

North Carolina End-of-Course Test of U.S. History

What is end-of-course testing and what is its purpose?

The North Carolina End-of-Course Test of U. S. History is required by General Statute 115C-174.10 as a component of the North Carolina Annual Testing Program. The purposes of end-of-course tests are: (1) to assure that all high school graduates possess those minimum skills and that knowledge thought necessary to function as a member of society; (2) to provide a means of identifying strengths and weaknesses in the educational process in order to improve instructional delivery; and (3) to establish a means for making the educational system at the state, local, and school levels accountable to the public for results. This end-of-course test is one component of the North Carolina Testing Program.

At the LEA level, student's scores from the U.S. History end-of-course assessments are included in the students' permanent records and high school transcripts. LEAs are required by State Board of Education policy to use results from this assessment as at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the student's final grade in the course. At the state level, student scores from U.S. History assessment are used in the computation of school growth and performance composites for the ABCs Accountability Program. At the federal level, U.S. History results are used in the calculations of the Adequate Yearly Progress results under Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).

According to the State Board of Education (SBE) policy HSP-N-004 (16 NCAC 6D. 0503) students entering the ninth grade for the first time in 2006-07 and beyond are required to meet new exit standards. To meet graduation exit standards, students in the Career Preparation, College Technical Preparation, or College University Preparation courses of study are required to perform at Achievement Level III (with one standard error of measurement) or above on the U.S. History end-of-course assessment and four other designated end-of-course assessments (English I, Algebra I, Biology, and Civics and Economics).

What is measured by the test?

The U.S. History end-of-course test assesses the goals for U.S. History described in the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* (SCS) revised 2001. During the administration of the U.S. History end-of-course tests students are asked to respond to a total of 100 questions about U.S. history after 1789. Most of the items are scored for accountability purposes at the student, state, and federal levels. The additional items are experimental items used for field testing or research purposes. These experimental items are not included in any reporting of accountability decisions, whether at the student, classroom, school, or school district level.

Some of the questions may include stimulus material such as political cartoons, historical quotes, charts, graphs, or maps. Each test item measures a specific objective from the SCS and represents a thinking skill level derived from Marzano, et al., *Dimensions of Thinking* (1988) used to undergird the development of the *Standard Course of Study*. The variety of test items on each form allows students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the course content by using both lower and higher order thinking skills as required by the content standards outlined in the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*. In this way, students are asked to respond to questions that go beyond memorization of people, dates, events, and facts to apply their knowledge of concepts, principles, procedures and ideas to other events.

Table 1: Descriptive Information for the North Carolina End-of-Course Test of U.S. History

Goal	Description of Goal	Percentage of Items on Test
1	The learner will identify, investigate, and assess the effectiveness of the institutions of the emerging republic.	5-10
2	The learner will assess the competing forces of expansionism, nationalism, and sectionalism.	5-10
3	The learner will analyze the issues that led to the Civil War, the effects of the war, and the impact of Reconstruction on the nation.	5-10
4	The learner will evaluate the great westward movement and assess the impact of the agricultural revolution on the nation.	5-10

Table 1: Descriptive Information for the North Carolina End-of-Course Test of U.S. History (continued)

Goal	Description of Goal	Percentage of Items on Test
5	The learner will describe innovations in technology and business practices and assess their impact on economic, political, and social life in America.	5-10
6	The learner will analyze causes and effects of the United States emergence as a world power.	5-10
7	The learner will analyze the economic, political, and social reforms of the Progressive Period.	5-10
8	The learner will analyze United States involvement in World War I and the war's influence on international affairs during the 1920's.	4-8
9	The learner will appraise the economic, social, and political changes of the decades of "The Twenties" and "The Thirties."	8-12
10	The learner will analyze United States involvement in World War II and the war's influence on international affairs in following decades.	8-12
11	The learner will trace economic, political, and social development and assess their significance for the lives of Americans during this time period.	8-12
12	The learner will identify and analyze trends in domestic and foreign affairs of the United States during this time period.	5-10

How is the test administered? The North Carolina End-of-Course Test of U.S. History consists of 100 multiple-choice questions which are required by SBE policy to be administered within the last ten days (5 days for semester courses) of the course. These tests are untimed which allows students ample opportunity to demonstrate what they know and are able to do related to U.S. History concepts. Although the test administration for U.S. History is untimed, estimated timing is provided for scheduling purposes.

During each administration, multiple equivalent forms of the test are administered in each classroom to measure the breadth and depth of the curricular requirements. The tests are scanned and scored locally which allows for timely reporting of results. In addition, test scores are aggregated and disaggregated at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to fulfill the state and federal reporting requirements for the accountability programs.

How was the test developed? The questions on the U.S. History end-of-course test were written and reviewed by trained North Carolina teachers and educators. The questions were written to reflect the variety of conceptual expectations specified in the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* for U.S. History. The test questions are written to reflect the principles of Universal Design to ensure accessibility for students with special needs. The questions chosen represent common, high frequency content that generally reflect expectations set forth by a high school U.S. History course. The questions were field tested during the fall of 2004 and the spring of 2005 as a statewide administration that involved approximately 74,000 students from schools across the state. The U.S. History test was implemented operationally statewide for the first time in the fall of 2005.

What kinds of scores do students receive on the test? The scores on the North Carolina End-of-Course Test of U.S. History are reported as scale scores, achievement levels, and grades. The scale scores range from 119 to 183. The use of scale scores helps to make interpretation easier and more consistent from test to test. Achievement levels are also generated to provide an interpretation of student performance relative to a predetermined standard. Student scores are converted to one of the four achievement level categories shown below. In addition, student scores are reported as percentile ranks, which are generated from a statewide distribution of students who take the test during the first year the test is administered or the norming year.

Table 2: Achievement Levels for the North Carolina End-of-Course Test of U.S. History

Level	Description	Interim Scale Score Range	Final Scale Score Range
I	<p>Achievement Level I Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills of the course to be successful at a more advanced level in the content area.</p> <p>Students performing at Level I are able to identify the effectiveness of the emerging institutions of the New Republic; the impact of technology on economic, political and social life in America; the trends and impact of economic, political, and social developments of the twentieth century; assess the competing forces of expansionism, nationalism, and sectionalism including the impact on domestic conflicts and social and political reforms; the causes and effects of the United States' rise as a world power, its role in world conflicts and trends in foreign affairs; and the significance of the developments of the twentieth century on the lives of Americans.</p>	119-139	up to 139
II	<p>Achievement Level II Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills of the course and are minimally prepared to be successful at a more advanced level in the content area.</p> <p>Students performing at Level II are able to identify and describe the effectiveness of the emerging institutions of the New Republic; the impact of technology on economic, political and social life in America; the trends and impact of economic, political, and social developments of the twentieth century; assess the competing forces of expansionism, nationalism, and sectionalism including the impact on domestic conflicts and social and political reforms; and the causes and effects of the United States' rise as a world power, its role in world conflicts and trends in foreign affairs, and the significance of the developments of the twentieth century on the lives of Americans.</p>	140-149	140-148
III	<p>Achievement Level III Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of the course subject matter and skills and are well prepared for a more advanced level in the content area.</p> <p>Students performing at Level III are able to identify, describe, and analyze the effectiveness of the emerging institutions of the New Republic; the impact of technology on economic, political and social life in America; the trends and impact of economic, political, and social developments of the twentieth century; analyze the competing forces of expansionism, nationalism, and sectionalism including the impact on domestic conflicts and social and political reforms; and the causes and effects of the United States' rise as a world power, its role in world conflicts and trends in foreign affairs, and the significance of the developments of the twentieth century on the lives of Americans.</p>	150-159	149-159
IV	<p>Achievement Level IV Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient in the course subject matter and skills and are very well prepared for a more advanced level in the content area.</p> <p>Students performing at Level IV are able to identify, describe, analyze, and evaluate the effectiveness of the emerging institutions of the New Republic; the impact of technology on economic, political and social life in America; the trends and impact of economic, political, and social developments of the twentieth century; assess the competing forces of expansionism, nationalism, and sectionalism including the impact on domestic conflicts and social and political reforms; and the causes and effects of the United States' rise as a world power, its role in world conflicts and trends in foreign affairs, and the significance of the developments of the twentieth century on the lives of Americans.</p>	160-183	160 and over

Sample Items

On the following pages are samples of the types of items that appear on the North Carolina End-of-Course Test of U.S. History. The objective indicates the curriculum objective the item is designed to assess. The thinking skill corresponds to the level of thinking the item requires as defined by a thinking skills taxonomy adapted from *Dimensions of Thinking* by Robert J. Marzano and others. A description of the Thinking Skills used in the North Carolina Testing Program can be found on our web site at www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing. Additional sample items of the types that appear on the North Carolina End-of-Course Test of U.S. History can be found at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/testing/eoc/ushistorysampleitems.pdf>.