



Grade 4

The content of the assessment varies at each grade to reflect what students should know and be able to do. The percentage of the assessment dedicated to each civics content area and each category of intellectual skills is specified for each grade by the civics framework.

Fourth-graders were presented with two 25-minute sections, each containing multiple-choice and constructed-response questions with 15 questions per section. Each student took just a portion of the assessment. The entire assessment at grade 4 included 90 items, 22 of them constructed response and 68 multiple choice.

Civics Achievement Levels at Grade 4

The civics achievement levels at grade 4 represent what fourth-graders should know and be able to do at each level. The following are excerpts from the civics achievement-level descriptions with the corresponding cut scores noted in parentheses. The full descriptions can be found at http://www.nagb.org/pubs/civics_06.pdf.

Basic (136): Fourth-grade students performing at the *Basic* level should have an understanding of what government is and what it does, and they should be able to identify some things that government is not allowed to do. These students should have some understanding of the foundations of the American political system. In the context of their school and community, they should understand rules and laws, rights and responsibilities, and ways to participate in governing. These students should know that the world is divided into many countries.

Proficient (177): Fourth-grade students performing at the *Proficient* level should have a good understanding of what the American Government does and of why it is not allowed to act in certain ways. These students should have an age-appropriate understanding of the foundations of the American political system. They

should understand purposes of laws, ways shared beliefs unify Americans, what it means to be a citizen, rights and responsibilities of citizens, and the idea of public participation in governing. These students should be able to describe ways in which countries interact with one another.

Advanced (215): Fourth-grade students performing at the *Advanced* level should understand and be able to explain some purposes of government. When given age-appropriate examples, they should recognize differences between power and authority and between limited and unlimited government. They should be able to explain the importance of shared values in American democracy, to identify ways citizens can participate in governing, and to understand that with rights come responsibilities. They should be able to explain how nations benefit when they resolve conflicts peacefully.

Question on the Fact That Only Citizens Can Vote in the U.S.

The following multiple-choice question from the grade 4 civics assessment requires the skill of “identifying and describing” in the content area, “What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?”

The percentages below the question indicate how students performed on the question. In addition to the overall percentage of students who answered the question correctly, the percentage of students at each achievement level who answered the question correctly is presented.

As an example of how to interpret these percentages, 75 percent of the students overall answered the question below correctly. When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 94 percent answered correctly.

In the United States, you have to be a citizen in order to

- A drive a car
- B own a business
- C vote in a presidential election
- D write letters to newspaper editors

Percentage correct in 2006

Overall	Below <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Proficient</i>	At <i>Advanced</i>
75	48	79	94	‡

‡ Reporting standards not met. Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

Question on the Importance of a Rule or Law

The following constructed-response question requires the intellectual skill of “explaining and analyzing” in the content area, “What are civic life, politics, and government?” Student responses were rated according to a three-point scale as “Complete,” “Partial,” or “Unacceptable.” Overall, 48 percent of the students were rated as having a “Complete” response. The “Complete” plus “Partial” rating categories, though not shown, summed to 65 percent. When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 65 percent were rated as “Complete.” The sample student response shown on the right was rated as “Complete.”



Give an example of one rule or law you think is important for your community.

I think we should not litter

Explain why this rule or law is important for your community.

So our community won't look so dirty and people may not come to our community

Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006

Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
48	23	51	65	‡

‡ Reporting standards not met. Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

Question on How Citizens’ Actions Can Affect the Community

The following is an example of a longer (extended) constructed-response question that requires the intellectual skill of “evaluating, taking, and defending a position” in the content area, “What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?” Student responses were rated according to a four-point scale as “Complete,” “Acceptable,” “Partial,” or “Unacceptable.”

Overall, 18 percent of students were rated as having a “Complete” response. The “Complete” plus “Acceptable” rating categories, though not shown, summed to 45 percent. When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 40 percent were rated as “Complete,” as illustrated by the example on the right.

Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006

Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
18	2	15	40	‡

‡ Reporting standards not met. Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

Think about what you have learned about being a good citizen. Now read the list below. For each of the three actions, tell how it would affect other people in your community.

- 1) Not returning library books

Other people might want to get the same book out and you would be stopping them from doing that.

- 2) Volunteering to help senior citizens with chores

I would help other people in the community because then they do not have to use their time to do that.

- 3) Littering

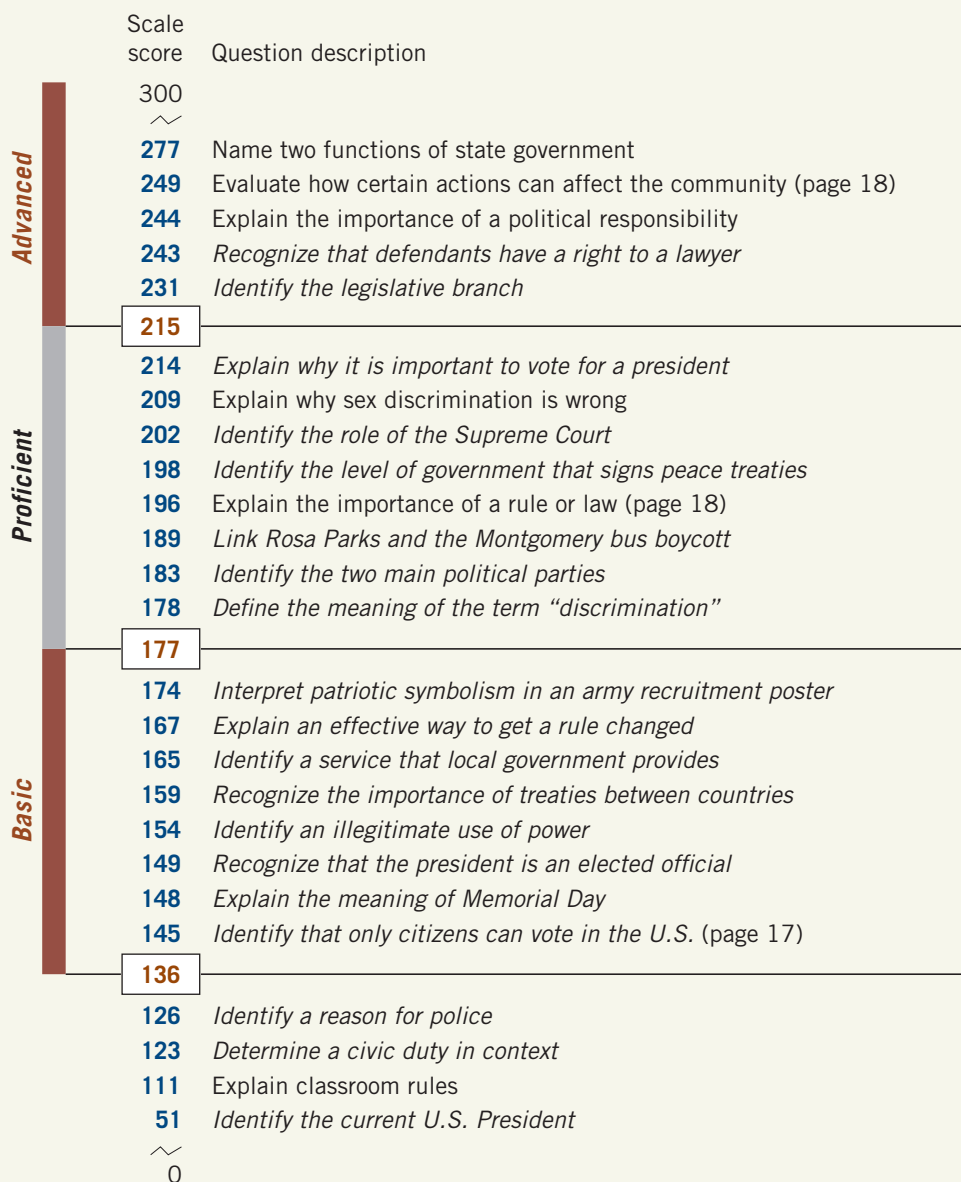
I could make the ground dirty, make animals sick, and pollute water and kill fish.

What Fourth-Graders Know and Can Do in Civics

The item map below provides another way to interpret the scale score and achievement-level results for fourth-graders. The left side of the item map shows the scores that define the lower boundaries of the *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced* achievement levels. The right side lists descriptions of some selected assessment questions that fall at various levels of difficulty on the 0–300 scale.

The map is a useful tool for understanding what it means to perform at different levels on the scale. For example, the map shows that students performing toward the lower end of the *Basic* achievement-level range (145) were likely to be able to identify that citizenship is required for one to vote in the United States. Students performing at the upper end of the *Proficient* achievement-level range (214) were likely to be able to explain why voting in a presidential election is important.

Grade 4 NAEP Civics Item Map



The position of a question on the scale represents the average scale score attained by students who had a 65 percent probability of correctly answering a constructed-response question, or a 74 percent probability of correctly answering a four-option multiple-choice question. Scale score ranges for civics achievement levels are referenced on the map. For constructed-response questions, the question description represents students' performance rated as completely correct.

NOTE: Regular type denotes a constructed-response question. *Italic* type denotes a multiple-choice question.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.



Grade 8

Compared with grade 4, there is a shift in content area emphasis at grade 8, with less time spent on definitions of civic life, politics, and government, and on the role of citizens. More time is spent on the foundations of the American political system, and the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy.

Eighth-graders were presented with two 25-minute sections, each containing multiple-choice and constructed-response questions with about 20 questions per section. Each student took just a portion of the assessment. The entire assessment at grade 8 included 154 questions, 29 of them constructed response and 125 multiple choice.

Civics Achievement Levels at Grade 8

The civics achievement levels at grade 8 represent what eighth-graders should know and be able to do at each level. The following are excerpts from the civics achievement-level descriptions with the corresponding cut scores noted in parentheses. The full descriptions can be found at http://www.nagb.org/pubs/civics_06.pdf.

Basic (134): Eighth-grade students performing at the *Basic* level should have some understanding of competing ideas about purposes of government, and they should be able to describe advantages of limited government. They should be able to define government, constitution, the rule of law, and politics. They should be able to identify the fundamental principles of American democracy and the documents from which they originate, and they should understand the importance of a shared commitment to the core values of American democracy. They should recognize the components of the political process and understand personal, political, and economic rights and responsibilities. They should be able to describe the purposes of some international organizations.

Proficient (178): Eighth-grade students performing at the *Proficient* level should understand and be able to explain purposes that government should serve. These students should have a good understanding of differences between government and civil society and of the importance of the rule of law. They should recognize discrepancies between American ideals and

reality and be able to describe continuing efforts to address them. They should understand the separation and sharing of powers among branches of government and between federal and state governments, and they should be able to explain how citizens influence government. They should be able to describe events within the United States and other countries that have international consequences.

Advanced (213): Eighth-grade students performing at the *Advanced* level should have a developed understanding of how civil society helps to maintain limited government and why the rule of law is important. These students should have a clear understanding of issues in which democratic values are in conflict and of past efforts to address the discrepancies between American ideals and reality. They should understand how citizens can monitor and influence government and how responsible citizens support democracy. They should recognize the impact of American democracy on other countries, as well as other countries' impact on American politics and society.

Question on the Historical Purpose of the Declaration of Independence

The following multiple-choice question addresses the skill of “explaining and analyzing” in the content area, “What are the foundations of the American political system?” The percentages below indicate how students performed on the question. In addition to the overall percentage of students who answered the question correctly, the percentage of students at each achievement level who answered the question correctly is presented.

As an example of how to interpret these percentages, 28 percent of the students overall answered the question on the right correctly. When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 61 percent answered correctly.

Percentage correct in 2006

Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
28	11	22	61	‡

‡ Reporting standards not met. Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

The following question refers to the passage below from the Declaration of Independence.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

The Declaration of Independence was written to

- (A) appeal to other countries for help in fighting Great Britain
- (B) convince Great Britain to repeal the Stamp Act
- (C) make laws for a new form of government
- (D) explain why the colonies were breaking away from Great Britain



Question on How Public Protests Can Achieve Political Goals

The following question requires the intellectual skill of “explaining and analyzing” in the content area, “What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?” Student responses were rated according to a three-point scale as “Complete,” “Partial,” or “Unacceptable.”

Overall, 25 percent of eighth-graders’ responses were rated as “Complete,” and, though not shown, 61 percent were rated as either “Partial” or “Complete.” When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 48 percent of responses were rated as “Complete.” The sample student response shown below was rated as “Complete.”

Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006

Overall	Below <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Proficient</i>	At <i>Advanced</i>
25	5	26	48	‡

‡ Reporting standards not met. Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.



The following question refers to the photograph below of the 1963 March on Washington.



Bruce Davidson/Magnum

What are two specific ways in which marches and demonstrations such as the one illustrated can achieve political goals?

- 1) It could possibly make the other party see your point and vote for your cause.
- 2) It also shows you stand up for what you believe in and won't give up no matter what.

Question on Decision-Making in a Foreign Policy Scenario

The following is an example of a longer (extended) constructed-response question that requires the intellectual skill of “evaluating, taking, and defending a position” in the content area, “What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?” Student responses were rated according to a four-point scale as “Complete,” “Acceptable,” “Partial,” or “Unacceptable.”

Overall, 3 percent of students were rated as having a “Complete” response, and the “Complete” plus “Acceptable” rating categories summed to 13 percent (data not shown) for this difficult question. When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 10 percent were rated as “Complete.” The sample student response shown on the right was rated as “Complete.”

Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006

Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
3	0.00	2	10	‡

‡ Reporting standards not met. Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

The following question is based on the situation described below.

Teresia is a small country that has been invaded by its neighbor Corollia. The king of Teresia is a long-standing United States ally who has been living in exile since the Corollian invasion. Teresia is an important exporter of uranium; it sends most of its supply to members of the European Union. The king appeals to the United States and the United Nations for military help in driving Corollia from his country.

Identify two pieces of information NOT given above that you would need before you could decide whether or not the United States military should help Teresia. Explain why each piece of information would be important.

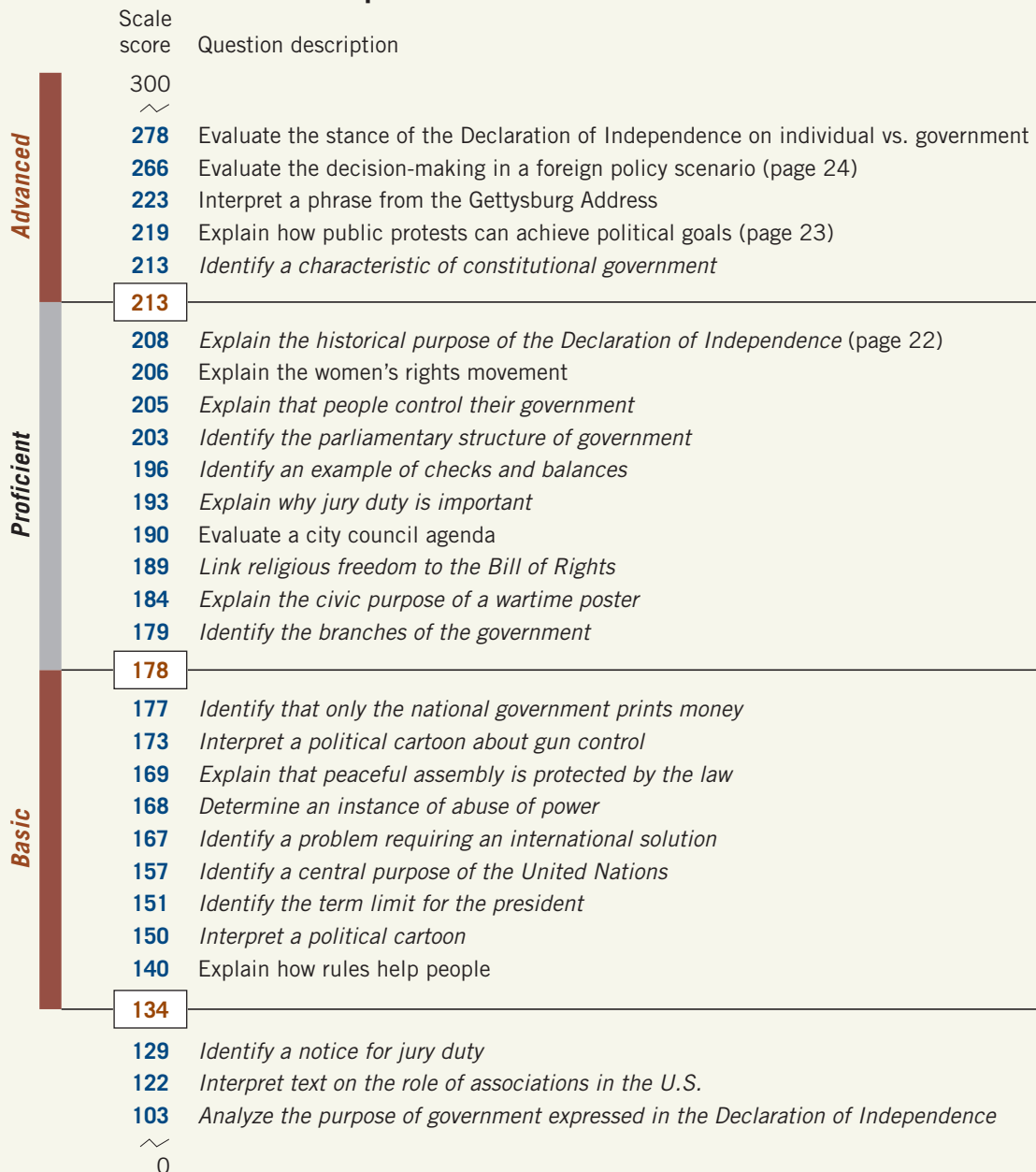
- 1) I would need to know Corollia's incentive to attack Teresia. This is important because maybe Corollia responded to an attack from Teresia making Teresia the aggressor.
- 2) I also need to know Corollia's allies and military strength. This is important because if I don't know this I might start another World War.

What Eighth-Graders Know and Can Do in Civics

The item map below provides another way to interpret the scale score and achievement-level results for eighth-graders. The left side of the item map shows the scores that define the lower boundaries of the *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced* achievement levels. The right side lists descriptions of some selected assessment questions that fall at various levels of difficulty on the 0–300 scale.

The map is a useful tool for understanding what it means to perform at different levels on the scale. For example, students performing in the middle of the *Basic* achievement-level range (157) are likely to be able to identify a central purpose of the United Nations. Students performing toward the upper end of the *Proficient* achievement-level range (203) are likely to be able to identify a schematic representation of the structure of a parliamentary government.

Grade 8 NAEP Civics Item Map



The position of a question on the scale represents the average scale score attained by students who had a 65 percent probability of correctly answering a constructed-response question, or a 74 percent probability of correctly answering a four-option multiple-choice question. Scale score ranges for civics achievement levels are referenced on the map. For constructed-response questions, the question description represents students' performance rated as completely correct.

NOTE: Regular type denotes a constructed-response question. *Italic* type denotes a multiple-choice question.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.



Grade 12

Compared with grade 8, more assessment time at grade 12 was devoted to the relationship of the United States to other nations and world affairs and to the roles of citizens in American democracy. Somewhat less time was devoted to the definitions of civic life, politics, and government, and the foundations of the American political system.

Twelfth-graders were presented with two 25-minute sections, each containing multiple-choice and constructed-response questions with 19 questions per section. Each student took just a portion of the assessment. The entire assessment at grade 12 included 152 questions, 30 of them constructed response and 122 multiple choice.

Civics Achievement Levels at Grade 12

The civics achievement levels at grade 12 represent what twelfth-graders should know and be able to do at each level. The following are excerpts from the civics achievement-level descriptions with the corresponding cut scores noted in parentheses. The full descriptions can be found at http://www.nagb.org/pubs/civics_06.pdf.

Basic (139): Twelfth-grade students performing at the *Basic* level should have an understanding of what is meant by civil society, constitutional government, and politics. They should know that constitutional governments can take different forms, and they should understand the fundamental principles of American constitutional government and politics, including functions of political parties and other organizations. They should understand both rights and responsibilities in a democratic society, and they should recognize the value of political participation. They should be familiar with international issues that affect the United States.

Proficient (174): Twelfth-grade students performing at the *Proficient* level should have a good understanding of how constitutions can limit the power of government and support the rule of law. They should be able to describe similarities and differences among constitutional systems of government, and they should be able to explain fundamental American democratic values, their applications, and their contribution to expanding political participation. They should understand the

structure of American government and be able to evaluate activities of political parties, interest groups, and media in public affairs. They should be able to explain the importance of political participation, public service, and political leadership. They should be able to describe major elements of American foreign policy and the performance of major international organizations.

Advanced (204): Twelfth-grade students performing at the *Advanced* level should have a thorough and mature understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of various forms of constitutional democracy. They should be able to explain fully the structure of American government and the political process. They should understand differences between American ideals and realities, and they should be able to explain past and present responses to those differences. They should understand why civic dispositions and individual and collective political actions sustain democracy. They should be able to explain objectives and consequences of American foreign policy.



Question on Analyzing Text and Explaining the Parliamentary System

The following multiple-choice question addresses the skill of “explaining and analyzing” in the content area, “What are civic life, politics, and government?” The percentages below indicate how students performed on the question. In addition to the overall percentage of students who answered the question correctly, the percentage of students at each achievement level who answered the question correctly is presented.

As an example of how to interpret these percentages, 53 percent of the students overall answered the question on the right correctly. When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 78 percent answered correctly.

Percentage correct in 2006

Overall	Below <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Proficient</i>	At <i>Advanced</i>
53	31	51	78	94

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

The following question is based on the quotation below.

We have a constitutional system that so fragments and divides power that it's impossible to give this country effective, long-run leadership. . . . The system has led to an inability to plan and get on top of problems ahead of time. Even at best, this country has always been twenty to sixty years behind other industrial democracies in dealing with tough problems.

—James MacGregor Burns, 1988

Parliamentary systems might not show the same fragmentation that Burns finds in the American system because in parliamentary systems

- (A) more real power is given to local governments
- (B) power is not divided among three branches of government
- (C) governments do not try to play an active role in the economy
- (D) political parties do not differ over important issues

Question on Evaluating a Domino Theory Political Cartoon

The following question requires the intellectual skill of “evaluating, taking, and defending a position” in the content area, “What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?” Student responses were rated according to a three-point scale as “Complete,” “Partial,” or “Unacceptable.”

Overall, 24 percent of twelfth-graders’ responses were rated as “Complete,” and, though not shown, 38 percent were rated as either “Partial” or “Complete.” When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 53 percent of responses were rated as “Complete.” The sample student response shown below was rated as “Complete.”

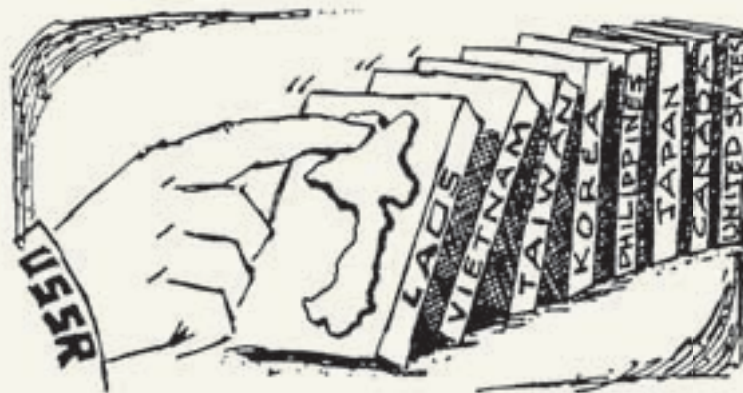
Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006

Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
24	4	22	53	81

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.



The following question refers to the cartoon below, which was drawn in the 1960s.



Reprinted by permission.

Describe the foreign policy concern pictured in the cartoon.

During this time period the United States was fighting with the U.S.S.R. and trying to prevent the spread of communism. The domino effect showed the necessity to pay attention to all countries.

Do you think this concern was valid? Explain why or why not.

Yes. Because if one country was to fall under communism that would mean it would gain more power to go up against stronger countries and eventually could become a threat to the U.S.

Question on Explaining Checks on the President's Power

The following is an example of a longer (extended) constructed-response question that requires the intellectual skill of “explaining and analyzing” in the content area, “How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?” Student responses were rated according to a four-point scale as “Complete,” “Acceptable,” “Partial,” or “Unacceptable.”

Overall, 5 percent of students were rated as having a “Complete” response, and the “Complete” plus “Acceptable” rating categories summed to 16 percent for this difficult question (data not shown). When only students at the *Proficient* level are considered, 13 percent were rated as “Complete.” The sample student response shown below was rated as “Complete.”

Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006

Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
5	0.15	1	13	43

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.



Explain three ways in which the power of the President can be checked by the legislative or the judicial branch.

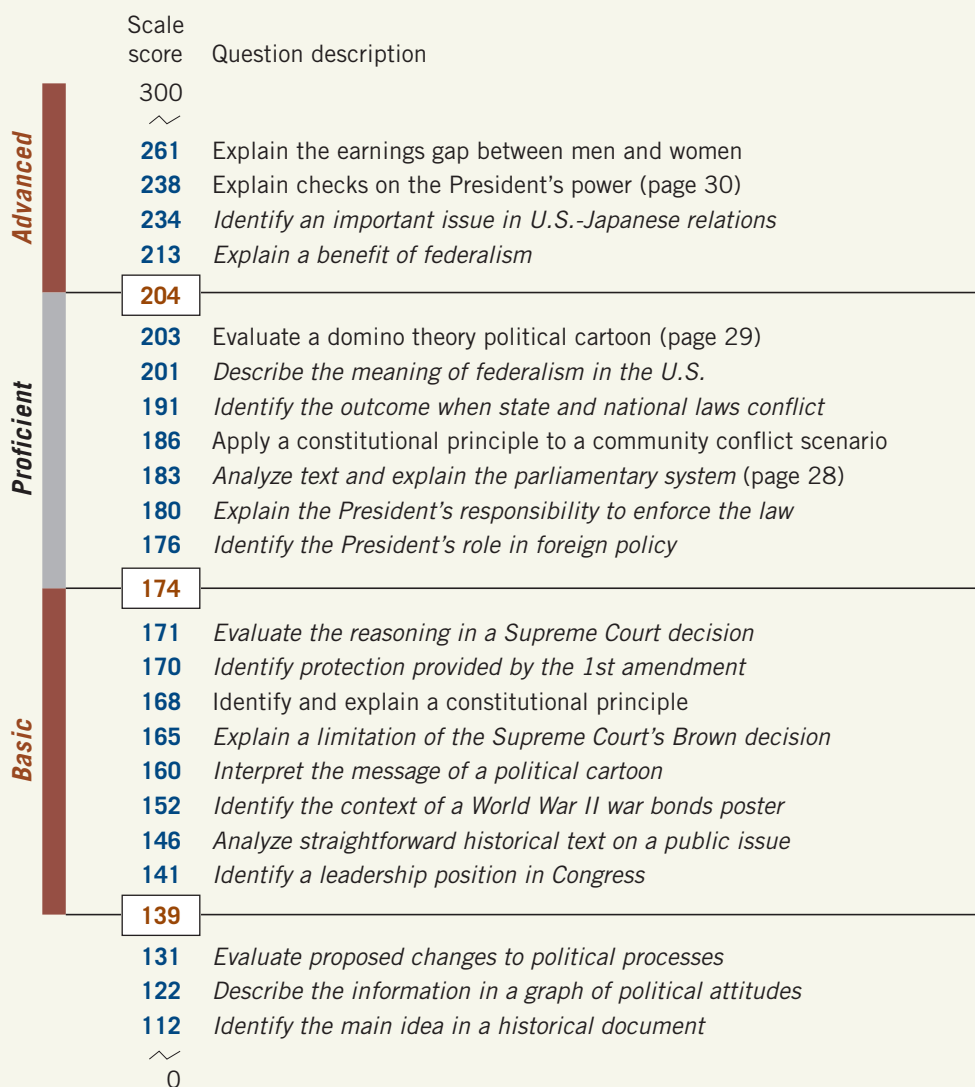
- 1) A president's veto of a law can be overridden by $\frac{2}{3}$ of the vote of ~~the~~ Congress.
- 2) Any treaty, etc. the President proposes/enters into must be approved by Congress
- 3) A president may be impeached by charges brought up by Congress and forced to leave office by the Senate's ruling on the charges

What Twelfth-Graders Know and Can Do in Civics

The item map below provides another way to interpret the scale score and achievement-level results for twelfth-graders. The left side of the item map shows the scores that define the lower boundaries of the *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced* achievement levels. The right side lists descriptions of some selected assessment questions that fall at various levels of difficulty on the 0–300 scale.

The map is a useful tool for understanding what it means to perform at different levels on the scale. For example, students performing toward the middle of the *Basic* achievement-level range (152) were likely to be able to identify the context of a “Buy War Bonds” poster from World War II. Students performing at the upper end of the *Proficient* achievement-level range (203) were likely to be able to understand a political cartoon depicting the domino theory and to evaluate its validity.

Grade 12 NAEP Civics Item Map



The position of a question on the scale represents the average scale score attained by students who had a 65 percent probability of correctly answering a constructed-response question, or a 74 percent probability of correctly answering a four-option multiple-choice question. Scale score ranges for civics achievement levels are referenced on the map. For constructed-response questions, the question description represents students' performance rated as completely correct.

NOTE: Regular type denotes a constructed-response question. *Italic* type denotes a multiple-choice question.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

Technical Notes

Sampling and weighting

The schools and students participating in NAEP assessments are chosen to form a sample representative of the nation. This sample was selected using a stratified, two-stage design that involved sampling students from selected schools (public and nonpublic) across the country. More information on sampling can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/nathow.asp>.

Each school that participated in the assessment, and each student assessed, represents a portion of the population of interest. Results are weighted to make appropriate inferences between the student samples and the respective populations from which they are drawn. Sampling weights account for the disproportionate representation of the selected sample and for the oversampling of students who attend schools with high concentrations of minority students, as well as for the lower sampling rates of students who attend very small nonpublic schools.

Reporting race/ethnicity

The scores presented in this report for 1998 and 2006 are based on school reports of students' race/ethnicity. The numbers in this report differ from those in the NAEP civics report for 1998. The categorization of race/ethnicity for the earlier report was based on student self-identification.

National School Lunch Program

Under the guidelines of the National School Lunch Program, children from families with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those from families with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals. (For the period July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006, for a family of four, 130 percent of the poverty level was \$25,155, and 185 percent was \$35,798.)

Accommodations

In the 1998 civics assessment, testing accommodations, such as extra time or individual administration, were provided to students with disabilities and English language learners who required accommodations to participate. For the 2006 civics assessment, accommodations were also provided, and the reported results include the performance of students who received accommodations. In the 2006 civics assessment, 3 percent of the sample was excluded from testing at grade 4, and 2 percent at each of grades 8 and 12, because they could not meaningfully participate even with the accommodations NAEP allows. The percentages of the assessed sample that received accommodations in 2006 were 11 percent at grade 4, 10 percent at grade 8, and 7 percent at grade 12. The results presented in this report reflect the performance of students who could be assessed. No attempt was



made to infer or include performance estimates for students who could not be assessed due to a disability or because they were still learning English. Additional information on exclusion rates can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/inclusion.asp>.

School/student participation rates

To ensure unbiased samples, participation rates for the original sample need to be at least 85 percent for schools to meet reporting requirements established by NCES and the Governing Board. The school participation rates for grades 4, 8, and 12 were 92, 93, and 79 percent, respectively. Student participation rates were 95, 92, and 72 percent, respectively, for each of the three grades. Because the participation rate for grade 12 public schools was below 85 percent, an analysis was performed examining the potential for nonresponse bias introduced through school nonresponse. The results showed that school substitution and nonresponse adjustments were effective in reducing the observable nonresponse bias.

A NAEP/Governing Board reporting rule requires a 70 percent initial school participation rate in order to report data separately for the public/private sectors. While participation rate standards were met for public schools at grades 4, 8, and 12, they were not met for private schools at any of the three grades (61, 62, and 41 percent, respectively); therefore, data for these schools are not reported separately. Participation rates for Catholic schools, which are included with the private category, did meet reporting standards at grades 4 (92 percent) and 8 (83 percent). Performance data for Catholic schools at grades 4 and 8 are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde/>.

Results by region of the country

Prior to 2003, NAEP results were reported separately for four NAEP-defined regions of the nation: Northeast, Southeast, Central, and West. As of 2003, NAEP analyses and reports have used the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of "region" to align NAEP with other federal data collections. The four regions defined by the U.S. Census Bureau are Northeast, South, Midwest, and West. More information on reporting for regions in NAEP can be found at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde/help/qs/NAEP_Reporting_Groups.asp#5.

Data for region of the country are not reported for two reasons. First, the change in the definition of region from 1998 to 2006 prevents the calculation of trend data. Second, in 2006, the participation rate of twelfth-graders in the West region fell below the reporting requirement of 70 percent. Data for the other three regions can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde/>.

Interpreting statistical significance

Comparisons over time or between groups are based on statistical tests that consider both the size of the differences and the standard errors of the two statistics being compared. Standard errors are margins of error, and estimates based on smaller groups are likely to have larger margins of error. The size of the standard errors may also be influenced by other factors such as how representative the students assessed are of the entire population. When an estimate has a large standard error, a numerical difference that seems large may not be statistically significant. Differences of the same magnitude may or may not be statistically significant depending upon the size of the standard errors of the statistics. For example, a 3-point difference between male and female students may be statistically significant, while a 4-point difference between Black and Hispanic students may not be. Standard errors for the NAEP scores and percentages presented in this report are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde/>.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a congressionally mandated project sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. The National Center for Education Statistics, a department within the Institute of Education Sciences, administers NAEP. The Commissioner of Education Statistics is responsible by law for carrying out the NAEP project.

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Peggy G. Carr
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THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT GOVERNING BOARD

In 1988, Congress created the National Assessment Governing Board to set policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, commonly known as The Nation's Report Card™. The Board is an independent, bipartisan group whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public.

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