



**Achievement Level Descriptors**  
**for**  
**United States History**

Georgia Department of Education  
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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 course standards. The pattern exhibited by student responses indicates that students are most likely able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognize that Europeans settled in North America during the seventeenth century;</li> <li>identify mercantilism;</li> <li>identify the primary causes of the American Revolution;</li> <li>identify territorial expansion in the early decades of the new nation;</li> <li>identify the U.S. Constitution;</li> <li>identify the key events relating to the causes of the Civil War;</li> <li>identify industrial growth;</li> <li>identify Reconstruction;</li> <li>identify the origins of U.S. involvement in World War I;</li> <li>identify the Great Depression;</li> <li>identify FDR and the New Deal;</li> </ul>	<p>A student who achieves at the <b>Developing Learner</b> level demonstrates partial command of the course standards. The pattern exhibited by student responses indicates that students are most likely able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify areas of European settlement in North America during the seventeenth century;</li> <li>describe the Middle Passage and growth of the African-American population;</li> <li>describe the primary causes of the American Revolution;</li> <li>identify the impact of territorial expansion and population growth in the early decades of the new nation;</li> <li>explain the Great Compromise and the separation of powers;</li> <li>identify growing north-south divisions and westward expansion;</li> <li>identify the key events and issues relating to the causes and course of the Civil War;</li> </ul>	<p>A student who achieves at the <b>Proficient Learner</b> level demonstrates proficiency of the course standards. The pattern exhibited by student responses indicates that students are most likely able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describe areas of European settlement in North America during the seventeenth century;</li> <li>explain the way the economy of British North America developed;</li> <li>explain the primary causes of the American Revolution;</li> <li>describe specific events and key ideas that brought about the adoption and implementation of the United States Constitution;</li> <li>describe the impact of territorial expansion and population growth and the impact of this growth in the early decades of the new nation;</li> <li>describe the process of economic growth and its regional and national impact in the first half of the nineteenth century;</li> </ul>	<p>A student who achieves at the <b>Distinguished Learner</b> level demonstrates advanced proficiency of the course standards. The pattern exhibited by student responses indicates that students are most likely able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describe areas of European settlement in North America during the seventeenth century, including reasons for settlement, relations with Native Americans, and role of location and place in specific colonial regions;</li> <li>trace the ways that the economy and society of British North America developed, including the trans-Atlantic trade, the Middle Passage, and the Great Awakening;</li> <li>explain the primary causes of the American Revolution and identify the ideological, military, and diplomatic aspects of the American Revolution;</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify the major developments of World War II;</li> <li>• identify technological developments in the United States, 1945–1975;</li> <li>• identify the Cold War;</li> <li>• identify the civil rights movement, 1945–1970;</li> <li>• identify the political developments in the United States between 1945 and 1970; and</li> <li>• identify social change movements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe the expansion of railroads;</li> <li>• describe Reconstruction;</li> <li>• identify the Progressive Era;</li> <li>• identify the origins and impact of U.S. involvement in World War I;</li> <li>• identify some causes and consequences of the Great Depression;</li> <li>• describe Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal;</li> <li>• identify the major developments and the domestic impact of World War II;</li> <li>• identify the domestic impact of the Cold War on the United States;</li> <li>• describe the political developments in the United States between 1945 and 1970;</li> <li>• identify technological development and economic growth in the United States, 1945–1975;</li> <li>• identify dimensions of the civil rights movement, 1945–1970;</li> <li>• identify social change movements and organizations of the 1960s; and</li> <li>• identify changes in national politics since 1968.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe the relationship between growing north-south divisions and westward expansion;</li> <li>• identify the key events, issues, and individuals relating to the causes, course, and consequences of the Civil War, including the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Dred Scott case, major generals and battles, and the Emancipation Proclamation;</li> <li>• identify legal, political, and social dimensions of Reconstruction, including the Freedmen’s Bureau, Black Codes, and the Thirteenth through Fifteenth Amendments;</li> <li>• describe some effects of the growth of big business and technological innovation after Reconstruction;</li> <li>• describe important consequences of American industrial growth;</li> <li>• identify major efforts to reform American society and politics in the Progressive Era;</li> <li>• explain America’s evolving relationship with the world at the turn of the twentieth century;</li> <li>• describe the origins and impact of U.S. involvement in World War I;</li> <li>• identify key developments in the aftermath of World War I;</li> <li>• describe the causes and consequences of the Great Depression;</li> <li>• describe Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal;</li> <li>• describe the major developments and the domestic impact of World War II;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain specific events and key ideas that brought about the adoption and implementation of the U.S. Constitution;</li> <li>• explain the impact of territorial expansion and population growth and the impact of this growth in the early decades of the new nation;</li> <li>• explain the process of economic growth, its regional and national impact in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the different responses to it;</li> <li>• explain the relationship between growing north-south divisions and westward expansion;</li> <li>• identify the key events, issues, and individuals relating to the causes, course, and consequences of the Civil War, including the Dred Scott case, Lincoln’s efforts to preserve the Union, and the economic disparity between the North and the South;</li> <li>• identify legal, political, and social dimensions of Reconstruction, including Presidential and Radical Republican Reconstruction and the compromise of 1877;</li> <li>• describe the economic, social, and geographic impact of the growth of big business and technological innovation after Reconstruction;</li> <li>• explain important consequences of American industrial growth;</li> <li>• identify major efforts to reform American society and politics in the Progressive Era;</li> </ul>
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