

The Research-  
Driven Solution  
to Raise the  
Quality of High  
School Core  
Courses

**QualityCore<sup>®</sup>**



U.S. History

**End-of-Course Test Blueprint**



## Test Blueprint QualityCore® End-of-Course Assessment U.S. History

The QualityCore® End-of-Course (EOC) system is modular, consisting of either two 35–38 item multiple-choice components or one 35–38 item multiple-choice component combined with a constructed-response component. This approach to measuring achievement of ACT Course Standards allows users to select the configuration that best meets their particular needs, while still receiving scores on a standardized QualityCore scale.

The EOC Test Blueprint tables below show how the test items are distributed across reporting categories and depth-of-knowledge levels. The tables display ranges of the percentages of operational multiple-choice items and the number of operational constructed-response items per test. Sample standards by reporting category are provided, along with definitions of the depth-of-knowledge thinking processes covered by the assessment. The constructed-response scoring guide is also presented.

Reporting category	Percent of multiple-choice items	Number of constructed-response items**
Building a Nation (B*)	20–30	0–1
Rebuilding a Nation (C)	20–30	0–1
Challenges at Home and Abroad (D)	20–30	0–1
America Since World War II (E)	20–30	0–1
Total	100	2

\* Code indicates specific ACT Course Standard(s) with which the reporting category is aligned.

\*\* Constructed-response module consists of two items, one each from two of the four reporting categories.

Depth of Knowledge	Percent of multiple-choice items	Number of constructed-response items
Level 1 — Recall	20–30	—
Level 2 — Basic Reasoning	40–50	—
Level 3 — Complex Reasoning	20–30	2
Total	100	2

### Sample ACT Course Standards by Reporting Category

#### Building a Nation (Colonization to circa 1877)

- Identify the reasons for colonization and analyze its impacts
- Evaluate the causes and course of the American Revolution and the subsequent development of government

- Evaluate political and territorial changes resulting from westward expansion in the early nineteenth century
- Analyze social and political discord and the growth of sectional conflict in the antebellum period
- Evaluate the technological, social, and strategic aspects of the Civil War
- Evaluate the social, economic, and political impact of Reconstruction on the South and the rest of the U.S.

#### Rebuilding a Nation (circa 1877 to circa 1914)

- Identify and evaluate issues associated with the development of the American West
- Analyze the growth and impacts of business and industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
- Compare the experiences of various social groups and political movements during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
- Identify and evaluate factors that influenced U.S. activity abroad during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

#### Challenges at Home and Abroad (circa 1914 to 1941)

- Analyze the causes, course, and enduring impacts of World War I
- Identify and evaluate societal changes of the 1920s
- Explain the various causes and impacts of the Great Depression and the significance of the New Deal

#### America Since World War II (1941 to present)

- Analyze the origins and major events of the Cold War and U.S. foreign policy since World War II
- Identify and evaluate major domestic issues and responses of the presidential administrations since World War II
- Identify events and individuals of the civil rights, human rights, and counterculture movements and evaluate their impacts
- Evaluate the political and social impacts of the Vietnam War
- Identify major contemporary social, environmental, and political issues, and evaluate the U.S. role in world events
- Identify the significant military and political aspects of World War II
- Evaluate the social, political, and economic impacts of World War II on the home front

## Thinking Processes

ACT uses the depth-of-knowledge (DOK) levels (Webb, 2002) to describe the thinking processes assessed by the EOC tests. Webb developed descriptions of the DOK levels specifically for social studies. He noted that some action verbs, such as “explain,” “describe,” and “interpret,” can be classified at different levels, depending on the object of the action.<sup>1</sup>

**Level 1: Recall** requires the recall of information such as facts, terms, definitions, and events. Students must identify features, trends, or patterns. Level 1 items require students to:

- Identify, list, or define facts, terms, concepts, and trends
- Recall who, what, where, and when

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<sup>1</sup> Webb, Norman L. (2002). Depth-of-Knowledge Levels for Four Content Areas. Retrieved from <http://facstaff.wcer.wisc.edu/normw/All%20content%20areas%20%20DOK%20levels%2032802.doc>

- Recognize or identify specific information contained in graphics (maps, charts, etc.)
- Label locations on a map
- Describe the features of places or people

**Level 2: Basic Reasoning** requires basic problem solving and describing, comparing, and interpreting trends or patterns. Level 2 items require students to:

- Describe the cause/effect of a particular event
- Identify patterns in events or behavior
- Contrast or compare people, places, events, and concepts
- Classify or sort items into meaningful categories
- Describe, interpret, or explain issues and problems, patterns, reasons, significance or impact, and points of view
- Convert information from one form to another

**Level 3: Complex Reasoning** requires planning, analyzing, explaining, justifying, using evidence, generalizing, and postulating. The cognitive demands are complex and abstract, going beyond Level 2. Level 3 items require students to:

- Develop a logical argument
- Justify “how and why” through application and evidence
- Analyze similarities and differences in issues, events, and problems
- Make connections across time and place to explain a concept
- Draw conclusions from observations
- Apply concepts to new situations
- Support ideas with details and examples

### **QualityCore U.S. History Constructed-Response Holistic Scoring Guide: Analysis Task**

For one of the two constructed-response items, a score (ranging from 1 to 4) is given using this scoring guide. No score is given to an essay that is blank, off-topic, illegible, or written in another language.

**Score of 4: A response at this level provides evidence of thorough knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. The essay:**

- Demonstrates thoughtful interpretation and/or analysis, of the historical issue and its implications
- Provides insightful explanation of the prompt topic, effectively using relevant and accurate facts, examples, and details from at least two of the required kinds of evidence
- Conveys knowledge and ideas effectively

**Score of 3: A response at this level provides evidence of competent knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. The essay:**

- Demonstrates reasonable interpretation and/or analysis of the historical issue and its implications
- Provides sufficient explanation of the prompt topic, appropriately using generally accurate facts, examples, and details from at least two of the required kinds of evidence
- Conveys knowledge and ideas adequately

**Score of 2: A response at this level provides evidence of basic knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. The essay:**

- Demonstrates incomplete or inconsistent interpretation and/or analysis of the historical issue and its implications
- Provides some explanation of the prompt topic. Facts, examples, and details included are partially correct, though a few may be incorrect or lack depth. The essay addresses fewer than two of the required kinds of evidence or may address them with little development.
- Conveys knowledge and ideas somewhat unclearly

**Score of 1: A response at this level provides evidence of minimal knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. The essay:**

- Demonstrates little or no interpretation and/or analysis of the historical issue and its implications
- Provides little or no explanation of the prompt topic. Facts, examples, and details included are mostly incorrect or lack depth. The essay may address fewer than two of the required kinds of evidence.
- Conveys knowledge and ideas in a manner that is unclear and/or impedes understanding

**QualityCore U.S. History Constructed-Response Holistic Scoring Guide:  
Visual Stimulus Task**

For one of the two constructed-response items, a score (ranging from 1 to 3) is given using this scoring guide. No score is given to a response that is blank, off-topic, illegible, or written in another language.

**Score of 3: A response at this level provides evidence of thorough knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. The response:**

- Demonstrates thoughtful analysis of the prompt topic that effectively supports logical conclusions or interpretations
- Provides insightful explanation of the prompt topic
- Conveys knowledge and ideas effectively

**Score of 2: A response at this level provides evidence of basic knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.**

- Demonstrates incomplete or inconsistent analysis of the prompt topic that may not fully support logical conclusions or interpretations
- Provides some explanation of the prompt topic using partially correct content and details that may contain a few errors or misconceptions
- Conveys knowledge and ideas adequately, but portions of the response may lack coherence

**Score of 1: A response at this level provides evidence of minimal knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.**

- Demonstrates little or no analysis of the prompt topic to support logical conclusions or interpretations
- Provides little or no explanation of the prompt topic using incorrect and/or incomplete content/details that contain significant errors or misconceptions
- Conveys knowledge and ideas in a manner that is unclear and/or impedes understanding.

ACT endorses the *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education* and the *Code of Professional Responsibilities in Educational Measurement*, guides to the conduct of those involved in educational testing. ACT is committed to ensuring that each of its testing programs upholds the guidelines in each *Code*. A copy of each *Code* may be obtained free of charge from ACT Customer Services (68), P.O. Box 1008, Iowa City, IA 52243-1008, 319/337-1429.