

READ, WHITE and BLUE

Celebrating 250 Chapters of America

★ CELEBRATE LITERACY WEEK 2026 ★

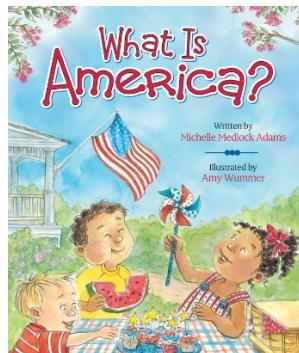
Preschool (ages 3-5) Activity Packet

The Florida Department of Education's (FDOE) Division of Early Learning (DEL) is collaborating with FDOE's *Just Read, Florida!* office for the eighteenth annual statewide *Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!* 2026 events. *Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!* 2026 is scheduled for **January 26-30, 2026**, so mark your calendars now for this important week of events. This year, our *Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!* theme is **Read, White and Blue: Celebrating 250 Chapters of America!**

DEL supports the *Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!* theme from an early learning perspective with a focus on reading books to deepen children's knowledge.

Save the date for the simultaneous reading activity on **Wednesday, January 28, 2026, at 10 a.m. EST**. Help us spread the love of literacy to preschoolers (3- to 5-year-olds) by reading *What is America?* by Michelle Medlock Adams in provider homes, centers and schools.

What is America? by Michelle Medlock Adams



This family friendly book highlights the many exciting facts about being an American and why we celebrate our country. Read along with the children and have deep discussions about the beauty of America, the freedoms we have and why we are celebrating America's 250th birthday.

Suggested Vocabulary Words or Terms from *What is America?* (with child-friendly definitions)

- **America** is the name of our country.
- **Tourists** are people who travel or visit places for fun.
- **4th of July** is the day we celebrate America's birthday.
- **Pledge of Allegiance** is a way for Americans to promise their loyalty to America.
- **Grand Old Flag** is a nickname for the American flag. Other nicknames are "Old Glory" and "Stars and Stripes."
- **Bald Eagle** is a bird that is a symbol of America.
- **Symbols** are pictures or objects that have meaning or represent an event. The American flag is a symbol of our country, America.

- **Faith** is believing in or hoping for something.
- **Amber** is a color word that describes something that is brown, gold or yellow.
- **Vote** is to express your opinion or make a choice.
- **Melting Pot** means many different people coming together to become one group.
- **Anthem** is a special song we sing about our country, America.
- **Lady Liberty or the Statue of Liberty** is a very tall statue that represents freedom and was given to America by the country, France.

**Teachers are encouraged to use vocabulary from the book that is most suitable for the children in their care.*

What is America? by Michelle Medlock Adams

Conducting a Read-Aloud and Intentional Teaching Tips

Plan ahead

- Read *What is America?* by Michelle Medlock Adams, ahead of time and become familiar with the story identifying any new vocabulary words the children may not know.
- Create a child-friendly definition for each new word to build the children's vocabulary and background knowledge for the story. See the list of suggested vocabulary words with child-friendly definitions above.
- Plan open-ended questions to ask the children during the read aloud.

Before reading the book

- Review the parts of the book with the children (front/back cover, title, author, illustrator, top/bottom and the spine of the book).
- Ask questions to engage the children and activate background knowledge. For example:
 - “Who writes the words or story of a book?” (Response: **the author**) “The author of this book is Michelle Medlock Adams.”
 - “Who draws the pictures in the book?” (Response: **the illustrator**) “The illustrator of this book is Amy Wummer.”
 - Let’s look at the front cover of the book, “What do you think this book is about?”

While reading the book

- Call attention to the new vocabulary words by using the pictures in the book. Note: It is not necessary for the text of the word to be on the same page as the picture of the word.
- Follow the prompts below to introduce new vocabulary words and ask open-ended questions. For example:
 - **Say the word.** “Tourist. That is one of our new words.”
 - **Say the child-friendly definition.** “A tourist is someone who travels or visits another place for fun.”
 - **Connect the story to real-life experiences.** “Have you ever been a tourist? Tourists like to visit new places; can you share when you were a tourist and went somewhere you had never been before?”
 - **Repeat the above prompts** as you encounter each new vocabulary word in the book.

After reading the book

- **Connect the book to real life experiences.** “They were watching fireworks. Can you share about a time you saw fireworks? What was it like?” (i.e., loud, pretty, scary)
- **Ask open-ended questions.** “The 4th of July is America’s birthday. Tell us about a time you celebrated something.”

Extension Activities for 3- to 5-Year-Olds

Following the simultaneous reading, teachers may choose to implement one or more of the following:

Activities for 3- to 5-Year-Olds

- Activity 1: America Parade
- Activity 2: Stripes Patterns
- Activity 3: Rhyme Memory Match
- Activity 4: Class Picnic Seating Plan
- Activity 5: Fizzing Fireworks - Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) Activity

Activity 1: America Parade



Activity Directions

- Educators and children will plan for an America Parade by making instruments and props for every child using materials they have readily available in the classroom.
 - Make or gather musical instruments as described in supplies/materials list below.
 - Make paper three-cornered hats.
- Educators and children will select songs for the America Parade and make a playlist of patriotic songs to use during the parade.
- Educators will play the patriotic playlist and lead children in a parade with their instruments and hats.
- Following the America Parade, hold a class vote to determine the favorite musical anthem played during the parade.

Supplies/Materials

Provide classroom instruments for every child or make your own:

- Drums - made from oatmeal cartons or other recyclable cylinders
- Rhythm sticks or chopsticks
- Various types of musical horns
- Bells
- Triangles
- Shakers
- American flags or red, white or blue scarves or streamers
- 3-corner hats - made from newspaper or butcher paper or construction paper with red, white or blue feathers
- Marching music for parade - create a play list with patriotic music for marching

Related Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (FELDS)

Physical Development

- I.B.a.2.a. Begins to combine and coordinate two or more motor movements

Social Studies

- VII.D.3. Identifies differences and similarities of basic physical characteristics (e.g., landmarks or land features)

- VII.F.3. Begins to explore basic principles of democracy (e.g., deciding rules in a classroom, respecting opinions of others, voting on classroom activities or civic responsibilities)

Activity 2: Stripes Patterns



Activity Directions

- Provide red, white and blue paper strips.
- Guide children to identify the AB pattern (red, white, red, white) on the American flag and encourage children to extend and duplicate the pattern using red and white paper strips.
- Guide children to recognize more complex patterns (AB, AAB, ABB, ABC) and encourage them to use paper strips to create a pattern.
- Invite children to glue their patterns onto paper to make their own “flags.”

Supplies/Materials

- Red, white and blue paper strips
- 8x10 sheet of paper
- Glue sticks

Related FIELDS

Mathematical Thinking

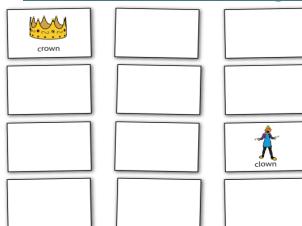
V.C.1. Identifies and extends a simple AB repeating pattern

V.C.2. Duplicates a simple AB pattern using different objects

V.C. 3. Recognizes the unit of repeat of a more complex pattern and extends the pattern (e.g., ABB or ABC)

Activity 3: Rhyme Memory Match

Source - Florida Center for Reading Research



Activity Directions

For this activity, the educator will create rhyme word cards ahead of time for children to practice recognizing rhyming words. This activity may be used as a whole group or small group literacy activity.

- Place the Rhyme Picture Cards face down in rows. To begin with, use only a set of 6 to 8 cards with 3 or 4 rhymes to match.
- Taking turns, children select two cards, name the picture on each (e.g., “crown, clown”), and determine if there is a match.
- If there is a match, pick up the cards and place them on the side. If cards do not match, return them to their original positions.
- Continue until all rhyming pairs are made.

Adaptations and Extensions

- Sort cards on a pocket chart and review rhyming pairs.
- Play using initial sound picture cards.

Supplies/Materials

- Rhyme word picture cards

Related FIELDS

Language and Literacy

IV.F.2. Shows age-appropriate phonological awareness

IV.A.2. Demonstrates understanding when listening

Activity 4: Class Picnic Seating Plan



Activity Directions

During this small group activity, children apply counting, number operations, and explore how to compose and decompose a group of children to determine how many picnic blankets are needed for a class picnic if sitting in groups of 3, 4 or 5.

Step 1: Setting the Scene

- After reading, *What Is America?* by Michelle Medlock Adams, explain to the children that they are going to plan a class picnic, and everyone will need a place to sit. Ask, “I wonder how many blankets we need for our class so that everyone has a seat?”
- “How do we figure out how many people there are?” and “How do we figure out how many people go to each spot?”

Step 2: Count and Confirm

- Have children use concrete representations using toy people or cubes to represent the number of children.
- To foster children’s prediction and experimentation ask how many people there are before counting them and then guide children to experiment with dividing them into groups.
- Explain, “We could sit in groups of 3 on each blanket...or maybe 4...or even 5.” Let’s see what happens when we try each way.” Have students set up 3 blankets, then 4 blankets, and then 5.
- Children place their toy people or cubes on 3 blankets, then 4 blankets, and then 5.

Step 3: Experiment and Discuss

- Try grouping in three first. “Let’s see if we can make groups of three friends per blanket. Does everyone have a blanket? Are there any extras or empty spots?
- Repeat for groups of four and groups of five, guiding children to notice patterns. Encourage children to predict before regrouping. Ask, “If we try groups of 4 next, do you think we’ll need more blankets or fewer?”

Step 4: Reflect & Extend the Thinking

- “Do some groups have more or fewer people?”
- “Which grouping uses fewer or more blankets?”
- “Was it fair? Did everyone have a place to sit?”
- Connect to real-world reasoning: “If more friends come to our picnic, what would we need to change?” or “What if we wanted smaller groups so we could talk more easily-what would happen?”

Supplies/Materials

- Toy people or cubes
- “Blankets” (mats, construction paper, drawn circles on the floor, blocks)

Related FIELDS

Mathematical Thinking

- V.A.3. Demonstrates one-to-one correspondence when counting objects placed in a row (one to 15 and beyond)
- V.A.5. Constructs and counts sets of objects (one to 10 and beyond)
- V.B.1. Explores quantities up to eight using objects, fingers and dramatic play to solve real-world joining and separating problems
- V.B.2. Begins to demonstrate how to compose and decompose (build and take apart) sets up to eight using objects, fingers and acting out

Social and Emotional Development

- III.B.2. Attends to sights, sounds, objects, people and activities
- III.D.1. Develops sense of identity and belonging through play

Approaches to Learning

- II.A.1. Shows increased curiosity and is eager to learn new things and have new experiences
- II.D.1. Demonstrates some planning and learning from experiences

Activity 5: Fizzing Fireworks - STEAM Activity



Activity Directions

This experiment produces a safe chemical reaction that creates fizzy and colorful effects resembling fireworks.

Step 1: Setting Up the Experiment

- Safety First: Provide protective equipment such as safety glasses and/or gloves.
- Prepare the workspace: Place a large, shallow tray or baking sheet on a flat surface.
- Prepare the colored vinegar: In small bowls (or cups), mix a few drops of different food coloring with white vinegar.
- Arrange the coffee filters: Spread the coffee filters out flat on the tray.

Step 2: Experiment and Discuss

- Present the experiment: Engage children in a conversation about fireworks to activate previous knowledge. Remind children that fireworks are explosives that must be handled with care only by adults who know how to handle them safely. Share that they will be doing a fireworks experiment using baking soda and vinegar.
- Explain the concept: Talk about the states of matter involved in this experiment, review definitions for *solid*, *liquid* and *gas*. Review the mix: a solid, the baking soda, with a liquid, the vinegar. The result is bubbles, which are trapped gas. Explain the concept "*chemical reaction*," a process in which a material (or more than one material) is converted to another material.
 - When you mix vinegar and baking soda you create carbon dioxide, water, and dissolved ions. (The dissolved ions are the atoms that don't make the water or carbon dioxide. They remain dissolved in the water.)
 - When baking soda and vinegar interact the result is a reaction called "fizz" (the product of the reaction: carbon dioxide gas, sodium acetate and water.)
- Create the fizzy base: Have children use a spoon to sprinkle baking soda over the entire surface of each coffee filter.
- Drip and fizz! Give the children pipettes or eye droppers and let them drip the colored vinegar onto the baking soda on the coffee filters. Encourage them to watch the colors fizz and bubble like mini fireworks.
- (OPTIONAL) Add sparkles: For extra glittery effects, sprinkle some glitter onto the fizzing mixture as it reacts.
- Dry: Once the fizzing stops, let the coffee filters dry completely. The leftover color and residue will create a textured, colorful firework design.
- Display: Once dry, mount them on black construction paper to make the colors pop.

Step 3: Reflect & Extend the Thinking

- Link concepts: connect the experiment to the book reading.
- Apply the concept (fireworks) to their lives outside the classroom.
- Encourage the use of higher order thinking by asking open ended questions such as how did the colors mix on the coffee filter? What did you notice when we added the *vinegar*?
- Optional: Create a classroom book. Support children in brainstorming and planning as they create a classroom book displaying their textured coffee filters and narratives about their fireworks creation.

Supplies/Materials

- White coffee filters
- Baking soda
- White vinegar
- Food coloring or liquid watercolors
- Pipettes, eye droppers, or small squeeze bottles
- Shallow tray or baking sheet with raised edges
- Spoons for sprinkling baking soda
- Glitter (optional)
- Black construction paper (optional, for mounting the finished art)

Related FIELDS

Physical Development

I.A.b.1.b. Identifies consequences of not following safety rules

Approaches to Learning

II.A.1. Begins to show eagerness and curiosity as a learner

Language and Literacy

IV.A.1.b. Shows understanding by asking and answering factual, predictive and inferential questions adding comments relevant to the topic and reacting appropriately to what is said

Scientific Inquiry

VI.A.2.a. Uses tools and various technologies to support exploration and inquiry (e.g., digital cameras, scales)

VI.A.3.a. Makes predictions and tests their predictions through experimentation and investigation

VI.C.1.d. Investigates and describes changing states of matter – liquid, solid and gas

Supplemental Resources for Preschool

Patriotic Book Titles

Fourth of July Mice! by Bethany Roberts

Good Night Florida by Adam Gamble and Mark Jasper

Proud Little Patriot by Alla Belousov

Patriotic Songs

You're a Grand Old Flag by George M. Cohan

America the Beautiful written by Katherine Lee Bates, music by Samuel A. Ward

The Star-Spangled Banner by Francis Scott Key, music by John Stafford Smith

The Pledge of Allegiance



I pledge allegiance to the flag of the
United States of America, and to the
Republic for which it stands, one
Nation under God, indivisible, with
liberty and justice for all.