

Item Position	Rationale	
1	"1. That the . . . power of [stopping] the laws or the execution of laws by [the king's] authority without consent of Parliament is illegal": Option "Congress can override presidential vetoes." is correct	As the English Bill of Rights states that the English monarch could not either enforce laws or prevent them from being carried out without the agreement of Parliament, the U.S. Constitution includes provisions for Congress to override a presidential veto if the president refuses to sign a bill into law.
	"4. That levying money for or to the use of the [king] . . . without [agreement] of Parliament . . . is illegal": Option "Only Congress has the power to raise or lower taxes." is correct	As the English Bill of Rights prevents monarchs from placing taxes without the agreement of Parliament, the U.S. Constitution requires that all revenue bills start in Congress, specifically in the House of Representatives.
	"6. That . . . raising or keeping a standing army . . . in time of peace, unless it be with consent of Parliament, is against law": Option "Only Congress can declare war." is correct	As the English Bill of Rights prevents monarchs from raising an army themselves without the agreement of Parliament, the U.S. Constitution grants the power of declaring war to Congress.
	"13. That . . . Parliaments ought to be held frequently": Option "Congress must meet at least once a year." is correct	As the English Bill of Rights requires frequent meetings of Parliament, the U.S. Constitution requires that Congress meet at least once a year.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
2	Option B is correct	The Puritans and Quakers had been persecuted in Europe for their religious beliefs. They established colonies to allow the inhabitants to practice religion without persecution. When the Massachusetts Bay Colony became intolerant of other religious beliefs, the Rhode Island Colony was founded.
	Option A is incorrect	Although overpopulation was occurring in some areas of Europe, this was not the reason the Puritans and Quakers established English colonies in the Americas.
	Option C is incorrect	Although some English colonies did support slavery, the Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Pennsylvania colonies did not rely on that institution. Moreover, Quakers were completely opposed to the idea of slavery.
	Option D is incorrect	The issue of fair trade was not important to the founders of these colonies. Instead, their goal was to survive and freely practice their religion.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
3	Option A is correct	As a staunch abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison argued that people could not be moderate in their efforts to end slavery.
	Option B is incorrect	Garrison argued that the system of slavery was wrong. He did not argue for any other viewpoints.
	Option C is incorrect	Garrison was against slavery, and he did not want greater protection for advocates of slavery.
	Option D is incorrect	Garrison was more concerned with the injustices of slavery than with a split in the nation regarding popular sovereignty.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
4	Option D is correct	To produce valuable cash crops such as cotton, parts of the South relied on slavery. This was particularly true in the fertile soil of the Mississippi Delta and the Black Belt of Alabama.
	Option A is incorrect	While Northern textile mills used Southern cotton produced by the enslaved labor described in the excerpt, there were not many textile mills in the South before the Civil War.
	Option B is incorrect	While iron ore would be mined in Southern states in the twentieth century, the enslaved labor described in the excerpt did not mine iron ore.
	Option C is incorrect	While merchants used Southern ports to export cash crops overseas, food crops in the South were grown to be consumed locally.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
5	Part A: Option C is correct	In the excerpt, Robinson explains that after the strike, management continued to reduce wages.
	Part A: Option A is incorrect	After the Lowell Mill Strike of 1836, management did not increase wages or improve working conditions.
	Part A: Option B is incorrect	Congress did not pass any laws as a result of the Lowell Mill Strike.
	Part A: Option D is incorrect	The excerpt does not reference Massachusetts courts ordering management to rehire workers. Indeed, when courts did intervene in labor disputes, they sided against workers for much of the nineteenth century.
	Part B: Option D is correct	This evidence illustrates how the Lowell Mill Strike affected workers. After the strike, as the excerpt indicates, management reduced wages and retaliated against the strike leaders. Thus, the “strike did no good.”
	Part B: Option A is incorrect	This evidence illustrates one of the causes of the Lowell Mill Strike, that “great [anger] was felt” over wage reductions. This evidence does not illustrate how the strike affected millworkers.
	Part B: Option B is incorrect	This evidence describes the shutting down of the mill. It does not explain how the Lowell Mill Strike affected workers.
	Part B: Option C is incorrect	This evidence describes one of the millworkers’ actions during the strike, but it does not indicate how the lives of millworkers were affected by the strike.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
6	Option C is correct	The principle of republicanism requires that the government be run by officials elected by the people, and this section of the Constitution requires that all states adopt this principle in their own governments.
	Option A is incorrect	The Constitution grants the federal government the power to print currency. States are not allowed to circulate their own currency.
	Option B is incorrect	The separation of powers is an integral part of the Constitution but is not relevant to this part of the text.
	Option D is incorrect	Freedom of choice in a political context is written into the Constitution but is not relevant to this part of the text.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
7	Option D is correct	The cartoon shows Lincoln chopping down a tree labeled "slavery," which represents the Emancipation Proclamation, in which he called for ending slavery in the South.
	Option A is incorrect	While the Gettysburg Address referenced equality and saving the union, it did not directly reference ending slavery.
	Option B is incorrect	While the selection of General Grant ultimately succeeded in ending the Civil War, it was not directly associated with ending slavery.
	Option C is incorrect	While the Union victory at Vicksburg did close the Mississippi River to the South and hinder the Confederate war effort, it was not associated with ending slavery.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale
8	For SCR items, please refer to the scoring guide.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
9	Option D is correct	The battles of Lexington and Concord were the “shots heard ‘round the world” and served as the start of the American Revolution.
	Option A is incorrect	The Battle of Saratoga led to an alliance between the United States and France. The battles described by the timeline resulted in the beginning of the American Revolution.
	Option B is incorrect	While the Battle of Yorktown resulted in the end of the American Revolution, the battles described by the timeline resulted in the beginning of the American Revolution.
	Option C is incorrect	While the Continental Army received better training during the winter at Valley Forge, the battles described by the timeline resulted in the beginning of the American Revolution.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
10	Option A is correct	The primary reason the orders were issued was to force American Indians to leave the Southeast so that their land could be taken by settlers.
	Option B is incorrect	The French were not a threat to American Indians or to the United States in 1838.
	Option C is incorrect	The U.S. Army wanted to force American Indians off their land and secure U.S. government control of that land. These orders were not issued to keep promises to American Indians.
	Option D is incorrect	While there was conflict between some American Indian tribes, it was primarily over how to respond to efforts to take American Indian lands.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
11	Option C is correct	The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom is one of the foundations for the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. James Madison used language from this law when writing the First Amendment.
	Option A is incorrect	The U.S. Supreme Court did not rule on the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, since it was a state law and predated that institution.
	Option B is incorrect	The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom was a state law, not a national law enforced by the Articles of Confederation.
	Option D is incorrect	The Declaration of Independence emphasized unalienable rights and reasons the colonies were declaring their independence. It did not emphasize religious rights.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
12	Option D is correct	The events in the poem describe the Boston Tea Party, during which colonists destroyed tea in protest of the Tea Act of 1770. This was a form of civil disobedience.
	Option A is incorrect	While British soldiers did occupy the homes of colonists as a result of the Quartering Act of 1764, this was neither related to the events described in the poem nor an example of civil disobedience.
	Option B is incorrect	While colonists threw snowballs and rocks at soldiers before the Boston Massacre, this was not a form of civil disobedience, since it involved violence.
	Option C is incorrect	While British lawmakers did close the port of Boston following the Boston Tea Party, this British action was not an example of civil disobedience.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
13	Option B is correct	Secret societies such as the Ku Klux Klan formed in order to suppress Republican governments. They deployed violence against African American officeholders and other Republican officials. President Grant issued this proclamation to combat the efforts of the Ku Klux Klan.
	Option A is incorrect	This proclamation was issued to protect African American citizens. It was not issued to address problems with the Freedmen's Bureau.
	Option C is incorrect	The South was divided into military districts during Reconstruction, but this action was not intended to protect members of the Democratic Party.
	Option D is incorrect	Draft riots took place during the Civil War. They did not take place during Reconstruction.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
14	Drop-Down: Option "Germany" is correct	Many Germans immigrated to the United States in the mid-1800s for the reasons listed.
	Drop-Down: Option "China" is incorrect	While many Chinese immigrated to the United States in the mid-1800s, it was not for the reasons listed. Chinese immigrants came to this country for economic opportunities (i.e., the Gold Rush and railroad construction) and to escape poor economic conditions in China.
	Drop-Down: Option "France" is incorrect	While some French immigrated to the United States in the mid-1800s, it was not for the reasons listed.
	Drop-Down: Option "Ireland" is incorrect	While many Irish immigrated to the United States in the mid-1800s, it was not for the reasons listed. Irish immigrants came to this country for economic opportunities and to escape famine in Ireland.
	Drop-Down: Option "Mexico" is incorrect	While some Mexicans immigrated to the United States in the mid-1800s, it was not for the reasons listed.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
15	Option D is correct	Southerners supported secession because they felt the institution of slavery was under attack by Northerners and the newly elected Lincoln administration.
	Option A is incorrect	Many Northerners criticized slavery and wanted to abolish the institution. Most Southerners did not want slavery to be abolished.
	Option B is incorrect	Many Southerners called for secession in 1860 and 1861. Most Northerners did not support secession.
	Option C is incorrect	Many Southern states held conventions that voted for secession in order to protect the institution of slavery. Northern states did not vote to secede or to protect the institution of slavery.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
16	Option A is correct	The long distance between the American colonies and England encouraged colonists to develop their own system of self-governance.
	Option D is correct	English political traditions and precedents such as the Magna Carta were often cited by colonists, who sought to pursue rights that they believed had been denied them. Colonists ultimately came to support limiting the power and authority of the king.
	Option B is incorrect	Colonists did not support the principle of equal rights. Although voting restrictions were not uniform in early representative governments, only property-owning men typically participated in these local governing bodies.
	Option C is incorrect	Religious revivals, such as the First Great Awakening, helped colonists challenge English political traditions.
	Option E is incorrect	Colonists did not participate in parliamentary decisions.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
17	"Enslaved people should be counted toward a state's population to determine its representation in the House of Representatives.": Option "Southern Delegates" is correct.	Southern states would benefit if enslaved people were included when determining the representation for each state. Under the Three-Fifths Compromise, part of the enslaved population was counted for the purpose of determining representation in the House of Representatives.
	"Enslaved people should be counted toward a state's population to determine taxation.": Option "Northern Delegates" is correct.	If enslaved people were counted toward a state's total population for taxation purposes, this would increase the amount southern states would have to pay. This would ultimately benefit northern states.
	"The international slave trade should be ended.": Option "Northern Delegates" is correct.	Southern delegates would not have encouraged the end of the international slave trade, because the southern economy relied on enslaved labor.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
18	Option C is correct	The firing on Fort Sumter marked the beginning of the Civil War.
	Option A is incorrect	The firing on Fort Sumter marked the beginning of the Civil War. It did not produce a turning point in the conflict.
	Option B is incorrect	The victory in the Battle of Antietam allowed President Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation during the Civil War.
	Option D is incorrect	The victory in the Battle of Gettysburg prevented the Confederate Army from threatening Washington, D.C., during the Civil War.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
19	“Led escaped enslaved people along the Underground Railroad”: Option “Harriet Tubman” is correct	Harriet Tubman spent years helping enslaved people escape from slavery in the South to freedom in the North and Canada.
	“Described the evils of slavery in a book called <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i>”: Option “Harriet Beecher Stowe” is correct	Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i>, which describes the evils of slavery. This book greatly increased support for the abolitionist movement.
	“Escaped enslavement and delivered speeches supporting abolition”: Option “Sojourner Truth” is correct	Sojourner Truth escaped enslavement by running away. She became well known for her speeches championing abolition, and she published an autobiography.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
20	Option A is correct	The Stamp Act Congress, which included representatives from Massachusetts, New York, Maryland, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Delaware, South Carolina, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, was the first time multiple colonies coordinated an organized opposition to a British policy.
	Option B is incorrect	While colonies did not have the power to enforce formal embargoes against British goods, they did boycott British goods.
	Option C is incorrect	While the Quartering Act was an unpopular British colonial policy, it was passed before the Stamp Act.
	Option D is incorrect	While opposition to the Stamp Act resulted in changes to British colonial policies, the British government sent more troops to Boston rather than withdrawing troops.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
21	Option C is correct	John Marshall established the principle of judicial review in his decision in <i>Marbury v. Madison</i> , increasing the power of the Supreme Court.
	Option A is incorrect	While the number of justices in the Supreme Court has changed, John Marshall was not involved in determining the size of the Supreme Court.
	Option B is incorrect	While his decision in <i>Gibbons v. Ogden</i> dealt with states' rights and the supremacy of the federal government, John Marshall supported the supremacy of the federal government, not individual state governments.
	Option D is incorrect	While the Supreme Court ruled in support of the rights of enslavers in the <i>Dred Scott</i> decision, John Marshall was not part of that decision.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
22	Drop-Down: Option "George Washington" is correct	All the actions in the list occurred during George Washington's presidency.
	Drop-Down: Option "John Adams" is incorrect	While John Adams continued a policy of neutrality, all the actions in the list occurred during George Washington's presidency.
	Drop-Down: Option "Thomas Jefferson" is incorrect	While Thomas Jefferson continued a policy of neutrality and concluded different treaties, all the actions in the list occurred during George Washington's presidency.
	Drop-Down: Option "James Madison" is incorrect	While James Madison continued a policy of neutrality for part of his presidency and concluded different treaties, all the actions in the list occurred during George Washington's presidency.
	Drop-Down: Option "James Monroe" is incorrect	While James Monroe continued a policy of neutrality, all the actions in the list occurred during George Washington's presidency.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
23	Option A is correct	Asher Durand was an important member of the Hudson River School, an artistic movement that grew from European Romanticism. The Hudson River School was named for its members' depictions of the Hudson River Valley, and artworks from this school generally emphasized the American wilderness.
	Option B is incorrect	Asher Durand was an important member of the Hudson River School, not of the federal architecture movement.
	Option C is incorrect	The Second Great Awakening was a religious movement, not an artistic movement.
	Option D is incorrect	Asher Durand was an important member of the Hudson River School; he did not produce African American folk art.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
24	Option C is correct	Under the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, the existence of slavery in new territories would be decided by the people of each new territory. The expansion of slavery would not be based on previous legislation by Congress.
	Option A is incorrect	This was a provision of the Three-Fifths Compromise in the U.S. Constitution, written in 1787 and ratified in 1788.
	Option B is incorrect	These were provisions of the Missouri Compromise of 1820 rather than of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854.
	Option D is incorrect	These were provisions of the Compromise of 1850 rather than of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
25	Option B is correct	The profitable trade in cash crops between the thirteen colonies and Europe led to the development of the transatlantic slave trade.
	Option A is incorrect	The temperance movement worked to reduce consumption of alcohol, not to develop the transatlantic slave trade.
	Option C is incorrect	The abolitionist movement worked to end slavery, not to develop the transatlantic slave trade.
	Option D is incorrect	Increased demand for cash crops, not manufactured goods, led to the development of the transatlantic slave trade.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
26	Option A is correct	The goals listed were all motivations for colonization.
	Option B is incorrect	The goals listed did not lead to events during the Civil War era.
	Option C is incorrect	The goals listed did not lead to events during the early republic.
	Option D is incorrect	The goals listed did not lead to events during Reconstruction.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
27	Option D is correct	The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which is referred to in the excerpt, abolished slavery.
	Option A is incorrect	The Thirteenth Amendment, which is referred to in the excerpt, did not distribute land to formerly enslaved people.
	Option B is incorrect	The Thirteenth Amendment, which is referred to in the excerpt, did not seize Confederate property.
	Option C is incorrect	The Thirteenth Amendment, which is referred to in the excerpt, did not grant voting rights. The Fifteenth Amendment granted voting rights to African American men.

Item Position	Rationale	
28	Drop-Down: Option "restrict Northern commercial interests" is correct	In the 1800s, the Mississippi River served as an important waterway for farmers and merchants to ship their goods throughout the country. When the Southern forces closed the river, this closure threatened the commercial interests of the Northern states.
	Drop-Down: Option "split Northern military districts" is incorrect	During the Civil War, the North was not split into military districts. Following the Civil War, the Southern states were split into military districts, but this action had no connection to the Mississippi River or its use.
	Drop-Down: Option "stop Northern abolition activities" is incorrect	Before the Civil War, many people in the North were working to free enslaved people in the South. When the Southern states seceded from the union, they forced the closure of the Mississippi River in order to restrict Northern commercial interests, not to stop Northern abolition activities.
	Drop-Down: Option "divide Northern labor leaders" is incorrect	The Mississippi River was an important source for transportation and economic activity during the Civil War. When the Confederates forced its closing, this did not lead to division among Northern labor leaders.
	Drop-Down: Option "displace Northern political parties" is incorrect	During the Civil War, the Confederate forces forced the closing of the Mississippi River. This closure threatened Northern military leaders and harmed Northern commercial interests, but it did not displace Northern political parties.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
29	Option C is correct	In the <i>Marbury v. Madison</i> decision, Chief Justice John Marshall established the principle of judicial review.
	Option A is incorrect	The <i>Dred Scott v. Sandford</i> decision ruled that African Americans were not citizens and that Congress could not decide where slavery could exist. The decision did not establish the principle of judicial review.
	Option B is incorrect	The <i>Gibbons v. Ogden</i> decision determined that Congress could regulate interstate commerce. The decision did not establish the principle of judicial review.
	Option D is incorrect	The <i>McCulloch v. Maryland</i> decision upheld the power of Congress to establish a national bank and refuted the claim that states could tax federal agencies. The decision did not establish the principle of judicial review.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale
30	For SCR items, please refer to the scoring guide.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
31	Option B is correct	Because of the cotton gin, cotton could be produced faster and more cheaply. This increased the demand for textile mills and for laborers to work in textile mills.
	Option A is incorrect	While the number of farms did increase in the North during this time period, this trend was not related to the invention and use of the cotton gin.
	Option C is incorrect	Cotton was transported to the North to be turned into textiles. Few textile factories existed in the South before the Civil War.
	Option D is incorrect	The invention of the cotton gin increased the need for enslaved labor.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
32	Option "The labor force . . . was made up of millions of newly arrived immigrants and even larger numbers of migrants from rural areas." is correct	This quotation describes the population shifts from rural to urban areas and from foreign countries to U.S. cities. These population shifts supplied the labor needed for industrialization.
	Option "Following the Civil War, the United States emerged as an industrial giant." is incorrect	This quotation describes the U.S. emergence as an industrial power. It does not describe how industrialization influenced population shifts.
	Option "Old industries expanded and many new ones . . . emerged." is incorrect	This quotation describes industrialization's influence on old and new industries. It does not describe how industrialization influenced population shifts.
	Option "Industrial growth transformed American society." is incorrect	This quotation describes a transformation in American society because of industrial growth, but it does not describe how industrialization influenced population shifts.
	Option "It produced a new class of wealthy industrialists and a prosperous middle class." is incorrect	This quotation describes a change in American society, but it does not describe how industrialization influenced population shifts.
	Option "It also produced a vastly expanded blue collar working class." is incorrect	This quotation describes a change in the American labor force, but it does not describe how industrialization influenced population shifts.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
33	Option C is correct	The geographic characteristics described in the excerpt, including an abundance of uncut pine forests, influenced the development of the timber industry in the Midwest.
	Option A is incorrect	Textile factories developed in New England. They did not emerge in the Midwest, which is the region described in the excerpt.
	Option B is incorrect	Plantations grew cash crops in the South. Cash crops were not grown in the Midwest, which is the region described in the excerpt.
	Option D is incorrect	Whaling companies developed in the Northeast. They did not develop in the Midwest, which is the region described in the excerpt.

Item Position	Rationale	
34	Part A: Option C is correct	The Fugitive Slave Act led to the separation of formerly enslaved African Americans from their families in the North. Free African Americans in the North, as indicated in the excerpt, could also be separated from their families and kidnapped into slavery.
	Part A: Option A is incorrect	The Fugitive Slave Act did not expand slavery into western territories or formerly free states. The legislation led to the re-enslavement of formerly enslaved African Americans living in the North. Conscription into military service was not a threat that free or enslaved African Americans faced during the 1850s.
	Part A: Option B is incorrect	Resettlement west of the Mississippi River affected American Indians, particularly the Cherokee, who were forced to settle on reservations in Oklahoma. The Fugitive Slave Act did not precipitate the abolition of slavery.
	Part A: Option D is incorrect	By 1808 the United States had banned the importation of enslaved Africans. While slavery had been prohibited in Massachusetts since 1783, the Fugitive Slave Act required state officials to comply with the requests of enslavers to return formerly enslaved African Americans.
	Part B: Option D is correct	This part of the excerpt describes a man named Mitchum being forced into slavery and being separated from his family.
	Part B: Option A is incorrect	While Thompson could have been forced into slavery, he was ultimately freed. This part of the excerpt does not show the separation of families or a person being forced into slavery.
	Part B: Option B is incorrect	Stephen Bennett might have been forced into slavery, had his friends not purchased his freedom. This part of the excerpt does not show the separation of families or a person being forced into slavery.
	Part B: Option C is incorrect	While a man named Mitchum was ultimately forced into slavery, the fact he was given a trial does not provide evidence of the separation of families or a person being forced into slavery.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
35	Option A is correct	In the free-enterprise system, companies produce goods more efficiently in order to make and increase profits.
	Option B is incorrect	The profit motive would not prevent employers from mistreating workers.
	Option C is incorrect	Profits gained by one business would encourage competition from other companies entering the same industry.
	Option D is incorrect	The profit motive would not encourage businesses to split earnings with their workers.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
36	Option C is correct	All the treaties listed involved the issue of slavery: Florida became a slave state in 1845, Oregon prohibited slavery, and the 1848 treaty reopened the question of whether to allow slavery in new territories or states.
	Option A is incorrect	None of the treaties listed involved France. The Adams-Onís Treaty was negotiated with Spain, The Oregon Treaty with Great Britain, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo with Mexico.
	Option B is incorrect	The Florida and Oregon territories were not rich in gold resources.
	Option D is incorrect	These treaties contributed to the continued mistreatment of American Indians.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
37	Option "Competing businesses in the economy" is correct	Industrialization was fueled in the early 1800s by increased competition among businesses producing goods. To increase their profits, businesses were always seeking ways to innovate and gain advantages over competitors.
	Option "Advances in science and technology" is correct	Advances in science and technology, including railroads, steam power, interchangeable parts, and other innovations, contributed to rapid industrialization in the early 1800s.
	Option "Increased government regulation of the economy" is incorrect	A lack of government regulation, not increased government regulation, contributed to industrialization and economic growth in the early 1800s.
	Option "The abolitionist movement and the end of slavery" is incorrect	The abolitionist movement was a social reform movement in the 1800s. It did not affect industrialization.
	Option "Citizens seeking opportunities in the Southwest" is incorrect	The movement of citizens to the Southwest increased the production of cash crops, including cotton, but it did not contribute to industrialization.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
38	Option A is correct	Both George Mason in the Virginia Declaration of Rights and Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence believed in John Locke’s concept of natural rights. Jefferson referred to them as “unalienable rights.”
	Option B is incorrect	Jefferson argued for unalienable rights in the Declaration of Independence. He did not argue that enslaved people deserved voting rights.
	Option C is incorrect	Jefferson argued for unalienable rights in the Declaration of Independence. In the 1770s, he did not argue that a national bank limited states’ rights.
	Option D is incorrect	Jefferson argued for unalienable rights in the Declaration of Independence. He did not argue that a strong government protected individual rights, and he was associated with supporting a weaker central government.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
39	Option D is correct	Abigail Adams wanted to influence her husband to consider the rights of women in any future government. She wanted him to ensure that women’s husbands did not have total economic power over them.
	Option A is incorrect	Abigail Adams did not support the British but wanted her husband and other colonial leaders to consider the rights (including the property and educational rights) of women in the new government.
	Option B is incorrect	Abigail Adams did not argue for women to serve in the army. Instead, she wanted her husband to consider women’s rights in the new government.
	Option C is incorrect	While Abigail Adams wanted men to protect the rights of women in future laws passed by the new government, John Adams did not write the Mayflower Compact.

STAAR Spring 2026 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
40	Option A is correct	Joseph Smith and the Mormons' inability to freely practice their religion violated the free-exercise clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
	Option B is incorrect	Joseph Smith and the Mormons' inability to freely practice their religion did not violate the Fifth Amendment, which protects due process rights.
	Option C is incorrect	Joseph Smith and the Mormons' inability to freely practice their religion did not violate the Fourth Amendment, which protects against unreasonable searches and seizures.
	Option D is incorrect	Joseph Smith and the Mormons' inability to freely practice their religion did not violate the Fifteenth Amendment. The Fifteenth Amendment granted voting rights to African American men.