



The  
Nation's  
Report Card



## The Nation's Report Card: U.S. History and Civics Achievement Levels

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The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), or The Nation's Report Card, measures eighth graders' understanding of U.S. history and civics.

The U.S. history assessment measures students' knowledge, perspective, analysis, and interpretation of U.S. history. The civics assessment measures students' knowledge and skills in identifying, explaining, analyzing, and defining civic knowledge.

### NAEP Achievement Levels

- Students performing at the **NAEP Basic** level have partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for performance at the *NAEP Proficient* level.
- Students performing at the **NAEP Proficient<sup>1</sup>** level have demonstrated competency over challenging material, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills.
- Students performing at the **NAEP Advanced** level have shown superior performance.

<sup>1</sup> *NAEP Proficient* does not signify being on grade level, like state assessments, which often align to state grade-level expectations, and NAEP achievement levels are distinct from those used on state assessments.

Examples of skills and knowledge most eighth-grade students performing at each achievement level demonstrate in **U.S. history and civics** are below.

## U.S. History



### NAEP Basic

Identify simple historical concepts in primary or secondary sources.<sup>2</sup>

#### Example of Knowledge or Skill<sup>3</sup>

Understand the historical context of the Gettysburg Address, for example, that soldiers were killed in a Civil War battle.



### NAEP Proficient

Read and interpret primary and secondary sources to make inferences and draw conclusions.

#### Example of Knowledge or Skill

Evaluate arguments for or against women's right to vote.



### NAEP Advanced

Analyze primary and secondary sources to contextualize and explain historical ideas and events.

#### Example of Knowledge or Skill

Interpret, after reading an excerpt of the Gettysburg Address, what President Lincoln thought was at stake.

## Civics



### NAEP Basic

Describe the structure and function of government.

#### Example of Knowledge or Skill

Explain one way Congress fulfills a constitutional responsibility.



### NAEP Proficient

Identify separation of powers and checks and balances.

#### Example of Knowledge or Skill

Understand the components of constitutional governments.



### NAEP Advanced

Analyze the functions of the three branches of government.

#### Example of Knowledge or Skill

Infer appropriate actions that citizens can use to influence government.

## U.S HISTORY EXAMPLE



Example of a U.S. history assessment question<sup>4</sup> that most students scoring at *NAEP Proficient* can answer:

[The cartoon<sup>5</sup> depicted] is about women's fight for the right to vote. The message of the cartoon is that women should not vote because if women voted:

- A. Men would lose their jobs
- B. People would have too many children
- C. They would not pay enough attention to their families**
- D. They would have to go fight in wars

## CIVICS EXAMPLE

Example of a civics assessment question that most students scoring at *NAEP Proficient* can answer:

What do all constitutional governments have?

- A. Legal limits on political power**
- B. A president as the head of government
- C. A bill of rights
- D. Separation of church and state

<sup>2</sup> These are excerpts from the Reporting Achievement Level Descriptions, which summarize the knowledge and skills measured by multiple related items.

<sup>3</sup> The knowledge and skills are taken from previously used items that most students performing at the associated achievement level answered correctly.

<sup>4</sup> Questions included are released questions from previous assessments and are available at [www.nationsreportcard.gov](http://www.nationsreportcard.gov).

<sup>5</sup> Courtesy of the Museum of American Political Life. University of Hartford, Hartford, CT.