses the word "like" or "as." Example: *as cool as a cucumber.*)

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**7. WHY** should others come visit this special place?

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