



**Achievement Level Descriptors**  
**for**  
**Grade 4 Social Studies**

Georgia Department of Education  
September 2015  
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### Achievement Levels and Achievement Level Descriptors

With the implementation of the Georgia Milestones Assessment System, Georgia educators have developed four achievement levels to describe student mastery and command of the knowledge and skills outlined in Georgia’s content standards. Most students have at least some knowledge of the content described in the content standards; however, achievement levels succinctly describe how much mastery a student has. Achievement levels give meaning and context to scale scores by describing the knowledge and skills students must demonstrate to achieve each level.

The four achievement levels on Georgia Milestones are *Beginning Learner*, *Developing Learner*, *Proficient Learner*, and *Distinguished Learner*. The general meaning of each of the four levels is provided below:

**Beginning Learners do not yet demonstrate proficiency** in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia’s content standards. The students ***need substantial academic support*** to be prepared for the next grade level or course and to be on track for college and career readiness.

**Developing Learners demonstrate partial proficiency** in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia’s content standards. The students ***need additional academic support*** to ensure success in the next grade level or course and to be on track for college and career readiness.

**Proficient Learners demonstrate proficiency** in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia’s content standards. The students ***are prepared*** for the next grade level or course and are on track for college and career readiness.

**Distinguished Learners demonstrate advanced proficiency** in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia’s content standards. The students ***are well prepared*** for the next grade level or course and are well prepared for college and career readiness.

More detailed and content-specific concepts and skills are provided for each grade, content area, and course in the **Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs)**. ALDs are narrative descriptions of the knowledge and skills expected at each of the four achievement levels and were developed for each grade level, content area, and course by committees of Georgia educators in March 2015 and July 2015. The ALDs are based on the state-adopted content standards.

**ALDs show a progression of knowledge and skills** for which students must demonstrate competency across the achievement levels. It is important to understand that a student should demonstrate mastery of the knowledge and skills within his/her achievement level *as well as all content and skills in any achievement levels that precede his/her own, if any*. For example, a Proficient Learner should also possess the knowledge and skills of a Developing Learner *and* a Beginning Learner.

POLICY ALDs			
Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner
<p><b>Beginning Learners do not yet demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills</b> necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia’s content standards. The students need substantial academic support to be prepared for the next grade level or course and to be on track for <i>college and career readiness</i>.</p>	<p><b>Developing Learners demonstrate partial proficiency in the knowledge and skills</b> necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia’s content standards. The students need additional academic support to ensure success in the next grade level or course and to be on track for <i>college and career readiness</i>.</p>	<p><b>Proficient Learners demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills</b> necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia’s content standards. The students are prepared for the next grade level or course and are on track for <i>college and career readiness</i>.</p>	<p><b>Distinguished Learners demonstrate advanced proficiency in the knowledge and skills</b> necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia’s content standards. The students are well prepared for the next grade level or course and are well prepared for <i>college and career readiness</i>.</p>
RANGE ALDs			
Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner
<p>A student who achieves at the <b>Beginning Learner</b> level demonstrates minimal command of the grade-level standards. The pattern exhibited by student responses indicates that students are most likely able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>locate on a map where the following groups of Native Americans settled: Southwest (Hopi), Plains (Pawnee), and Southeastern (Seminole);</li> <li>identify how Native Americans obtained food, clothing, or shelter;</li> <li>identify cooperation or conflict between Europeans and Native Americans;</li> <li>identify who wrote the Declaration of Independence;</li> <li>identify King George III, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin,</li> </ul>	<p>A student who achieves at the <b>Developing Learner</b> level demonstrates partial command of the grade-level standards. The pattern exhibited by student responses indicates that students are most likely able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>locate on a map the general location where the following groups of Native Americans settled: Arctic (Inuit), Northwest (Kwakiutl), and Plateau (Nez Perce);</li> <li>explain the ways Native Americans used their environment to obtain food, clothing, and shelter;</li> <li>identify reasons for, obstacles to, and accomplishments of the Spanish, French, and English explorations of John Cabot, Vasco Nunez de Balboa, Juan</li> </ul>	<p>A student who achieves at the <b>Proficient Learner</b> level demonstrates proficiency of the grade-level standards. The pattern exhibited by student responses indicates that students are most likely able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explain the impact of the environment on Native American groups;</li> <li>explain reasons for, obstacles to, and accomplishments of the Spanish, French, and English explorations of John Cabot, Vasco Nunez de Balboa, Juan Ponce de Leon, Christopher Columbus, Henry Hudson, or Jacques Cartier;</li> <li>explain the effect of conflict and cooperation between Europeans and Native Americans;</li> <li>compare or contrast life in the</li> </ul>	<p>A student who achieves at the <b>Distinguished Learner</b> level demonstrates advanced proficiency of the grade-level standards. The pattern exhibited by student responses indicates that students are most likely able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>analyze the impact of the environment on Native American groups;</li> <li>analyze the reasons for, obstacles to, and accomplishments of the Spanish, French, and English explorations of John Cabot, Vasco Nunez de Balboa, Juan Ponce de Leon, Christopher Columbus, Henry Hudson, or Jacques Cartier;</li> <li>analyze the effect of conflict and cooperation between Europeans</li> </ul>

<p>Thomas Jefferson, Benedict Arnold, Patrick Henry, or John Adams;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify the roles of the branches of government;</li> <li>• identify the purpose of the Bill of Rights;</li> <li>• locate major physical features of the United States including the Atlantic Coastal Plain, Great Plains, Gulf of Mexico, and Great Lakes;</li> <li>• locate the major man-made features of New York City, NY; Boston, MA; and Philadelphia, PA;</li> <li>• identify in which document “We the people” is found;</li> <li>• identify examples of ways the government may handle conflicts;</li> <li>• identify examples of how the government defends the nation;</li> <li>• identify examples of persons participating in public life;</li> <li>• name positive character traits of key historic figures and government leaders (honesty, patriotism, courage, trustworthiness); and</li> <li>• identify elements of a personal budget.</li> </ul>	<p>Ponce de Leon, Christopher Columbus, Henry Hudson, or Jacques Cartier;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain cooperation or conflict between Europeans and Native Americans;</li> <li>• identify lifestyles that may have been found in the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southern colonies;</li> <li>• identify the lifestyle of a landowner, farmer, artisan, woman, indentured servant, slave, or Native American during the colonial period;</li> <li>• identify the terms and events—French and Indian War, British imperial policy that led to the 1765 Stamp Act, the slogan “no taxation without representation,” the activities of the Sons of Liberty, and the Boston Tea Party—that shaped the revolutionary movement in America;</li> <li>• identify reasons the Declaration of Independence was written;</li> <li>• identify the significance of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, Saratoga, and Yorktown;</li> <li>• describe the role played by King George III, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Benedict Arnold, Patrick Henry, or John Adams in the American Revolution;</li> </ul>	<p>New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southern colonies;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain the lifestyles of large landowners, farmers, artisans, women, indentured servants, slaves, and Native Americans during the colonial period;</li> <li>• sequence the events—French and Indian War, British imperial policy that led to the 1765 Stamp Act, the activities of the Sons of Liberty, and the Boston Tea Party—that shaped the revolutionary movement in America;</li> <li>• explain how the Declaration of Independence was a response to tyranny and the abuse of power or explain why the Declaration of Independence was necessary;</li> <li>• explain why the Battle of Lexington and Concord, the Battle of Saratoga, or the Battle of Yorktown was significant;</li> <li>• explain the impact of King George III, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Benedict Arnold, Patrick Henry, or John Adams on the American Revolution;</li> <li>• explain weaknesses of the government established by the Articles of Confederation;</li> <li>• explain the role played by one of the leaders of the Constitutional Convention or explain the major</li> </ul>	<p>and Native Americans;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyze how differences in lifestyles in the three regions affected the development of New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southern colonies;</li> <li>• compare the lifestyles of large landowners, farmers, artisans, women, indentured servants, slaves, and Native Americans during the colonial period;</li> <li>• analyze the relationship of the events—French and Indian War, British imperial policy that led to the 1765 Stamp Act, the activities of the Sons of Liberty, and the Boston Tea Party—that shaped the revolutionary movement in America;</li> <li>• analyze why the Declaration of Independence was necessary;</li> <li>• analyze the results of the Battle of Lexington and Concord, the Battle of Saratoga, or the Battle of Yorktown;</li> <li>• analyze the impact of King George III, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Benedict Arnold, Patrick Henry, or John Adams on the American Revolution;</li> <li>• evaluate the effectiveness of the Articles of Confederation and the impact this had on the development of the new nation;</li> <li>• analyze the debates surrounding</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation;</li> <li>• identify leaders of the Constitutional Convention;</li> <li>• explain the function of each branch of government or explain the relationship of the U.S. government to state governments;</li> <li>• explain the reason for the creation of the Bill of Rights;</li> <li>• identify causes and events of the War of 1812;</li> <li>• identify one noted example of territorial expansion—the Louisiana Purchase, the Lewis and Clark expedition, and the acquisitions of Texas (the Alamo and independence), Oregon (Oregon Trail), and California (the gold rush and the development of mining towns);</li> <li>• explain the impact of the steamboat, the steam locomotive, and the telegraph on life in America;</li> <li>• explain the impact of westward expansion on Native Americans;</li> <li>• identify Harriet Tubman and Elizabeth Cady Stanton;</li> <li>• locate major physical features of the United States including the Atlantic Coastal Plain, Great Plains, Continental Divide, Great Basin, Death Valley, Gulf of Mexico, St. Lawrence River, and</li> </ul>	<p>issues debated;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain the reasons for checks and balances or explain separation of powers;</li> <li>• explain in general terms how the Bill of Rights places limits on the power of government or explain why the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution in 1791;</li> <li>• explain the causes of the War of 1812;</li> <li>• explain territorial expansion as seen in the Louisiana Purchase, the Lewis and Clark expedition, and the acquisitions of Texas (the Alamo and independence), Oregon (Oregon Trail), and California (the gold rush and the development of mining towns);</li> <li>• compare and contrast the importance of the steamboat, the steam locomotive, and the telegraph on life in America;</li> <li>• explain the impact of westward expansion on Native Americans;</li> <li>• explain the importance of Harriet Tubman and Elizabeth Cady Stanton;</li> <li>• explain the significance of Sojourner Truth to the abolitionist and suffrage movements;</li> <li>• identify reasons that led some groups to develop permanent settlements;</li> <li>• explain how John Cabot, Vasco</li> </ul>	<p>one of the Constitutional Convention’s major issues;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyze the relationship of the three branches of government to each other and to the states;</li> <li>• analyze the reasons for adding the Bill of Rights to the Constitution;</li> <li>• explain the significance of the burning of the Capitol and the White House;</li> <li>• analyze the importance of the Louisiana Purchase, the Lewis and Clark expedition, and the acquisitions of Texas (the Alamo and independence), Oregon (Oregon Trail), and California (the gold rush and the development of mining towns);</li> <li>• analyze the importance of the steamboat, the steam locomotive, and the telegraph on life in America;</li> <li>• analyze the impact of westward expansion on Native Americans;</li> <li>• analyze the impact of Harriet Tubman and Elizabeth Cady Stanton;</li> <li>• analyze the impact of Sojourner Truth on the abolitionist and suffrage movements;</li> <li>• analyze reasons why some groups developed permanent villages and others did not;</li> <li>• analyze why a given explorer was able or unable to adapt to</li> </ul>
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	<p>Great Lakes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• locate the major man-made features of New York City, NY; Boston, MA; Philadelphia, PA; and the Erie Canal;</li> <li>• identify economic activities practiced in the different colony groups (New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southern colonies);</li> <li>• identify specific American and British advantages and disadvantages at the Battles of Lexington and Concord, Saratoga, and Yorktown;</li> <li>• identify physical barriers and/or physical gateways encountered by Lewis and Clark or settlers on the Oregon Trail;</li> <li>• identify the natural rights listed in the Declaration of Independence (the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness);</li> <li>• describe the meaning of “We the people” from the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution as a reflection of consent of the governed or popular sovereignty;</li> <li>• identify aspects of the federal system of government;</li> <li>• identify the importance of the First Amendment;</li> <li>• explain how laws are enforced;</li> <li>• identify ways in which the government protects rights of citizens;</li> </ul>	<p>Nunez de Balboa, Juan Ponce de Leon, Christopher Columbus, Henry Hudson, or Jacques Cartier adapted, or failed to adapt, to the various physical environments in which they traveled;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain how the physical geography of each colony group helped determine economic activities practiced therein;</li> <li>• explain how the American and British forces sought to use the physical geography of Lexington and Concord, Saratoga, and Yorktown;</li> <li>• explain how physical barriers or gateways affected territorial expansion between 1801 and 1860;</li> <li>• describe the meaning of natural rights as found in the Declaration of Independence (the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness);</li> <li>• explain the reasons for the use of “We the people” in the U.S. Constitution;</li> <li>• explain aspects of a federal system of government;</li> <li>• explain the importance of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution;</li> <li>• explain in broad, general terms the process for making laws;</li> <li>• explain ways the government</li> </ul>	<p>the physical environment in which he traveled;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyze the impact of geography on economic activities in the colonies;</li> <li>• analyze how the American and British forces sought to use the physical geography of Lexington and Concord, Saratoga, and Yorktown;</li> <li>• analyze how physical barriers or gateways affected territorial expansion between 1801 and 1860;</li> <li>• evaluate the importance of the natural rights in the Declaration of Independence;</li> <li>• analyze the reasons for the use of “We the people” in the U.S. Constitution;</li> <li>• analyze how the United States uses a federal system of government;</li> <li>• analyze the importance of the First Amendment;</li> <li>• explain how the government helps protect rights;</li> <li>• explain ways the government provides for the defense of the nation;</li> <li>• analyze the importance of limiting the power of people in authority;</li> <li>• explain why fiscal responsibility of government is important;</li> <li>• analyze the benefits of persons</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain ways the government provides for the defense of the nation;</li> <li>• identify examples of persons respecting the rights of others and/or promoting the common good;</li> <li>• explain why it is important for citizens in a democratic society to participate in public (civic) life by staying informed, voting, volunteering, and/or communicating with public officials;</li> <li>• identify the noted positive character traits associated with important historic figures (honesty, patriotism, courage, trustworthiness);</li> <li>• define opportunity costs;</li> <li>• identify examples of price incentives;</li> <li>• identify examples of specialization;</li> <li>• define voluntary exchange;</li> <li>• identify the role of trade in economic relationships; and</li> <li>• explain the purpose of a personal budget.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain ways the government provides for the defense of the nation;</li> <li>• explain why limiting the power of people in authority is necessary;</li> <li>• define fiscal responsibility;</li> <li>• explain why it is important to respect the rights of others and to promote the common good;</li> <li>• explain the necessity of obeying reasonable laws/rules voluntarily;</li> <li>• illustrate how George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Patrick Henry, John Adams, Harriet Tubman, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, or Sojourner Truth demonstrated one of the positive character traits of honesty, patriotism, courage, and trustworthiness;</li> <li>• explain how opportunity costs influence decision making;</li> <li>• explain how price incentives affect people's behavior and choices;</li> <li>• explain how specialization affects the standard of living;</li> <li>• explain how voluntary exchange helps both buyers and sellers;</li> <li>• explain the role of trade in promoting economic activity;</li> <li>• explain the impact of the steamboat, the steam</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participating in public life;</li> <li>• analyze the effect opportunity costs have on decision making;</li> <li>• analyze the impact of price incentives on people's behavior and choices;</li> <li>• analyze how specialization affects the standard of living;</li> <li>• analyze the importance of voluntary exchange;</li> <li>• analyze the role of trade in promoting economic activity;</li> <li>• analyze the impact of the steamboat, the steam locomotive, and the telegraph on business productivity during the development of the United States; and</li> <li>• analyze the importance of spending or saving decisions.</li> </ul>
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		<p>locomotive, and the telegraph on business productivity during the development of the United States; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• explain why personal spending and savings decisions are important.</li></ul>	
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