

Social Studies Key Themes: Grade 5

To be productive members of society, students must be critical consumers of information they read, hear, and observe and communicate effectively about their ideas. They need to gain knowledge from a wide array of sources and examine and evaluate that information to develop and express an informed opinion, using information gained from the sources and their background knowledge. Students must also make connections between what they learn about the past and the present to understand how and why events happen and people act in certain ways.

Thus, students must:

- Build an understanding of social studies content in the grade-level expectations (GLEs)
 - Examine authentic sources to build knowledge of social studies content
 - Explore meaningful questions about sources and content to build understanding
- Develop and express claims that demonstrate their understanding of content
 - Make connections among ideas, people, and events across time and place
 - Express understanding of content using evidence from authentic sources and outside knowledge

This document has two sections.

1. **Key Themes:** There are seven key themes across all grades. These describe the connections students must make to build and express their understanding of content. They progress from kindergarten to grade 12, as students build a more sophisticated understanding of content. The descriptions in this document are for grade 5.
2. **Sample Assessment Item:** This section compares an old end-of-year assessment item to a new item for grade 5. The new assessment items require students to make connections represented by the key themes to develop and express claims that demonstrate their understanding of GLE content.



Physical and Human Systems

Students in grade 5 differentiate among various types of maps and examine maps from the Age of Exploration to 1763. They also understand the relationship between geography and human settlement, including how climate, physical features, exploration, colonization/settlement patterns, and land use affect the environment. Lastly, students describe the impact of human systems on the environment (i.e. colonization, building communities, land use, and depletion of resources).



Migration and Settlement

Students in grade 5 understand that many factors impact the movement and settlement of people, such as exploration, colonization, and settling new lands. They describe ways in which location and environment influenced settlement and land use in colonial America. They also identify natural resources used by people of colonial America and they describe the impact of human action on the physical environment. Finally, students explain and give examples of how Native Americans, Europeans, and free and enslaved Africans adapted to living in the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies.



Economics and Trade

Students in grade 5 cite evidence of how supply, demand, and scarcity motivated European exploration and settlement in the Americas and describe triangular trade among the Americas, Europe, and West Africa during the colonial period. They explain the reasons for the French and Indian War and the economic impact on Britain resulting in unpopular policies on colonial America. Lastly, students describe how triangular trade led to economic interdependence and cultural diffusion, as well as how the agricultural and industrial specialization led to the development of regional economies in the colonies.



Politics and Governance

Students in grade 5 compare and contrast the different types of government in colonial America and summarize the key ideas that influenced the development of colonial governments and their influence on and contributions to democracy in the United States. They also investigate basic rights and responsibilities of citizens in current day government.



Society and Culture

Students in grade 5 understand the impacts of expansion, exploration, trade, slavery, and colonization on culture. They describe the origins, characteristics, and expansion of indigenous cultures and groups (i.e., the Aztecs and Incas) that existed in the Americas prior to European exploration. They identify the religious motivations of early explorers and describe how the Columbian Exchange led to cultural diffusion after 1492. Lastly, students compare and contrast religious groups that settled colonial America and examine the role of religion in colonial communities.



Conflict and Compromise

Students in grade 5 understand the goals, challenges, and achievements of the major European powers that colonized the Americas to explain how interaction among indigenous peoples and Europeans and then Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans sometimes led to cooperation and trade and other times led to conflict. Students describe how alliances and conflicts between British and other countries in North America and British policies affected the colonies. In particular, students describe the key people, ideas, and events that led to the French and Indian War.



Continuity and Change

Students in grade 5 construct timelines of key events in early American history, examine primary and secondary sources related to the pre-Columbian civilizations through 1763, and compare and contrast different points of view. They do this to understand how European exploration of the Americas changed the indigenous peoples, the Columbian Exchange brought new goods, people, ideas, innovations, and diseases to the Americas, Europe, and West Africa, and colonization led to the development of new economies and types of government.

Old Assessment Item

The first African slaves were brought to the Americas to

- A. be servants for wealthy New England families.
- B. build missions and settlements for the Spanish.
- C. work on Portuguese sugar plantations in the Caribbean.**
- D. help colonists fight wars against the Native Americans.

This item assesses GLE 28: Describe the trade that connected the Americas, Western Europe, and Western Africa prior to 1620, including the origins of the West Africa-European trade connection.

Key Concept

Triangular Trade that connected the Americas, Western Europe, and Western Africa, prior to 1620, including the goods each supplied and where they were shipped

This item asks students to identify a reason why African slaves were brought to the Americas. Students would need to know what was traded among the Americas, Western Europe, and Western Africa in the seventeenth century to answer this question. To prepare for this assessment in the classroom, teachers would need to ask students to memorize what was traded in triangular trade.

New Assessment Item

Grade 5 Item Set: [The Columbian Exchange](#)

This set assesses GLEs 5.2.3, 5.2.4, 5.3.3, 5.4.3, and 5.8.1.

Key Themes

- **Physical and Human Systems:** Students examine maps from the Age of Exploration to 1763.
- **Economics and Trade:** Students cite evidence of how supply, demand, and scarcity motivated European exploration and settlement in the Americas and describe triangular trade.
- **Conflict and Compromise:** Students understand the goals, challenges, and achievements of major European powers that colonized North America.
- **Continuity and Change:** Students examine primary and secondary sources related to the time period to understand how the Columbian Exchange brought new goods, people, ideas, innovations, and diseases to the Americas.

This item set asks students to examine two maps and a journal entry to describe the reasons for and impact of triangular trade in the seventeenth century. To prepare for this assessment in the classroom, students would need to examine sources about the Columbian Exchange and colonialism to build their understanding of why major European powers colonized North America and why trade was important to the Americas, Europe, and West Africa.