



25 NORTH DAKOTA

FREEDOM MINUTES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



As our nation approaches **America 250**, the 250th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, **ND250** highlights North Dakota's unique role in the American story.

This milestone invites reflection on our shared history while inspiring the next generation to understand and shape our nation's future. To support classroom engagement, ND250 offers 25 one-sentence "Freedom Minutes"—ready-to-use facts designed to spark brief, meaningful conversations that connect North Dakota's history, heritage, and contributions to the broader story of the United States.



The 25 Facts

Unit 1: Civics

1. The Metis people come from the Red River Valley and are descendants of European fur traders (mainly French and Scottish) and Indigenous women (mainly Cree and Chippewa). They created a unique culture with their own language, Michif.

Source Link: [Metis](#)

2. The Michif language mixes Cree and French. Even though it's endangered, a few hundred people in North Dakota and Canada still speak it.

Source Link: [Metis](#)

3. The Metis hunted bison on the northern Great Plains and built a network of ox-cart trails from Saint Paul to Winnipeg to support trade, often connected to the Northwest Company in the fur trade.

Source Link: [Metis](#)

4. Arthur A. Link was a North Dakota farmer-politician who served many years in the state legislature, one term as a U.S. Representative, and then as the 27th Governor of North Dakota from 1973 to 1981. As governor, he focused on responsible use of the state's natural resources and supporting agriculture and rural communities.

Source Link: [Arthur Link](#)

5. Henry Martinson settled in Divide County, North Dakota, in 1906 and became an early member of both the Nonpartisan League and the Socialist Party.

Source Link: [Henry Martinson](#)

6. The Nonpartisan League (NPL) mainly worked on political and economic changes. But they also supported adding women's right to vote to the state constitution and wanted to shorten the work hours for women.

Source Link: [The Nonpartisan League \(NPL\)](#)



Unit 2: Economics

7. Pembina, located on the Red River in northeastern North Dakota, played an important role in fur trade competition, Metis nationalism, and international political tensions along the U.S. Canada border.

Source Link: [Commerce and Conflict](#)

8. From 1797 to 1895, Pembina changed over time from a fur trade post to a colony, shipping center, and military outpost. This reflected the changing history of the northern Great Plains.

Source Link: [Commerce and Conflict](#)

9. In 1797, Charles Jean Baptiste Chaboillez built a fur trade post at the meeting point of the Pembina and Red Rivers, as part of the North West Company's efforts to expand trade in the region.

Source Link: [Commerce and Conflict](#)

10. Several traders operated in the area at the same time, including posts near the Forest River and the Souris River, showing there was strong competition in the fur trade.

Source Link: [Commerce and Conflict](#)

11. In 1811–1812, settlers supported by Thomas Douglas (the Fifth Earl of Selkirk) founded an agricultural colony called Fort Daer at the meeting of the Pembina and Red Rivers.

Source Link: [Commerce and Conflict](#)

12. U.S. leaders wanted to establish a permanent military fort at Pembina to help negotiate land cessions from the Pembina and Red Lake Chippewa bands, as Minnesota Territory was rapidly growing and preparing for more settlement.

Source Link: [Commerce and Conflict](#)

13. Fort Pembina kept its role of keeping order and providing stability for over 25 years. But in 1895, a fire destroyed much of the fort, so the U.S. War Department decided to close it and sold what was left at a public auction.

Source Link: [Commerce and Conflict](#)



Unit 3: Geography

14. The Mandan and Hidatsa lived in the Knife River villages, where Lewis and Clark stayed nearby during the winter at Fort Mandan.

Source Link: [Exploring the Northern Great Plains](#)

15. In 1837, a smallpox epidemic began in these villages, killing thousands of Northern Plains Native Americans and nearly destroying the Mandan tribe.

Source Link: [Exploring the Northern Great Plains](#)

16. Samuel Lewis, a mapmaker from the late 1700s and early 1800s, created an important map showing the route taken by the Corps of Discovery between 1804 and 1806. Published in 1814, his map was the first to clearly share the Lewis and Clark trail with a wide audience, making it one of his most important works.

Source Link: [Exploring the Northern Great Plains](#)

17. Early Native Americans in North Dakota did not use paper maps like Europeans; instead they memorized the land, rivers, and villages and passed this knowledge orally from generation to generation.

Source Link: [Exploring the Northern Great Plains](#)

18. When Europeans and Americans arrived, they created maps using latitude, longitude, and standard symbols showing certain directions, rivers, and mountains. This reflected a Western way of understanding the land.

Source Link: [Exploring the Northern Great Plains](#)

19. North Dakota has a prime habitat for wildlife, including animals like ducks, elk, deer, moose, antelope, and once large herds of bison, because of its grasslands, badlands, rivers, and forests.

Source Link: [Natural Resources in North Dakota](#)



Unit 4: History

20. The Lakota and other Native American tribes recorded the passing of time and important events in their communities using winter counts (waniyetu wowapi). A winter count was a calendar that marked one year from the first snowfall of one winter to the first snowfall of the next.

Source Link: [*Time*](#)

21. The Lakota winter counts survived because of their significance and interest from outsiders. Many were preserved on Lakota reservations despite other traditions being banned. Missionaries, traders, army officers, and government agents collected these records, helping them last into the 20th century.

Source Link: [*Time*](#)

22. The area where the Knife, Heart, and Missouri Rivers meet in North Dakota has been an important home and trading center for many different Native American cultures for thousands of years.

Source Link: [*Early People on the Northern Great Plains*](#)

23. Around 1,000 years ago, big-game hunters were replaced by village farmers—ancestors of the Mandan and Hidatsa—who became central to a large trade network exchanging crops and goods with other tribes.

Source Link: [*Early People on the Northern Great Plains*](#)

24. After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, North Dakota strongly supported joining World War II. More than 4,000 North Dakotans joined the military by the end of 1941, and by the end of the war, over 46,000 had served. This included women who joined military groups such as the Women's Army Corps.

Source Link: [*Theaters of War: Europe and the Pacific*](#)

25. Woodrow Keeble was the most highly decorated soldier from North Dakota, serving bravely in both World War II and the Korean War. Even though he was nominated for the Medal of Honor in 1951, he did not receive it until 2004, more than 20 years after he had passed away.

Source Link: [*Theaters of War: Europe and the Pacific*](#)

**FOR MORE
INFORMATION**

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