



The 
Nation's
Report Card
U.S. History 2006

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS AT GRADES 4, 8, AND 12



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May 2007

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What is The Nation's Report Card™?

The Nation's Report Card™ informs the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States. Report cards communicate the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a continuing and nationally representative measure of achievement in various subjects over time.

For over three decades, NAEP assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and other subjects. By making objective information available on student performance at the national, state, and local levels, NAEP is an integral part of our nation's evaluation of the condition and progress of education. Only information related to academic achievement and relevant variables is collected. The privacy of individual students is protected.

NAEP is a congressionally mandated project of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education. The Commissioner of Education Statistics is responsible for carrying out the NAEP project. The National Assessment Governing Board oversees and sets policy for NAEP.



Executive Summary

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) U.S. history assessment evaluates students' understanding of the development of America's democratic institutions and ideals. Students demonstrated their knowledge of democracy, culture, technological and economic change, and America's changing world role. A nationally representative sample of 29,000 students at grades 4, 8, and 12 was assessed in 2006. This report compares 2006 student performance to similar assessments conducted in 1994 and 2001.

America's twelfth-, eighth-, and especially fourth-graders know more U.S. history now than in the past according to the 2006 NAEP assessment.

The performance of twelfth-graders, tomorrow's adult citizens, improved over the last dozen years with increases distributed across the entire range of performance. A higher percentage of twelfth-graders performed at or above the *Basic* level in 2006 than in both previous assessment years. Scores increased over the past five years in all four themes measured by the assessment.

Eighth-graders' knowledge of U.S. history has also improved since 1994. Eighth-grade scores were higher at all levels of performance. The percentage of eighth-graders at or above *Proficient* increased from 14 percent in 1994 to 17 percent in 2006.

What students know about U.S. history

Fourth-graders

- 66% understood the symbolism of the Statue of Liberty
- 35% explained how two inventions changed life in the U.S.
- 24% explained why people settled on the western frontier

Eighth-graders

- 64% identified an impact of the cotton gin
- 43% explained goals of the Martin Luther King, Jr., march
- 1% explained how the fall of the Berlin Wall affected foreign policy

Twelfth-graders

- 67% identified important Great Society idea
- 36% identified immigration pattern and explained its causes
- 14% explained a reason for involvement in the Korean War

	Grade 4		Grade 8		Grade 12	
	Compared to 1994	Compared to 2001	Compared to 1994	Compared to 2001	Compared to 1994	Compared to 2001
Overall	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
White	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Black	↑	↔	↑	↔	↑	↔
Hispanic	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↔
Asian/ Pacific Islander	↔	↔	↔	↔	↑	↔
American Indian/ Alaska Native	‡	‡	↔	↔	↔	↔
Gaps						
White – Black	↓	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔
White – Hispanic	↓	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔

- ↑ Indicates the score was higher or the gap increased in 2006.
- ↓ Indicates the score was lower or the gap decreased in 2006.
- ↔ Indicates there was no significant change in the score or the gap in 2006.
- ‡ Reporting standards not met.

Improvements in fourth-grade performance, with higher average scores in 2006 than in 1994, were evident for a number of student groups. The greatest improvement was found for the lowest-performing fourth-graders who gained 19 points. Seventy percent of fourth-graders performed at or above *Basic* compared to 64 percent in 1994.

As shown in the chart above, White, Black, and Hispanic students at all three grades and Asian/Pacific Islander students at grade 12 showed improvements when compared to 1994. American Indian/Alaska Native students did not improve.



An Introduction to the U.S. History Assessment

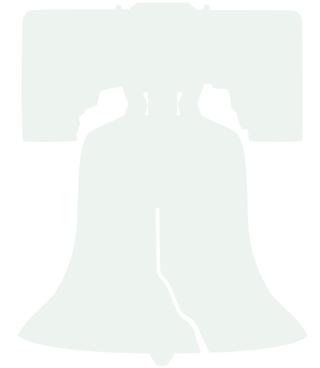
The framework, which serves as the blueprint for the NAEP U.S. history assessment, was developed by the National Assessment Governing Board. With the goals that students should know the specific facts of American history, be able to evaluate historical evidence, and understand change and continuity over time, the U.S. history assessment is organized around three dimensions:

- **THEMES OF U.S. HISTORY**
- **PERIODS OF U.S. HISTORY**
- **WAYS OF KNOWING AND THINKING ABOUT U.S. HISTORY**

THEMES OF U.S. HISTORY

Four historical themes make up the core structure of the framework and are intended to cover all major branches of historical study. The themes also define the subscales for reporting the U.S. history assessment results:

- > **Democracy** – Change and Continuity in American Democracy: Ideas, Institutions, Events, Key Figures, and Controversies
- > **Culture** – The Gathering and Interactions of Peoples, Cultures, and Ideas
- > **Technology** – Economic and Technological Changes and Their Relationship to Society, Ideas, and the Environment
- > **World Role** – The Changing Role of America in the World



CHANGES IN THE FRAMEWORK

U.S. history was assessed by NAEP in 1986 and 1988, but only the results in 1994, 2001, and 2006 are discussed in this report. A new U.S. history framework was developed for 1994, which provided specifications for both the 1994 and 2001 assessments. In 2003, the Governing Board revised the framework for the 2006 U.S. history assessment. The relatively minor revisions in 2003 ensured that NAEP could maintain the U.S. history trend line of student achievement for grades 4, 8, and 12 in 1994, 2001, and 2006.





PERIODS OF U.S. HISTORY

The assessment divides the major eras of U.S. history into eight chronological periods:

- > Beginnings to 1607
- > Colonization, Settlement, and Communities (1607–1763)
- > The Revolution and the New Nation (1763–1815)
- > Expansion and Reform (1801–1861)
- > Crisis of the Union: Civil War and Reconstruction (1850–1877)
- > The Development of Modern America (1865–1920)
- > Modern America and the World Wars (1914–1945)
- > Contemporary America (1945 to the present)



WAYS OF KNOWING AND THINKING ABOUT U.S. HISTORY

Two ways of understanding U.S. history guided question development:

Historical knowledge and perspective

- > Sequencing events and recognizing multiple perspectives
- > Seeing an era or movement through the eyes of different groups
- > Developing a general conceptualization of U.S. history
- > Knowing and understanding people, events, concepts, and historical sources

Historical analysis and interpretation

- > Explaining issues
- > Identifying historical patterns
- > Establishing cause-and-effect relationships
- > Finding value statements
- > Establishing significance
- > Applying historical knowledge
- > Weighing evidence to draw sound conclusions
- > Making defensible generalizations
- > Rendering insightful accounts of the past

ASSESSMENT DESIGN

To cover a greater range of content, each student took just a portion of the assessment, answering two 25-minute sections or one 50-minute section of multiple-choice and constructed-response questions. Results were combined to produce an average score for the nation overall and by various student groups (for example, gender or race/ethnicity).

More detailed information about the assessment can be found in the 2006 NAEP U.S. history framework on the Governing Board website at http://www.nagb.org/frameworks/history_06.pdf.



Reporting NAEP Results

The students selected to take the NAEP assessment represent hundreds of other students like themselves across the U.S. The NAEP data can only be obtained with the cooperation of schools, teachers, and students nationwide. By participating, they play an important role in improving education in the country.

Nationally representative samples of schools and students at grades 4, 8, and 12 participated in the 2006 NAEP U.S. history assessment. The overall estimates include performance of all fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-graders in public schools, private schools, Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, and Department of Defense schools. The number of schools and students who participated in the 2006 NAEP U.S. history assessment is presented in table 1.

Table 1. **Number of participating schools and students in NAEP U.S. history assessment, by grade: 2006**

Grade	Schools	Students
Grade 4	330	6,500
Grade 8	450	11,400
Grade 12	570	11,300

NOTE: The numbers of schools are rounded to the nearest ten, and the numbers of students are rounded to the nearest hundred.

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

SCALE SCORES

NAEP U.S. history results are reported on a 0–500 scale, overall and for each of the four themes. In addition, results are reported at five percentiles (10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th) to show the scores of lower-, middle-, and higher-performing students.

Because scales were set separately for each theme, score comparisons should not be made from one theme to another.

A common scale metric across all three grades was used for the U.S. history scores. However, comparisons across grades, at the subscale level and for the composite scale, are not appropriate because the scale was not based on a combined analysis of all three grades.

ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS

Achievement levels reflect what students should know and be able to do. The Governing Board sets specific achievement levels for each subject area and grade, based on recommendations from policymakers, educators, and members of the general public. To provide a context for interpreting student performance, NAEP results are reported as percentages of students performing at or above the *Basic* and *Proficient* levels and at the *Advanced* level. As provided by law, NCES, upon review of congressionally mandated evaluations of NAEP, has determined that achievement levels are to be used on a trial basis and should be interpreted with caution. The NAEP achievement levels have been widely used by national and state officials.

NAEP ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS

Basic denotes partial mastery of the knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at a given grade.

Proficient represents solid academic performance. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter.

Advanced signifies superior performance for a given grade.

ITEM MAPS

As shown in the Assessment Content section, the item maps are another way to interpret the scale scores and achievement-level results for each grade. The item maps also show student performance on items at different levels on the scale.

ACCOMMODATIONS IN NAEP

Prior to 2001, no testing accommodations were provided in the NAEP U.S. history assessment. This resulted in the exclusion of some students (for example, students with disabilities or English language learners) who could not fairly and accurately demonstrate their abilities without modified test administration procedures. In 2001, administration procedures were introduced allowing certain accommodations, such as extra testing time or individual rather than group administration, for students requiring such accommodations to participate. Note that most figures in this report show two data points in 2001—one permitting and one not permitting accommodations. Both 2001 samples are presented in this report, but comparisons between 2001 and 2006 are based on the accommodated samples of both years.

INTERPRETING RESULTS

This report discusses findings based on a statistical significance at the .05 level with appropriate adjustments for multiple comparisons. In the tables and charts, the symbol (*) indicates that scores or percentages in 2006 are significantly different from the comparable scores or percentages in prior assessment years.

NAEP results present student performance by different demographic characteristics (for example, gender, race/ethnicity, or student-reported highest level of parents' education). These results should not be used to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between background characteristics and achievement. Educational and socioeconomic factors may affect student performance in complex ways. Not all of the data for results discussed in the text are presented in corresponding tables or graphics, but can be found on the NAEP website at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde>. For additional information, see the Technical Notes on page 30 or visit <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.





U.S. History Knowledge Improves at All Three Grades

Results from the 2006 NAEP assessment in U.S. history show overall improvement in student performance in comparison to previous assessment years. A closer look at results for students performing at different achievement levels also shows increases over the past five years in percentages of students performing at the *Basic* level or above, but no significant change in the percentages performing at the *Proficient* level or above.

Fourth-grade lowest-performing students make largest gains

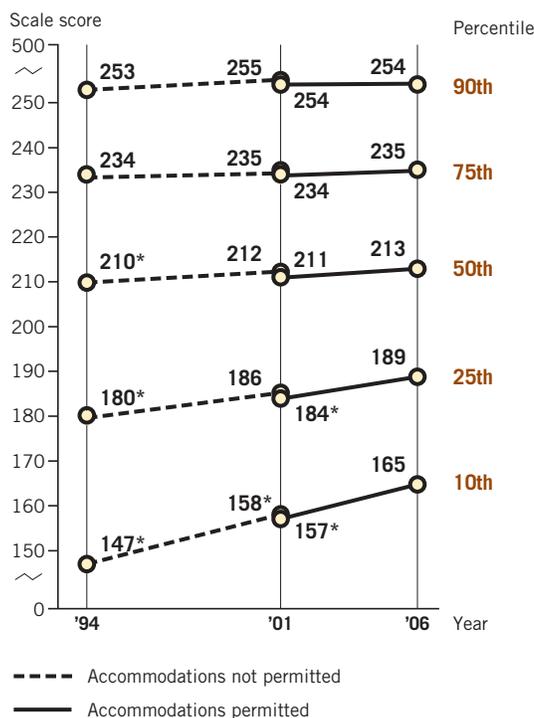
Fourth-graders' knowledge of U.S. history has improved over the past dozen years. The average score in 2006 was higher than in either previous assessment year (figure 1).

This overall improvement was largely driven by gains for lower-performing students. Scores for lower-performing students reached their highest level in 2006 including a 19-point¹ increase at the 10th percentile in comparison to 1994 (figure 2). Scores for students at the 75th and 90th percentiles were not significantly changed since the first assessment over a decade ago.

Gains by lower-performing students were also reflected in achievement-level results. The percentage of fourth-graders performing at or above the *Basic* level increased from 64 percent in 1994 to 70 percent in 2006 (figure 3). However, there was no significant change in the percentage of students at or above the *Proficient* level.

¹ The score point gain is based on the difference of the unrounded scores from the two years.

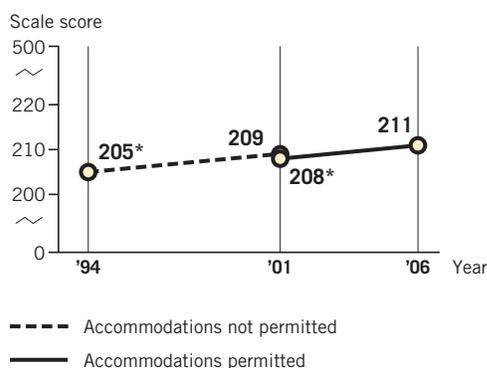
Figure 2. Trend in fourth-grade NAEP U.S. history percentile scores



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

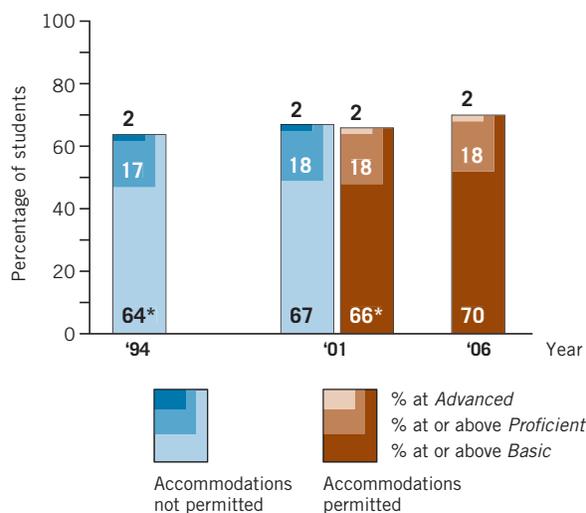
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.

Figure 1. Trend in fourth-grade NAEP U.S. history average scores



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

Figure 3. Trend in fourth-grade NAEP U.S. history achievement-level performance



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.



Eighth-graders performing at or above *Basic* increases

Similar to the results for grade 4, eighth-graders demonstrated a greater knowledge of U.S. history. The average score was higher in 2006 than in both 1994 and 2001 (figure 4).

Increases can be seen at all levels of performance compared with 1994 (figure 5). While lower- and middle-performing students also showed improvement between 2001 and 2006, there was essentially no change for higher-performing students.

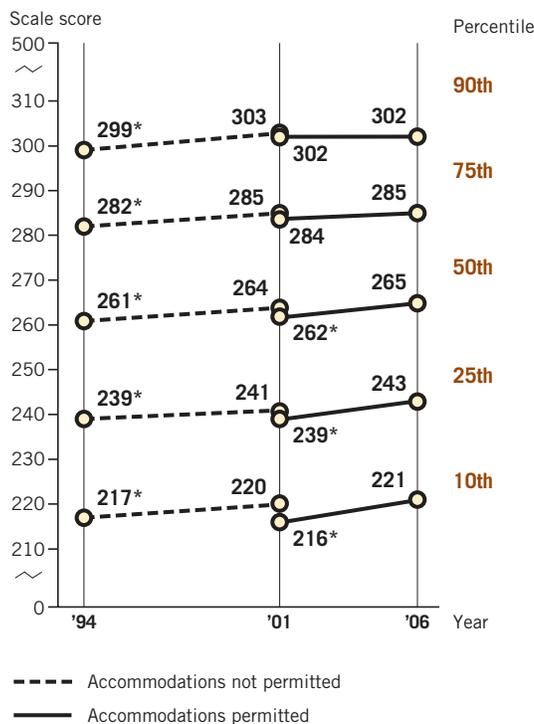
The achievement-level results also showed improvement. A higher percentage of eighth-graders performed at or above the *Basic* level in 2006 than in both previous assessment years (figure 6). While the percentage of students at or above *Proficient* in 2006 was higher than in 1994, it was not significantly different from 2001.

Figure 4. Trend in eighth-grade NAEP U.S. history average scores



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

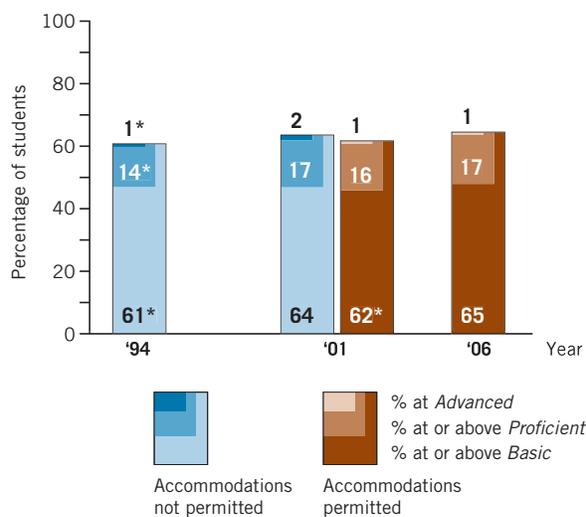
Figure 5. Trend in eighth-grade NAEP U.S. history percentile scores



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.

Figure 6. Trend in eighth-grade NAEP U.S. history achievement-level performance



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

NOTE: The percentage at *Advanced* in 2006 (1.16) was higher than in 1994 (0.74) but not significantly different from 2001 (1.28).



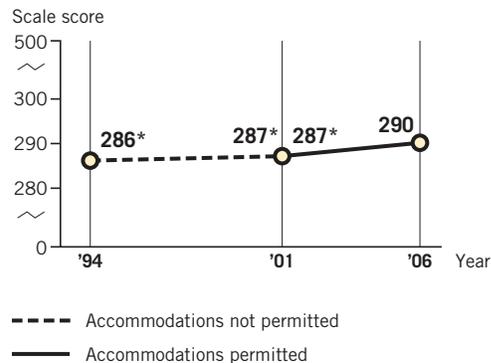
Twelfth-graders' knowledge of U.S. history increases

Twelfth-graders' average score was higher in 2006 than in either previous assessment year (figure 7). Most of the gains seen for twelfth-graders occurred over the last five years.

Scores for all percentiles increased over the last dozen years, and scores for all but the highest-performing students increased from 2001 to 2006 (figure 8).

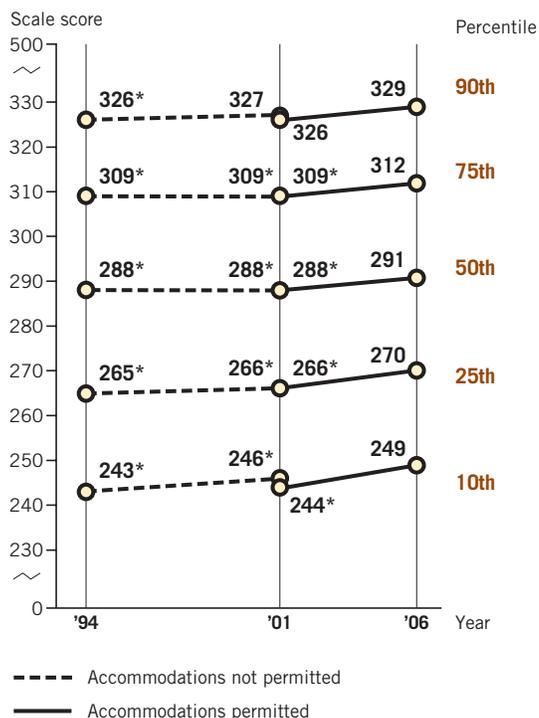
A higher percentage of twelfth-graders performed at or above the *Basic* level in 2006 than in previous assessment years (figure 9). The percentage of students at or above *Proficient* also increased from 1994 to 2006.

Figure 7. Trend in twelfth-grade NAEP U.S. history average scores



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

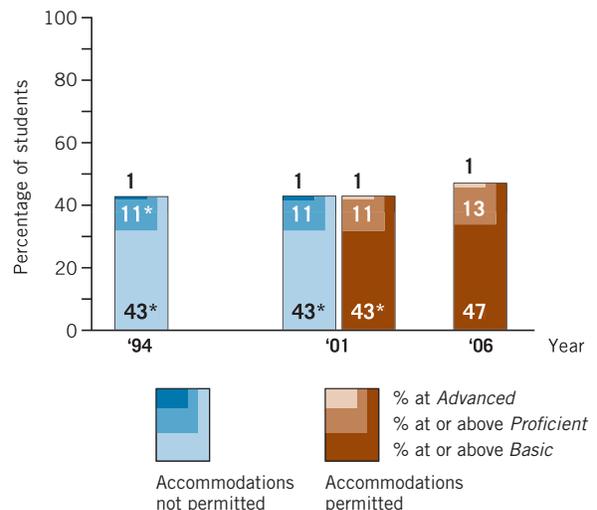
Figure 8. Trend in twelfth-grade NAEP U.S. history percentile scores



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.

Figure 9. Trend in twelfth-grade NAEP U.S. history achievement-level performance



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

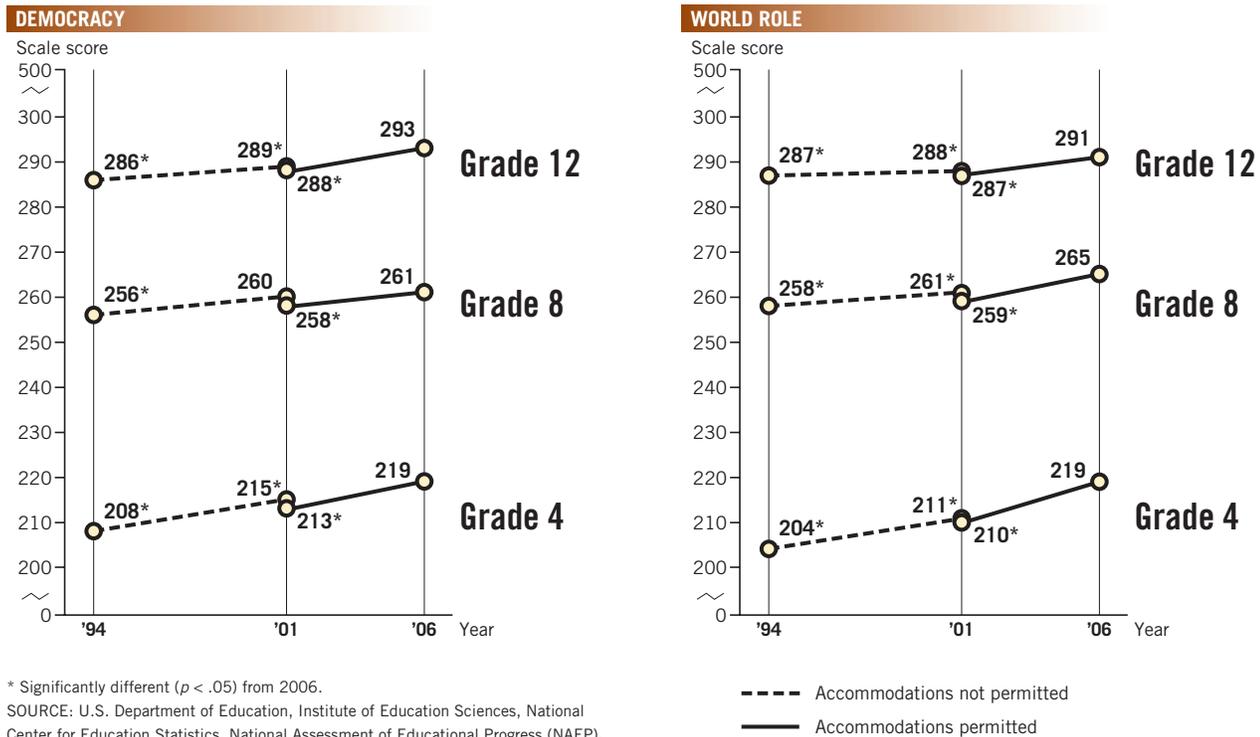


Improvement at all three grades in Democracy and World Role

Fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-graders all showed improved performance in both the Democracy and World Role themes.

All three grades showed increases in the average scores for both the Democracy and World Role themes in 2006 as compared to 1994 and 2001 (figure 10).

Figure 10. Trend in NAEP U.S. history average scores, by grade and Democracy and World Role themes in U.S. history



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.

Themes of U.S. History

Democracy questions assess students' understanding of American political democracy traced from colonial times to the present, including basic principles developed through the American Revolution, the U.S. Constitution, the Civil War, and the struggles over slavery and civil rights.

World Role questions assess students' understanding of America's role in foreign affairs and participation in world and regional wars, as well as the influences of geography, economic interests, and democratic ideals of the U.S. and other nations.

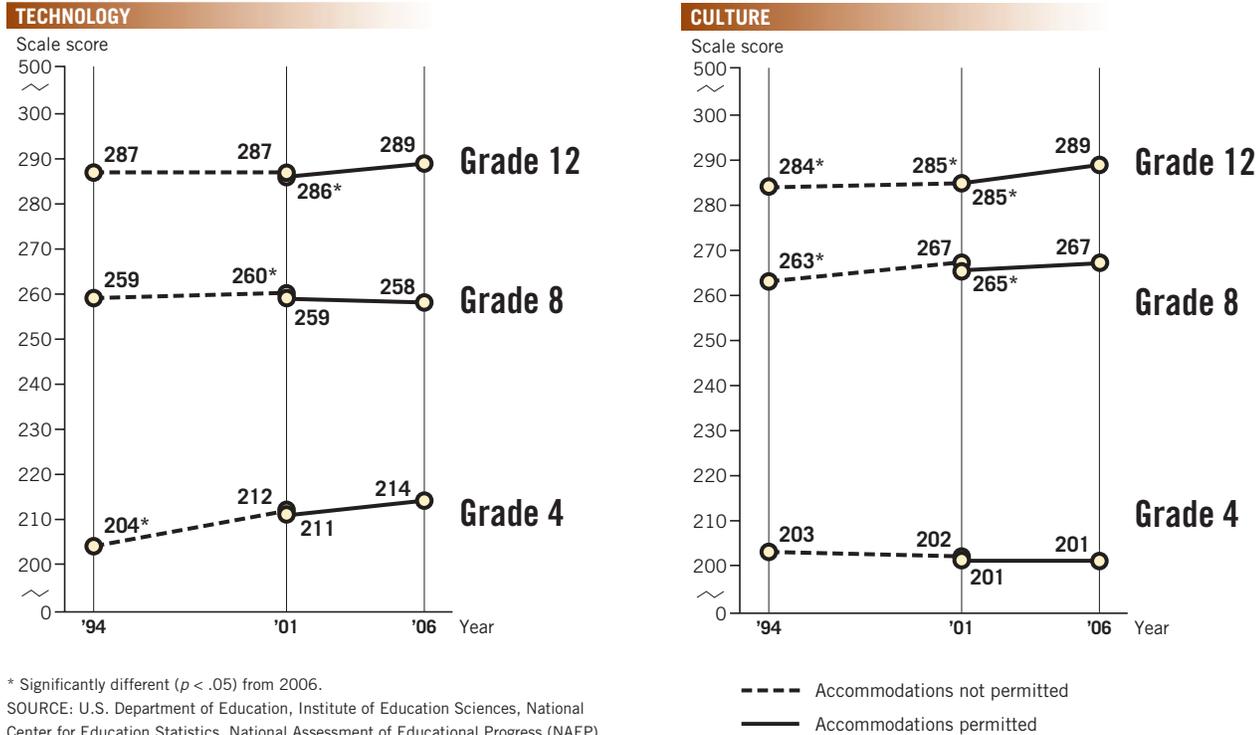


Gains mixed in Technology and Culture

Gains in the Technology and Culture themes varied by grade. While the average score for the Technology theme was higher in 2006 than in 1994 at grade 4, there were no significant differences over the same period at grades 8 and 12 (figure 11). At grade 12,

however, the average score in Technology was higher in 2006 than in 2001. There was no significant change in the score for the Culture theme at grade 4, but students at grades 8 and 12 made gains compared to both 1994 and 2001.

Figure 11. Trend in NAEP U.S. history average scores, by grade and Technology and Culture themes in U.S. history



Themes of U.S. History

Technological and economic change questions assess students' understanding of the changes in the United States, transformed from a rural frontier economy to an industrial superpower, including the impact of science and technology on society, the influence of geography, and the development of business and urbanization.

Culture questions address topics about the gathering of people and cultures from many countries, races, and religious traditions that have contributed to the American heritage and American society.



Performance Increases for Most Student Groups

The pattern of overall improvement in students' performance in U.S. history at all three grades was also seen for most student groups. Changes in score gaps between the student groups, however, did not reveal a consistent picture.

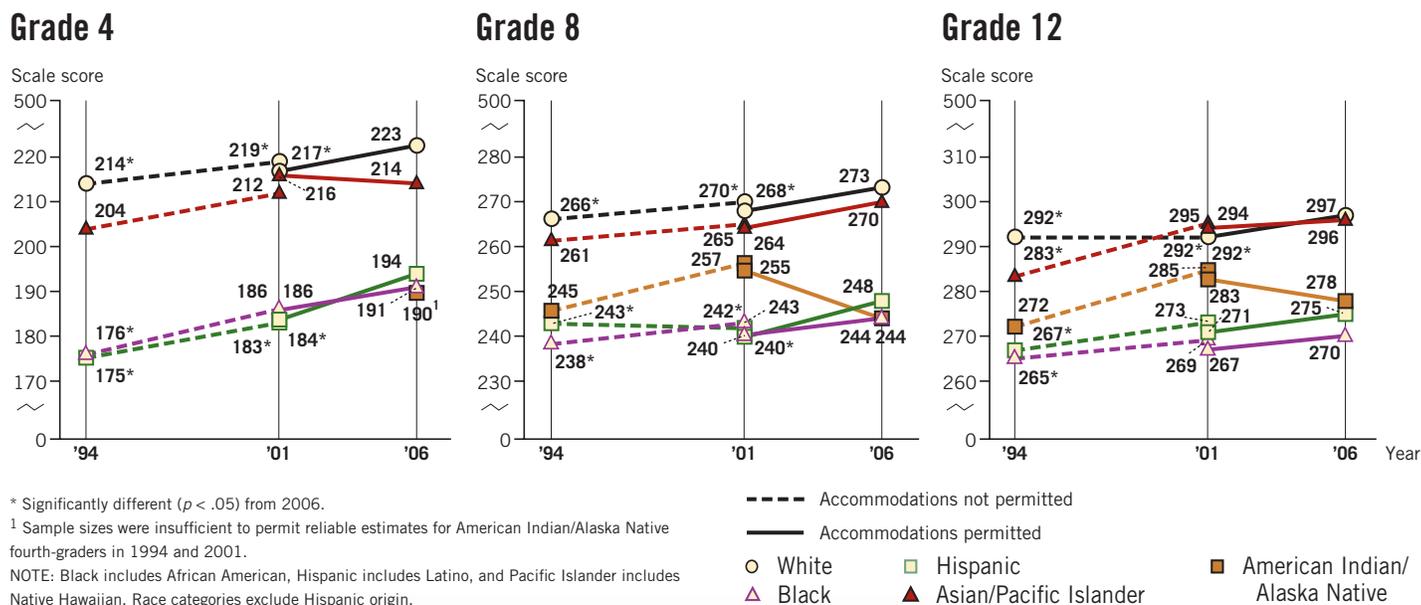
White, Black, and Hispanic students make gains

The overall improvement at all three grades was not found for every student group. White, Black, and Hispanic students scored higher in 2006 than in 1994 at all three grades (figure 12). However, between 2001 and 2006 there were no significant changes in average scores for Black students in any of the three grades, or for Hispanic students at grade 12. The average score for Asian/Pacific Islander students at grade 12

increased in comparison to 1994, but showed no significant change since 2001.

The improvement made by lower-performing fourth-graders overall was also seen for the racial/ethnic student groups. Although not shown here, scores for White, Black, and Hispanic fourth-graders at the 10th percentile increased 20, 29, and 36 points, respectively, from 1994 to 2006.

Figure 12. **Trend in NAEP U.S. history average scores, by grade and race/ethnicity**



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

¹ Sample sizes were insufficient to permit reliable estimates for American Indian/Alaska Native fourth-graders in 1994 and 2001.

NOTE: Black includes African American, Hispanic includes Latino, and Pacific Islander includes Native Hawaiian. Race categories exclude Hispanic origin.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.



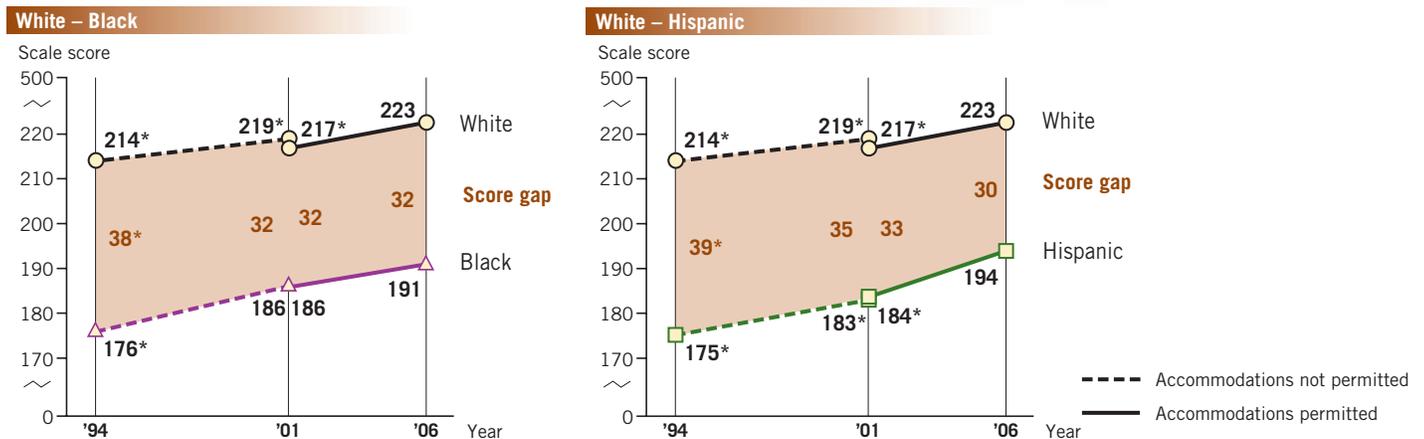
Gaps narrow at grade 4

The gains made between 1994 and 2006 by Black and Hispanic fourth-graders contributed to a narrowing of the gaps with their White peers. The White-Black gap narrowed by 6 points, and the White-Hispanic gap narrowed by 10 points during this period (figure 13).

While White, Black, and Hispanic students have made improvements, at grades 8 and 12 the gaps were not significantly changed over the last 12 years (table 2).



Figure 13. Trend in fourth-grade White – Black and White – Hispanic average scores and score gaps in NAEP U.S. history



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

NOTE: Black includes African American, and Hispanic includes Latino. Race categories exclude Hispanic origin. Score gaps are calculated based on differences between unrounded average scores.

Table 2. Average scores and score gaps in NAEP U.S. history, by grade and race/ethnicity: 1994, 2001, and 2006

	Scale score			Score gap with White students		
	1994	2001	2006	1994	2001	2006
Grade 8						
White	266*	268*	273	†	†	†
Black	238*	240	244	28	28	29
Hispanic	243*	240*	248	23	28	25
Grade 12						
White	292*	292*	297	†	†	†
Black	265*	267	270	27	24	27
Hispanic	267*	271	275	25	21	22

† Not applicable.

* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

NOTE: Scores in 2001 are based on the accommodated sample. Black includes African American, and Hispanic includes Latino. Race categories exclude Hispanic origin. Score gaps are calculated based on differences between unrounded average scores.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.

Males outperform females at upper grades

The trend in student progress varied slightly by gender. At grades 4 and 8, both groups demonstrated increased U.S. history knowledge compared with the first assessment year, and male students also improved since the more recent assessment in 2001. At grade 12, both male and female students showed improvement compared with both previous assessment years.

Male students scored higher on average than female students at grades 8 and 12 in 2006. The gap at grade 8 was larger in 2006 than in 1994 (figure 14) although both groups scored higher. Male students also scored higher than their female counterparts in World Role at grades 4 and 8, and in Democracy, Technology, and World Role at grade 12 (table 3).

Figure 14. Trend in NAEP U.S. history average scores and score gaps, by grade and gender

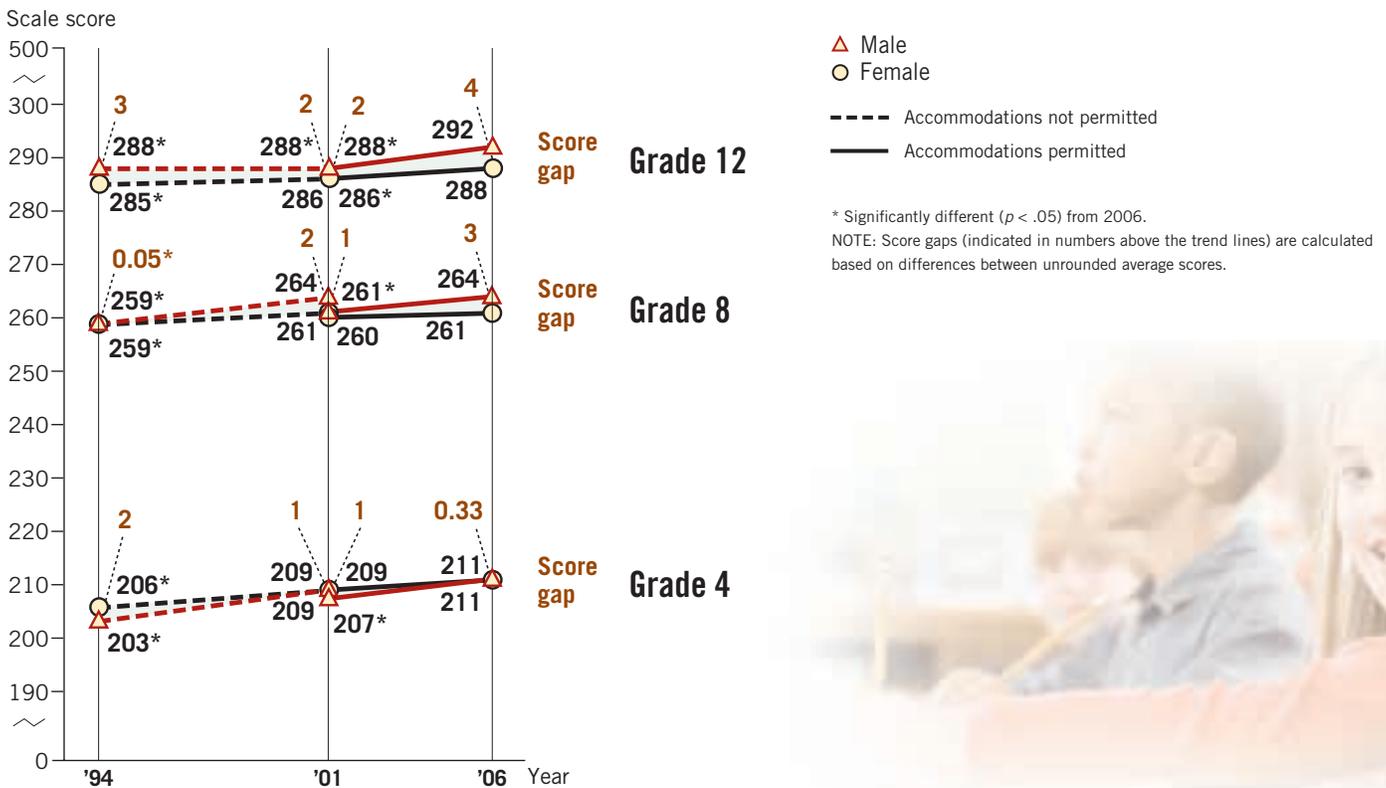


Table 3. Average scores for themes of NAEP U.S. history, by gender and grade: 2006

Grade	Democracy		World Role		Technology		Culture	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Grade 4	220	218	222*	217	214	213	199	202
Grade 8	262	260	270*	259	259	258	267	267
Grade 12	295*	291	296*	286	290*	287	288	289

* Significantly different ($p < .05$). Male students scored higher on average than female students.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.

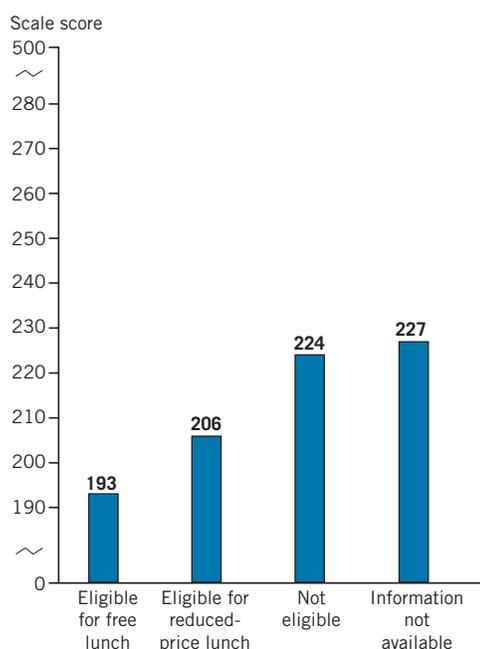
Knowledge of U.S. history differs by income levels

Students from lower-income families (those eligible for either free or reduced-price school lunch) scored lower on average than those from higher-income families. At both grades 4 and 8, students eligible for free lunch scored lower than students eligible for

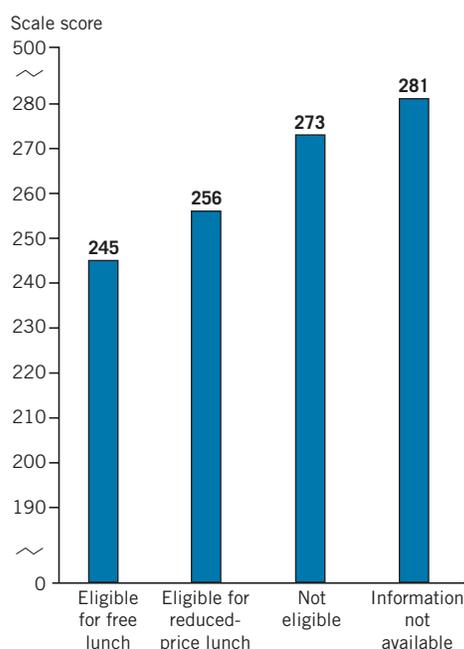
reduced-price lunch (figure 15). The score gaps between students in the lowest income level (eligible for free lunch) and those in the highest level (not eligible) were 31 points at grade 4 and 28 points at grade 8.

Figure 15. **Average scores in NAEP U.S. history, by grade and eligibility for National School Lunch Program: 2006**

Grade 4



Grade 8



The table below shows the percentages of fourth- and eighth-graders in the population who were eligible for the National School Lunch Program in 2006. Information on students' eligibility was not available for 7 percent of fourth-graders and 6 percent of eighth-graders.

Table 4. **Percentage of students assessed in NAEP U.S. history, by grade and eligibility for National School Lunch Program: 2006**

Eligibility status	Grade 4	Grade 8
Eligible for free lunch	37	32
Eligible for reduced-price lunch	8	7
Not eligible	48	55
Information not available	7	6

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 U.S. History Assessment.



Knowledge of U.S. history varies by parent education

Students reporting higher levels of parental education scored higher on the U.S. history assessment. At grade 8, only students who reported that at least one parent graduated from college showed improvement over the past dozen years (figure 16). At grade 12, students reporting the lowest and highest levels of parental education showed improvement over the same period. Students reporting the middle levels of parental education performed better compared to five years ago.

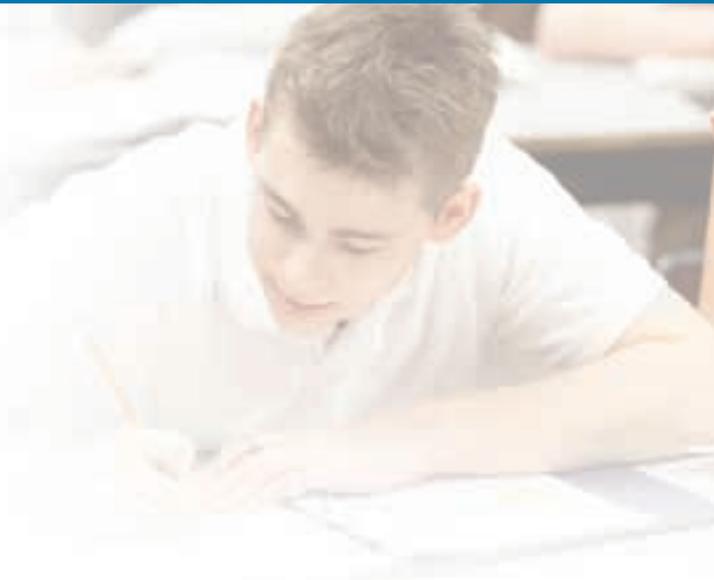
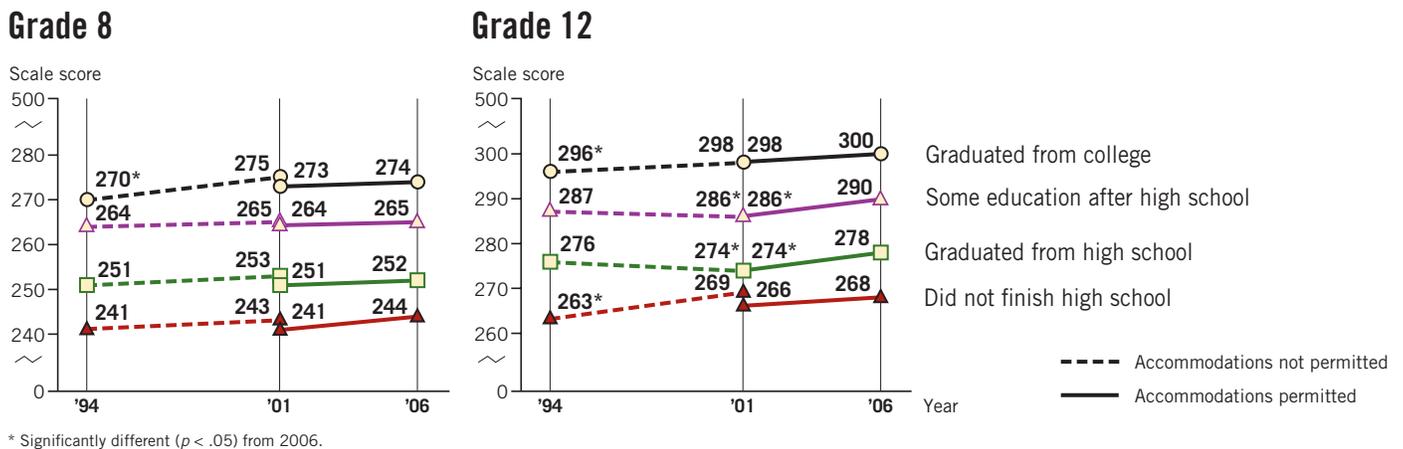


Figure 16. Trend in NAEP U.S. history average scores, by grade and parental education



The percentage of students at grades 8 and 12 reporting at least one parent graduated from college increased in 2006 compared to 1994.

Table 5. Percentage of students assessed in NAEP U.S. history, by grade and parental education: 1994, 2001, and 2006

Parental education level	Grade 8			Grade 12		
	1994	2001	2006	1994	2001	2006
Did not finish high school	7	8	8	7	7	8
Graduated from high school	23*	19	19	20	19	18
Some education after high school	19	18	18	25*	24	23
Graduated from college	42*	46	46	45*	46	49
Unknown	9	10	10	3	3	2

* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

NOTE: Parental education levels are based on student-reported information. Percentages in 2001 are based on the accommodated sample. Information on parental education was not collected at grade 4 in 2006. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994, 2001, and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.



Grade 4

The content of the assessment varies by grade to reflect the knowledge and skills appropriate for each grade level, with differing proportions of assessment time devoted to each of the historical themes, historical periods, and cognitive areas outlined in the introduction.

Many of the questions in the assessment were designed to enable students to draw upon the knowledge and skills gained from their elementary social studies units. In 2006, a slightly higher proportion of fourth-grade assessment time was devoted to the Culture theme than the Technology, Democracy, or World Role themes. Fourth-graders answered questions across all historical time periods, with about 50 percent of the assessment time focused on the four early historical periods.

U.S. History Achievement Levels at Grade 4

The achievement levels represent what students should know and be able to do in U.S. history at each level. The following are achievement-level descriptions for U.S. history at grade 4 with the corresponding “cut scores” (scores depicting the lowest score representative of that level) noted in parentheses.

Basic (195): Fourth-grade students performing at the *Basic* level should be able to identify and describe a few of the most familiar people, places, events, ideas, and documents in American history. They should be able to explain the reasons for celebrating most national holidays, have some familiarity with the geography of their own state and the United States, and be able to express in writing a few ideas about a familiar theme in American history.

Proficient (243): Fourth-grade students performing at the *Proficient* level should be able to identify, describe, and comment on the significance of many historical people, places, ideas, events, and documents. They should be able to interpret information from a variety of sources, including texts, maps, pictures, and timelines. They should be able to construct a simple timeline from data. These students should recognize the role of invention and technological change in

history. They should also recognize the ways in which geographic and environmental factors have influenced life and work.

Advanced (276): Fourth-grade students performing at the *Advanced* level should have a beginning understanding of the relationships between people, places, ideas, events, and documents. They should know where to look for information, including reference books, maps, local museums, interviews with family and neighbors, and other sources. They should be able to use historical themes to organize and interpret historical topics and to incorporate insights from beyond the classroom into their understanding of history. These students should understand and be able to explain the role of invention and technological change in history. They should also understand and be able to explain the ways in which geographic and environmental factors have influenced life and work.

Question on Causes of the Civil War

This sample question related to a quote by Abraham Lincoln assessed students’ skills in historical analysis and interpretation in the Democracy theme. To answer correctly, students needed to interpret the quote about divisions over slavery leading up to the Civil War.

The percentages below indicate how students performed on the question. Overall, 46 percent of fourth-graders answered the question correctly. When looking at how students performing at different levels did on this question, 49 percent of students performing at the *Basic* level answered correctly, and 73 percent of students at the *Proficient* level answered correctly.

Percentage correct in 2006				
Overall	Below <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Proficient</i>	At <i>Advanced</i>
46	25	49	73	‡

‡ 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 U.S. History Assessment.

A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided.

—Abraham Lincoln, 1858

What did Abraham Lincoln mean in this speech?

- (A) The South should be allowed to separate from the United States.
- (B) The government should support slavery in the South.
- (C) Sometime in the future slavery would disappear from the United States.
- (D) Americans would not be willing to fight a war over slavery.

Question About Westward Expansion

Students answering this question about westward expansion had to combine a close study of the painting with knowledge of the factors that motivated people to settle on the frontier in the 19th century. This question assessed students' historical analysis and interpretation skills within the Culture theme.

Student responses for this constructed-response question were rated using the following three-level scoring guide:

- **Complete** responses accurately described two or three specific things in the painting that could have persuaded people to go west.
- **Partial** responses accurately described at least one thing from the painting.
- **Inappropriate** responses failed to provide any accurate descriptions.

The sample student response shown here was rated as “Complete,” and the table below shows that 24 percent of fourth-graders were able to provide a “Complete” response to the question in 2006.

Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006				
Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
24	5	25	50	†

† 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 U.S. History Assessment.



© Museum of the City of New York, Harry T. Peters Collection

Look carefully at the painting of a western town shown above. Describe three specific things you see in the painting that could have made people want to become settlers in the West.

1. There are lakes and rivers.
2. There are trees for building houses and stoves.
3. There is a train so you can get from one place to another.

What Fourth-Graders Know and Can Do in U.S. History

The item map is useful for understanding performance at different levels on the scale. The scale scores on the left represent the average scores for students who were likely to get the items correct or “Complete.” The lower-boundary scores at each achievement level are noted in boxes. The descriptions of selected assessment questions are listed on the right along with the corresponding themes.

For example, the map on this page shows that fourth-graders performing in the middle of the *Basic* range (students with an average score of 221) were likely to be able to identify a common colonial occupation. Students performing near the top of the *Proficient* range (with an average score of 272) were likely to be able to identify the purpose of the Underground Railroad.

GRADE 4 NAEP U.S. HISTORY ITEM MAP

	Scale score	Theme	Question description
Advanced	500		
	330	Technology	Compare southern and northern colonies using maps
	325	Culture	Explain why people settled on the western frontier (question on page 20)
	294	Democracy	Explain goals of the Martin Luther King, Jr., march
Proficient	276		
	274	Democracy	<i>Interpret message of political cartoon about women’s right to vote</i>
	272	Culture	<i>Identify purpose of Underground Railroad</i>
	266	World Role	Describe impact of a world event on the U.S.
	262	Democracy	<i>Identify slave states on a map</i>
	256	Technology	Explain how two inventions changed life in the U.S.
	255	World Role	<i>Identify the time frame of the Vietnam War</i>
	253	Democracy	<i>Interpret Lincoln’s position on slavery</i> (question on page 19)
	248	Technology	<i>Understand impact of railroad growth on Chicago</i>
	246	Technology	<i>Identify reason for American Revolution</i>
Basic	243		
	241	Democracy	<i>Interpret a presidential quotation</i>
	239	Technology	<i>Interpret a map of canals</i>
	235	Culture	<i>Explain why some early Native Americans built homes in cliffs</i>
	226	World Role	<i>Understand Statue of Liberty symbolism</i>
	224	Democracy	<i>Identify change for African Americans</i>
	221	Technology	<i>Identify common colonial occupation</i>
	219	Technology	<i>Interpret map of colonial economy</i>
	211	Culture	<i>Understand simple population pie graph</i>
195			
	188	Democracy	<i>Know who suffragists were</i>
	0		

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 U.S. history 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 U.S. History Assessment.



Today's Topic

Grade 8

The proportion of eighth-grade assessment time devoted to each theme differed somewhat from the proportions at grade 4. A slightly higher proportion of eighth-grade assessment time was devoted to the Technology theme than to the Democracy, Culture, or World Role themes. Assessment time at the eighth grade was divided about evenly between the four early historical periods and the four later periods.

U.S. History Achievement Levels at Grade 8

The achievement levels represent what students should know and be able to do in U.S. history at each level. The following are achievement-level descriptions for U.S. history at grade 8 with the corresponding “cut scores” (scores depicting the lowest score representative of that level) noted in parentheses.

Basic (252): Eighth-grade students performing at the *Basic* level should be able to identify and place in context a range of historical people, places, events, ideas, and documents. They should be able to distinguish between primary and secondary sources. They should have a beginning understanding of the diversity of the American people and the ways in which people from a wide variety of national and cultural heritages have become part of a single nation. Eighth-grade students at the *Basic* level should also have a beginning understanding of the fundamental political ideas and institutions of American life and their historical origins. They should be able to explain the significance of some major historical events.

Proficient (294): Eighth-grade students performing at the *Proficient* level should be able to explain the significance of people, places, events, ideas, and documents, and to recognize the connection between people and events within historical contexts. They should understand and be able to explain the opportunities, perspectives, and challenges associated

with a diverse cultural population. They should incorporate geographic, technological, and other considerations in their understanding of events and should have knowledge of significant political ideas and institutions. They should be able to communicate ideas about historical themes while citing evidence from primary and secondary sources to support their conclusions.

Advanced (327): Eighth-grade students performing at the *Advanced* level should recognize significant themes and movements in history and begin to understand particular events in light of these themes and movements. They should have an awareness of continuity and change over time and be able to draw relevant analogies between past events and present-day situations. They should be able to frame questions about historical topics and use multiple sources to develop historical generalizations and interpretations. They should be able to explain the importance of historical themes, including some awareness of their political, social, and economic dimensions.

Question on U.S. Foreign Policy

Eighth-grade students were asked to demonstrate their historical knowledge of U.S. foreign policy in the following question from the World Role theme.

Overall, 33 percent of eighth-graders were able to correctly associate Latin America with the policies listed. More than one-half (60 percent) of students performing at the *Proficient* level answered correctly.

The Monroe Doctrine, the Good Neighbor Policy, and the Alliance for Progress were all United States foreign policy positions relating directly to

- A Latin America
- B Africa
- C the Middle East
- D China

Percentage correct in 2006				
Overall	Below <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Proficient</i>	At <i>Advanced</i>
33	19	33	60	‡

‡ 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 U.S. History Assessment.

Question About the Transcontinental Railroads

In answering this question, students could use the map provided to describe the impact of the transcontinental railroad system on the development of the western United States. This question assessed students' skills in historical analysis and interpretation in the Technology theme.

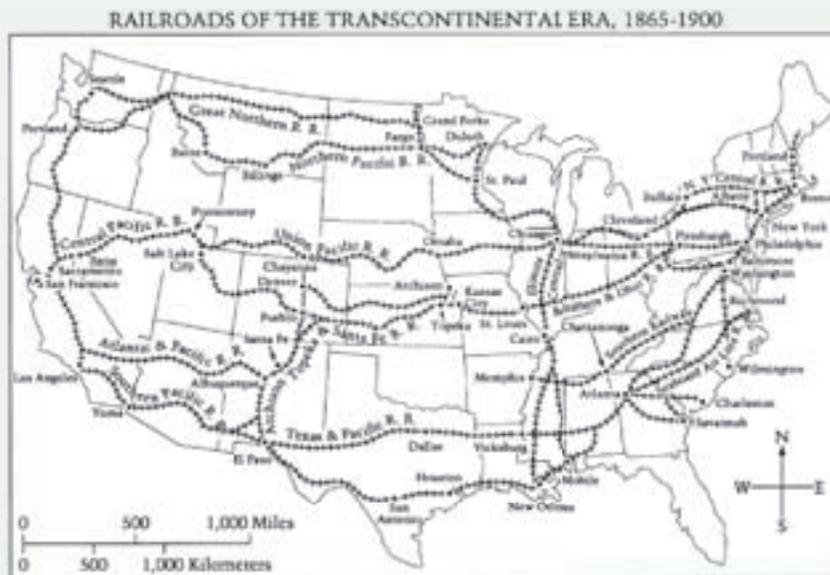
Student responses were rated using the following three-level scoring guide:

- **Complete** responses described at least two ways the West changed after the transcontinental railroad was built.
- **Partial** responses accurately described just one way the West changed.
- **Inappropriate** responses did not accurately describe any significant change.

The sample student response shown here was rated as “Complete.” Overall, 39 percent of eighth-graders were able to provide a “Complete” response to the question in 2006.

Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006				
Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
39	13	46	73	‡

‡ 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 U.S. History Assessment.



Describe two ways that the western United States changed after the transcontinental (or cross-country) railroads were built. You can use the map to help you answer the question.

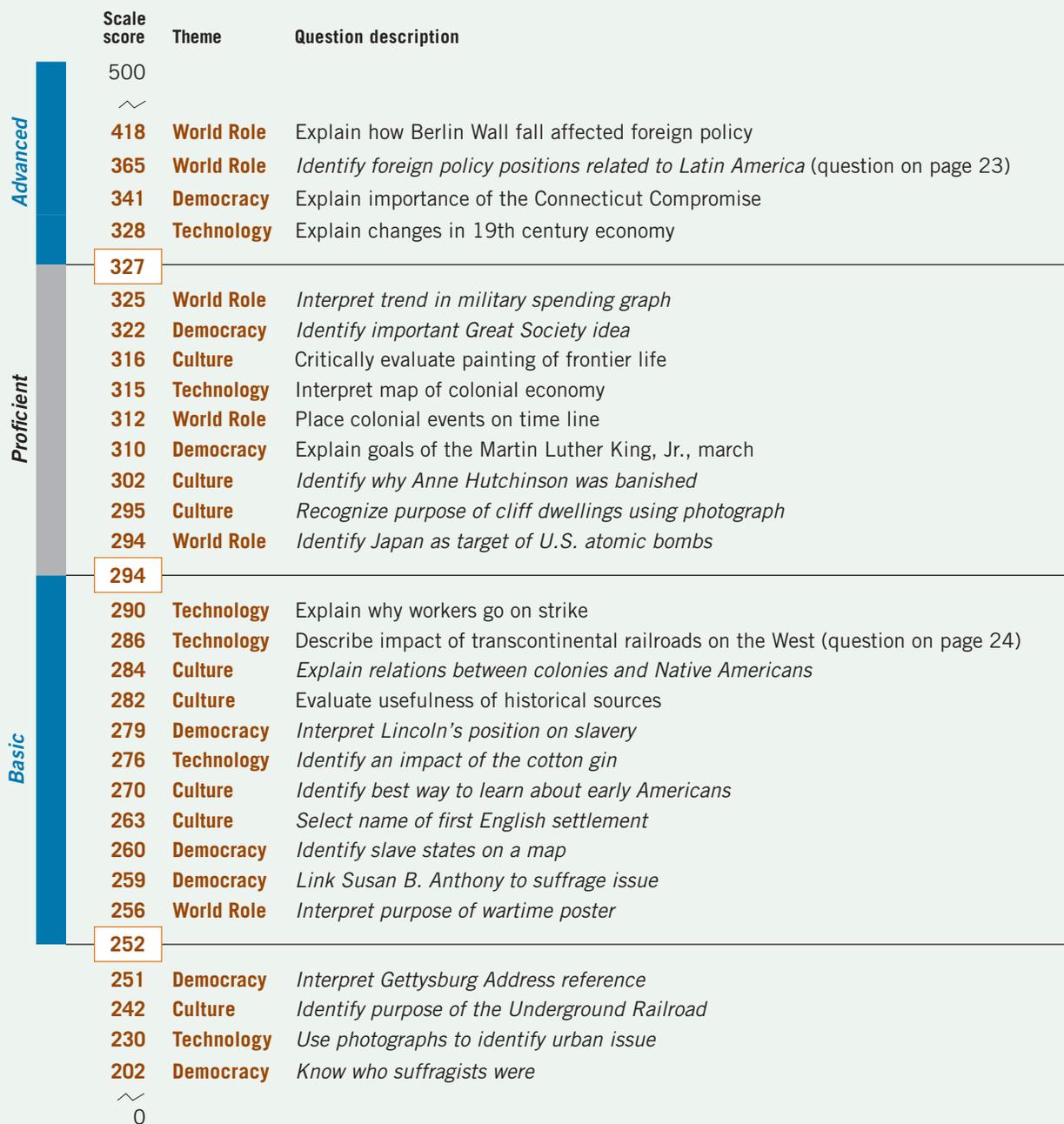
- 1) *The western states became more populated.*
- 2) *The western states had more trade.*

What Eighth-Graders Know and Can Do in U.S. History

The item map below illustrates the range of U.S. history knowledge and skills demonstrated by eighth-grade students. For example, students performing near the bottom of the *Basic* range (with an average score of 260) were likely to be able to identify the

slave states prior to the Civil War on a U.S. map. Students performing in the middle of the *Proficient* range (with an average score of 315) were likely to be able to interpret a map of the colonial economy.

GRADE 8 NAEP U.S. HISTORY 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 U.S. history 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 U.S. History Assessment.



Grade 12

In 2006, the assessment time at grade 12 was divided almost evenly across the four historical themes. The proportion of time devoted to World Role was higher than at either of the other two grades. As at the other grades, twelfth-graders also answered questions about Democracy, Culture, and Technology.

The chronological focus of the assessment at grade 12 shifted toward more recent history. Over 60 percent of assessment time was devoted to the four later periods.

U.S. History Achievement Levels at Grade 12

The achievement levels represent what students should know and be able to do in U.S. history at each level. The following are achievement-level descriptions for U.S. history at grade 12 with the corresponding “cut scores” (scores depicting the lowest score representative of that level) noted in parentheses.

Basic (294): Twelfth-grade students performing at the *Basic* level should be able to identify the significance of many people, places, events, dates, ideas, and documents in U.S. history. They should also recognize the importance of unity and diversity in the social and cultural history of the United States and have an awareness of America’s changing relationships with the rest of the world. They should have a sense of continuity and change in history and be able to relate relevant experience from the past to their understanding of contemporary issues. They should recognize that history is subject to interpretation and should understand the role of evidence in making a historical argument.

Proficient (325): Twelfth-grade students performing at the *Proficient* level should understand particular people, places, events, ideas, and documents in historical context, with some awareness of the political, economic, geographic, social, religious, technological, and

ideological factors that shape historical settings. They should be able to communicate reasoned interpretations of past events, using historical evidence effectively to support their positions. Their written arguments should reflect some in-depth grasp of issues and should refer to both primary and secondary sources.

Advanced (355): Twelfth-grade students achieving at the *Advanced* level should demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of events and sources of U.S. history. Recognizing that history is subject to interpretation, they should be able to evaluate historical claims critically in light of the evidence. They should understand that important issues and themes have been addressed differently at different times and that America’s political, social, and cultural traditions have changed over time. They should be able to write well-reasoned arguments on complex historical topics and draw upon a wide range of sources to inform their conclusions.

Question on the Lewis and Clark Mission

The sample question presented here on the Lewis and Clark expedition assessed students’ historical knowledge and perspective within the Culture theme.

To answer correctly, students had to recognize the route and relate it to the Louisiana Purchase. Overall, 63 percent of twelfth-graders answered the question correctly in 2006. When looking at how students performing at different levels did on this question, about four-fifths (81 percent) of the students performing at the *Proficient* level answered correctly.



The expedition whose route is shown was undertaken to explore the

- (A) lands taken in the Mexican War
- (B) lands taken from England in the War of 1812
- (C) Louisiana Purchase
- (D) Gadsden Purchase

Percentage correct in 2006				
Overall	Below <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Proficient</i>	At <i>Advanced</i>
63	54	70	81	‡

‡ 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 U.S. History Assessment.

Question About the Korean War

In the sample question on this page, students were asked to identify a factor that led to U.S. involvement in the Korean War and to describe the factor's significance. This question measured students' skills in historical analysis and interpretation within the context of the World Role theme.

Student responses for this constructed-response question were rated using the following three-level scoring guide:

- **Complete** responses identified an important factor that led to U.S. involvement in the Korean War and explained why the factor was significant.
- **Partial** responses identified a factor but did not accurately explain its significance.
- **Inappropriate** responses did not accurately identify any factor leading to U.S. involvement.

The sample student response shown here was rated as “Complete,” and the table below shows that less than one-fifth (14 percent) of twelfth-graders gave a “Complete” response to the question in 2006.

Percentage rated as “Complete” in 2006				
Overall	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
14	2	16	54	†

† 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 U.S. History Assessment.



Identify a significant factor that led to United States involvement in the Korean War.

A significant factor that led the US into the Korean War was the fear of the domino-effect and the spread of communism.

Explain why this factor was significant.

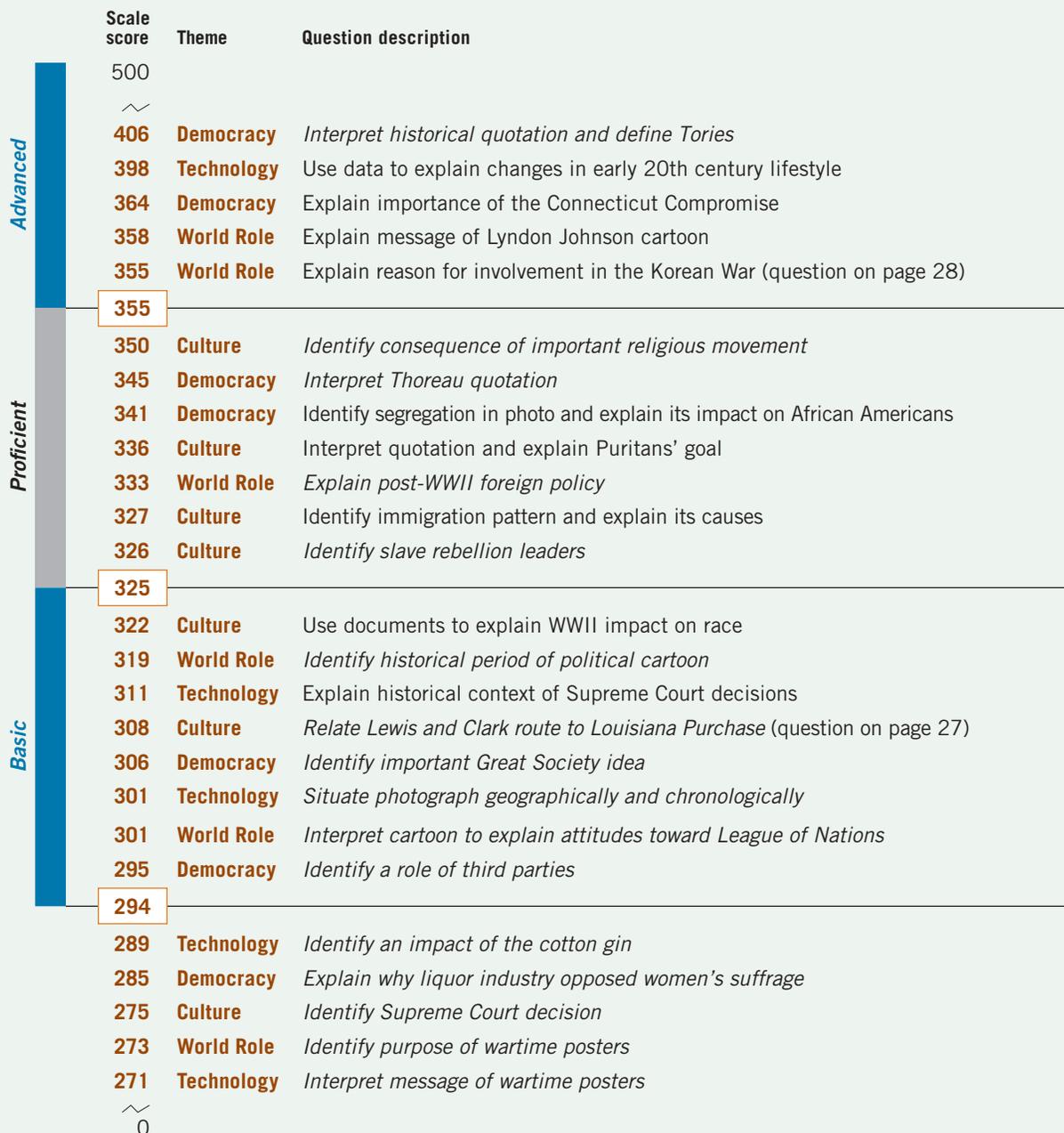
Communism and socialism economically threatened the laissez-faire capitalist economic system of the United States.

What Twelfth-Graders Know and Can Do in U.S. History

The item map below shows that twelfth-graders performing in the middle of the *Basic* range (students with an average score of 306) were likely to be able to identify an important idea of Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society program. Students performing in the

middle of the *Proficient* range (with an average score of 341) were likely to be able to identify an instance of segregation in a photograph and explain its impact on African Americans.

GRADE 12 NAEP U.S. HISTORY 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 U.S. history 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 U.S. History Assessment.

Technical Notes

SAMPLING AND WEIGHTING

The schools and students participating in the 2006 NAEP U.S. history assessments are chosen to be a nationally representative sample. This sample was chosen using a multistage design that involved sampling students from the sampled schools, which include public schools and nonpublic schools (i.e., private schools, Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, and Department of Defense schools). 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, for the oversampling of students who attend schools with high concentrations of minority students, and for the lower sampling rates of students who attend very small nonpublic schools.

INTERPRETING STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Standard errors represent the confidence that an estimate is close to the population value. Estimates based on smaller groups generally have larger standard errors. When an estimate—such as an average score—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 4-point difference between Black and Hispanic students may be statistically significant, while a 4-point difference between White and Asian/Pacific Islander 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/>.



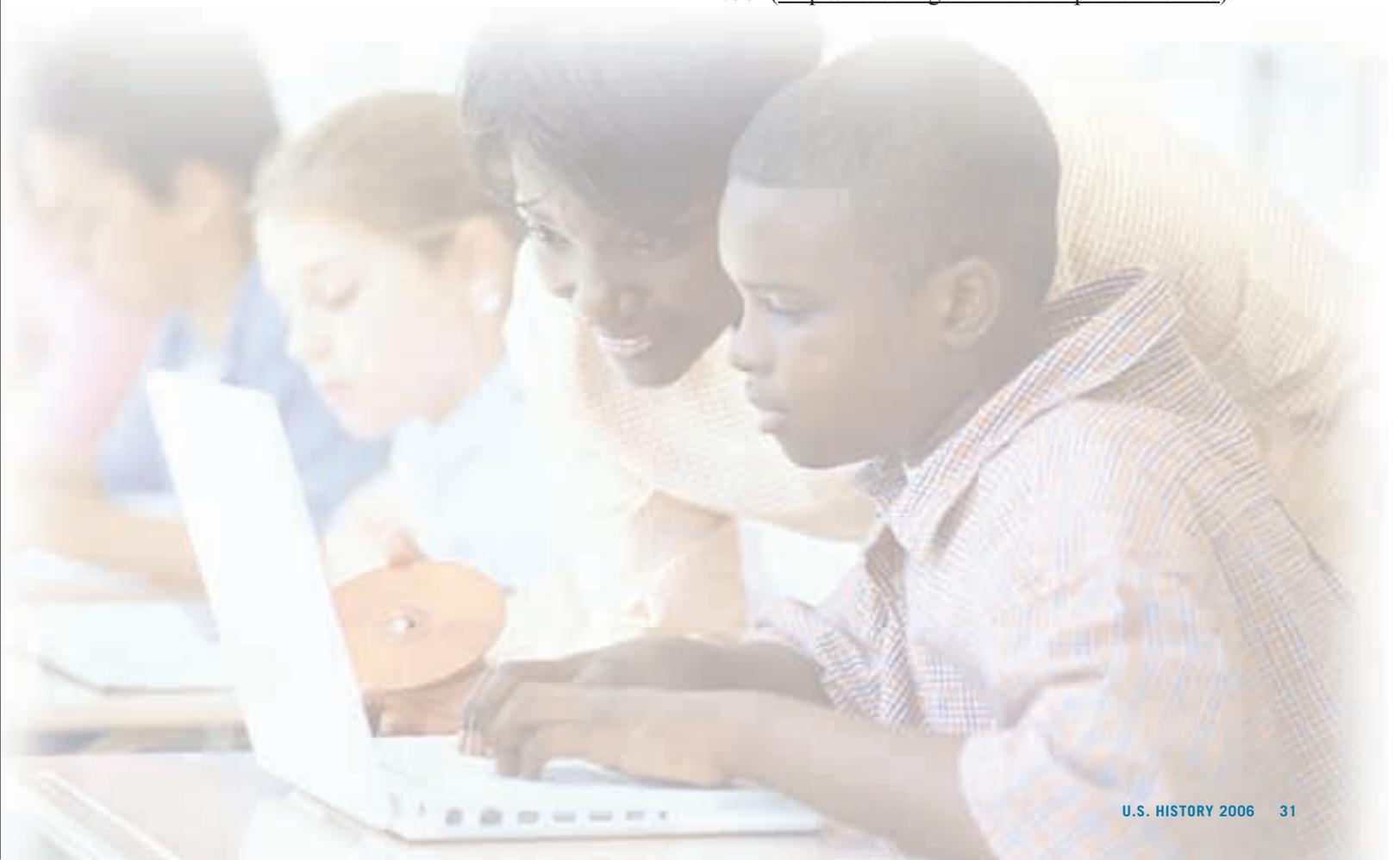
SCHOOL/STUDENT PARTICIPATION RATES

The NAEP participation rates for the original sample need to be at least 70 percent for schools to meet reporting requirements established by NCES and the Governing Board. The overall school participation rates for grades 4, 8, and 12 were 91, 91, and 80 percent, respectively. The overall student participation rates were 95, 92, and 73 percent, respectively, for each of the three grades. The participation rates for public schools were 93, 94, and 83 percent at grades 4, 8, and 12, respectively. For private schools, they were 70 (after rounding), 63, and 46 percent at grades 4, 8, and 12, respectively. However, participation rates for Catholic schools, which are included in the private category, did meet reporting standards at grades 4 (95 percent) and 8 (82 percent). The results reported are based on the public and private schools combined at each of the three grades.

NAEP requires nonresponse bias analyses for certain types of schools when their initial school participation rate meets the reporting guidelines, but is below 85 percent. The results of the nonresponse bias analyses showed that school substitution and nonresponse adjustments were effective in reducing the observable nonresponse bias for grade 12 public schools. However, these adjustments did not fully account for the nonresponse bias of Catholic students in grade 4 private schools.

PRIVATE SCHOOL RESULTS

Results are available for private schools at grade 4 and Catholic schools at grades 4 and 8 in 2006. The average score in 2006 for fourth-grade private school students (227) was higher than the score for students in public schools (210). Fourth- and eighth-graders attending Catholic schools also scored higher than their peers in public schools. Catholic school students had an average score of 223 at grade 4 and 282 at grade 8 in 2006, both of which were not significantly different from their comparable scores in either 1994 or 2001. These data are available in the NAEP data tool (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde/>).



REPORTING RACE/ETHNICITY

The scores presented in this report for 1994, 2001, and 2006 are based on school reports of students' race/ethnicity. The numbers in this report differ from those in the NAEP history reports for 1994 and 2001. The categorization of race/ethnicity for those earlier reports was based on student self-identification.

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

NAEP first began collecting data in 1996 on student eligibility for the National School Lunch Program as an indicator of a student's socioeconomic status. 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

Certain types of accommodations have been used in the NAEP administration procedures since 2001 for students who required accommodations to participate in the U.S. history assessment. The students who received accommodations are, in general, students with disabilities (SD) and/or English language learners (ELL). Table 6 shows the percentages of students assessed with and without accommodations and percentages of students excluded because they could not meaningfully participate in the assessment even with the accommodations NAEP allows. The percentages of students assessed with accommodations increased at all three grades in 2006 compared to 2001.

Table 6. **Percentage of students with disabilities (SD) and/or English language learners (ELL), identified, excluded, and assessed in NAEP U.S. history, by grade: 2001 and 2006**

Grade 4	2001	2006
SD and/or ELL		
Identified	18*	23
Excluded	3	3
Assessed	14*	20
Without accommodations	6*	10
With accommodations	8*	10
Grade 8	2001	2006
SD and/or ELL		
Identified	17	19
Excluded	3*	2
Assessed	13*	17
Without accommodations	7	7
With accommodations	6*	10
Grade 12	2001	2006
SD and/or ELL		
Identified	10*	13
Excluded	2	2
Assessed	7*	11
Without accommodations	5	4
With accommodations	3*	6

* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2006.

NOTE: Students identified as both SD and ELL were counted only once under the combined SD and/or ELL category. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2001 and 2006 U.S. History Assessments.

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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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THE NATION'S REPORT CARD

U.S. HISTORY 2006

May 2007

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