

**State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)  
Performance Level Descriptors  
Grade 8 Social Studies**

**Performance Level Descriptors**

Students' social studies skills are not assessed in isolation but are incorporated into questions that assess understanding of U.S. history content. Social studies skills focus on applying critical-thinking skills to interpret, organize, and analyze social studies information from a variety of sources.

**Students achieving *Masters Grade Level Performance* can**

- Evaluate historical perspectives on major events and issues in U.S. history
- Apply content knowledge in multiple contexts to make historical connections and evaluate change over time
- Evaluate historical justifications and interpretations through the examination of multiple and varied sources
- Analyze the foundation of representative government and how economic, political, and social changes impact representative government

**Students achieving *Meets Grade Level Performance* can**

- Describe the impact of colonialism and revolution on the development of the United States
- Explain the development of representative government in the United States
- Explain constitutional principles and issues
- Analyze the causes of the Civil War and the effects of Reconstruction
- Analyze the effects of geographic factors on major events in U.S. history
- Describe economic, political, and social factors associated with U.S. expansion
- Analyze factors that contributed to the economic development of the United States
- Explain cultural influences on the development of the United States, including the impact of immigrant groups, religion, reform movements, and fine arts
- Explain the social and economic effects of technological and scientific innovations

**Students achieving *Approaches Grade Level Performance* can**

- Identify major eras in U.S. history
- Explain the roles of significant individuals and events in the American Revolution
- Describe key events and issues in the early years of the American republic
- Describe key people and events in the Civil War and Reconstruction
- Locate places and regions related to major eras and key events in U.S. history

**Students achieving *Did Not Meet Grade Level Performance* can**

- Identify significant individuals, events, and issues in U.S. history
- Define major social studies terminology
- Identify and use social studies sources
- Recognize major historical points of reference