

Social Studies Key Themes: Grade 8

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 8.
2. **Sample Assessment Item:** This section compares an old end-of-year assessment item to a new item for grade 8. 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 8 read, interpret, and create maps to locate and describe the physical and political features and climate of different parts of Louisiana and identify how the natural world impacts Louisiana in ways that are different from other regions of the United States (e.g., the geographical and historical influences of the Mississippi River and hurricanes). Students use this information to describe the impact of geography on the history, culture, and economy of various places in Louisiana. They also understand the impact humans have on the environment to explain how levees, agriculture, urbanization, and the oil and gas industry have shaped the geography of Louisiana and its historical development.



Migration and Settlement

Students in grade 8 describe how indigenous and Native American groups, European settlers, Acadian exiles, and African slaves contributed to the development of Louisiana and created cultural diffusion and diversity in early Louisiana. Students also recognize patterns in migration to identify the push-pull factors that led cultural groups to move and settle in and outside of Louisiana during French colonization, the Antebellum period, and Reconstruction.



Economics and Trade

Students in grade 8 examine how Louisiana's systems of trade and resource usage have developed from the pre-colonial period through the modern era. They explain how Louisiana's economic interdependence with other regions, the concepts of supply, demand, and scarcity, and historical and geographical factors have shaped Louisiana's economy and resource use (i.e., the plantation economy of the Antebellum period and the effects of Reconstruction, New Orleans' role as an international port, the impacts of the Great Depression, and the state's role in the oil and gas industry). They also identify how and why Louisiana's economy has become increasingly specialized over time (e.g., fluctuations in oil prices can lead to inflation and unemployment) and predict how specialization will continue to impact the economy and different groups. Lastly, students explain how economic concepts relate to their personal economic decisions and research different careers.



Politics and Governance

Students in grade 8 understand how Louisiana’s government has changed and developed over time from the period of relatively decentralized governance by different Native American groups through colonial rule under Spain and France and then statehood. They recognize the influences of those early governments on modern-day Louisiana as they describe the role of various forms of local government in Louisiana and compare the constitutions of Louisiana and the United States. They also describe how Huey Long and the Populist movement, the Progressive era, and the Civil Rights movement affected politics in Louisiana. Lastly, students explain the importance of being an informed citizen, recognizing propaganda, and knowing the voting issues.



Society and Culture

Students in grade 8 describe how various social movements and reforms in Louisiana resulted from groups and individuals who exercised their rights and responsibilities to seek change. They identify the social movements within the Antebellum period, the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Populist movement, the Progressive era, the Great Depression, and the Civil Rights Movement and describe the impacts of those social movements on the government, economy, culture, and course of Louisiana history. Students also recognize the patterns for social change that movements follow and find commonalities among the motivations, goals, and effects of various movements.



Conflict and Compromise

Students in grade 8 understand how international conflict and foreign policy played a role in the development of Louisiana over time. They explain how differences and similarities among ethnic groups in colonial Louisiana contributed to cooperation and conflict through statehood. Students understand the importance of the Mississippi River as it relates to the War of 1812 and explain how the conflict directly impacted Louisiana. They also investigate and describe the impacts of Reconstruction and World War II on Louisiana’s social, political, and economic systems.

Continuity and Change

Students in grade 8 use a broad variety of primary and secondary sources with varied points of view to examine how Louisiana’s politics, economy, and culture changed over time through the Antebellum period, the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Populist movement, the Progressive era, the Great Depression, World War II, and the Civil Rights Movement. They explain how inventions and technological advances, resource distribution, geography, migration, and changing social norms contributed to the changes and predict ways in which Louisiana will continue to grow and change in the 21st century.

Old Assessment Item

Use the table below to answer the question.

New Orleans Population: 1810–1860	
Year	Population
1810	12,000
1820	41,000
1840	102,000
1860	169,000

Which factor **most likely** caused the population of New Orleans to change as shown in the table?

- efforts by the leaders of New Orleans to attract settlers by offering them free land and jobs
- peace treaties signed with American Indians that made New Orleans a safe place to live
- the invention of the steamboat and a worldwide increase in demand for crops grown in Louisiana**
- the construction of railroads and the rise of Louisiana as the South's most industrialized state

This item assesses GLE 10: Analyze the population characteristics and other demographic information about the United States and Louisiana, including rates of increase/decrease for demographic variables.

Key Concept

Explain the effects of changing population distribution during a given period of time.

This item asks students to determine that the population changed in New Orleans during the Antebellum period as a result of the steamboat and exports being shipped out of the port of New Orleans. To prepare for this assessment in the classroom, teachers would need to ensure students are able to recall this specific information.

New Assessment Item

Grade 8 Task Set: [Louisiana Economy during the Antebellum Period](#)

This set assesses [GLEs 8.2.6, GLE 8.7.2, and 8.10.3](#).

Key Themes

- Physical and Human Systems:** Students describe the impact of the Mississippi River and the port of New Orleans on Louisiana's economy.
- Migration and Settlement:** Students describe how African slaves contributed to the development of Louisiana and identify the push-pull factors that led cultural groups to come to Louisiana during the Antebellum period.
- Economics and Trade:** Students explain how Louisiana's economic interdependence, the concepts of supply and demand, and historical and geographical factors shaped Louisiana's economy during the Antebellum period.
- Continuity and Change:** Students in grade 8 use a broad variety of primary and secondary sources to examine how inventions and technological advances contributed to changes in Louisiana's economy during the Antebellum period.

This task set asks students to examine various sources to explain the growth of Louisiana's economy during the Antebellum period. To prepare for this assessment in the classroom, students would need to be able to gain information from and make connections among sources to answer questions about Louisiana's economy during this time period. They would also need to explain the role innovations played in the development of agriculture, understand the importance of the port of New Orleans in the early 19th century, and draw conclusions about the impact of foreign demand for agricultural goods on Louisiana's economy.