

Performance Level Descriptors

User Guide

August 2022

Introduction to the User Guide

Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) serve as a foundational resource in the development process for the South Carolina End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) tests. These descriptors help convey information about South Carolina's goals for students (i.e., level of knowledge and skills required of students at each level of performance) and give meaning and context to the total test score (scale score). This document was created to help educators and parents better understand the purpose for and intended use of PLDs.

1. What are Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs)?

PLDs are descriptions that provide the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of students in each performance level as defined by the South Carolina College- and Career- Ready (SCCCR) Standards. The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) has different kinds of PLDs: Policy PLDs and Range PLDs.

2. What are the differences between SCDE's Policy PLDs and Range PLDs?

- 1) **Policy PLDs** summarize the state's definition for each performance level, providing information to stakeholders on the state's suggested interpretation of each level. They are typically not specific to any given grade or content area.
- 2) **Range PLDs** summarize the knowledge, skills, and abilities, as informed by the state content standards, expected of students in a given performance level on a specific test. These PLDs translate the policy definitions into specific expectations about student knowledge and skills in a particular content area, at each performance level, for each subject and grade.

3. What are performance levels? How many are there for EOCEP tests?

Performance levels are the broad, categorical levels used to report student performance on an assessment. There are four performance levels for the South Carolina EOCEP tests which are organized in a manner that assumes students performing in higher levels have mastered the concepts and skills within the preceding levels. The general meaning of each of the four levels is provided below:

	Does Not Meet Expectations	Minimally Meets Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Policy	The student Does Not Meet the Expectations of the course content standards.	The student Minimally Meets the Expectations of the course content standards.	The student Meets the Expectations of the course content standards.	The student Exceeds the Expectations of the course content standards.
Range	The student <i>needs substantial academic support</i> to be on track for college and career readiness.	The student <i>needs additional academic support</i> to be on track for college and career readiness.	The student <i>is prepared</i> to be on track for college and career readiness.	The student <i>is well prepared</i> to be on track for college and career readiness.

4. How do performance levels relate to scale scores for EOCEP tests?

A scale score is the total test score a student receives on the EOCEP test and is reported as a letter grade (A, B, C, D, F). Scale scores are built using the PLDs and the Rasch model. Each letter grade corresponds to a performance level.

- *Does Not Meet* corresponds to a scale score in the range of 0-59 (F).
- *Minimally Meets* corresponds to a scale score in the range of 60-69 (D).
- *Meets* corresponds to a scale score in the range of 70-89 (B/C).
- *Exceeds* corresponds to a scale score in the range of 90-100 (A).

5. Do the performance levels align to reporting categories?

No, the process used to create the Low, Middle, and High classifications for the reporting categories differs from the process used to create the performance levels for the total test score. Each reporting category classifies a student’s performance as “Low,” “Middle,” or “High.” This classification is based on the subset of items that assesses the reporting category. The PLDs are intended to describe *overall* student performance and should only be used in conjunction with the total test score.

 Individual Student Report			
U.S. History and the Constitution Reporting Category	Your Student’s Performance		
	Low	Middle	High
Standard 1: Foundations of American Republicanism	✓		
Standard 2: Expansion and Union		✓	
Standard 3: Capitalism and Reform		✓	
Standard 4: Modernism and Interventionism			✓
Standard 5: Legacy of the Cold War	✓		

6. What is the purpose of PLDs?

The purpose of content-specific, Range PLDs is to provide

- guidelines to assess the level of student performance,
- an indication of how demanding the standards should be,
- specific expectations about student knowledge and skills in a particular content area at each performance level, and
- a progression of knowledge and skills that students are expected to have mastered across the performance levels.

Both the scale score and the PLDs provide information that help guide educators and parents understand the level of student performance required at each performance level.

7. How are PLDs used in conjunction with the EOCEP tests?

PLDs provide a link among the raw score, scale score, and performance level, while also adding insight into student knowledge and performance. They are the basis for test score reporting and interpretation of student scores on the EOCEP tests. PLDs are developed, revised, and expanded prior to and during the Standard Setting process for each EOCEP subject and are used by the standard-setting committee as a guide to make recommendations for “cut scores” that mark the threshold of performance from one level to the next.

8. What process is used to develop Range PLDs?

The PLDs are written using a multi-step process. State agency content experts and the state testing contractors/subcontractors begin with the policy definitions and expand the definitions in terms of specific knowledge, skills, and abilities required at each level within a content area to create an initial draft. A committee of South Carolina educators and curriculum experts are selected to review and revise the draft to articulate the SCCR expectations of the EOCEP standards. Participants are

- required to have an affiliation with a South Carolina public school,
- mostly content-specific classroom teachers and teachers serving special populations, and
- representative of the demographic characteristics of South Carolina in terms of gender, race and ethnicity, region (education districts), and community type (urban, suburban, rural).

The final version is adopted by the SCDE and released to the field.

9. How can teachers use the PLDs in their classrooms?

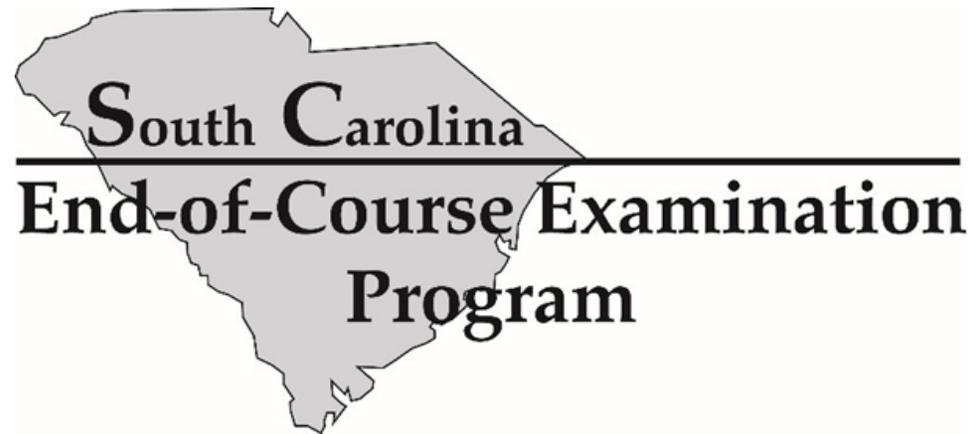
In addition to being used in the standard setting process, PLDs may serve a number of purposes. By using the PLDs to better understand students’ total test scores, classroom teachers will have a better understanding of what their students were generally able to do within a performance level. PLDs help to further clarify the relationship between the standards and expectations of the EOCEP tests, which can then inform the development of classroom expectations to ensure these expectations meet the rigor of the standards.

Teachers may leverage this understanding of their previous year's students' performance to inform instruction for the coming year in the same content area. Teachers can further use this information to help understand the knowledge, skills, and abilities that their current students have from the previous year's instruction by

- tracking student growth along the expectation continuum as described by the PLDs,
- differentiating instruction to support achievement of all students,
- developing formative classroom assessments, and
- creating rubrics to gauge student learning against the expectations of the EOCEP tests.

10. Where can I find a copy of the PLDs?

A copy of the PLDs is attached in the subsequent pages of this document. PLDs are updated as standards are revised.



U.S. History and the Constitution Performance Level Descriptors

Columbia, SC

Performance Levels and Performance Level Descriptors

For the South Carolina End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP), educators have developed four performance levels to describe student mastery and command of the knowledge and skills outlined in South Carolina’s College- and Career-Ready Standards (SCCCRS). Most students have at least some knowledge of the information described in the content standards; however, performance levels succinctly describe the extent to which students have demonstrated mastery of the knowledge and skills expressed in the College- and Career-ready standards. Performance levels give meaning and context to scale scores by describing the knowledge and skills students must demonstrate to achieve each level.

The four performance levels on EOCEP are *Does Not Meet Expectations*, *Minimally Meets Expectations*, *Meets Expectations*, and *Exceeds Expectations*. The general meaning of each of the four levels is provided below:

The student **does not meet the expectations** of the course content standards.

The student **minimally meets the expectations** of the course content standards.

The student **meets the expectations** of the course content standards.

The student **exceeds the expectations** of the course content standards.

More-detailed descriptions of the specific concepts and skills are provided for each course in the **Performance Level Descriptors** (PLDs). PLDs are descriptions of the knowledge and skills expected at each of the four performance levels and were developed by committees of South Carolina educators in March 2022. The PLDs are based on the state-adopted content standards.

PLDs show a progression of knowledge and skills that students are expected to have mastered across the performance levels. It is important to understand that a student should demonstrate mastery of the knowledge and skills within the student’s performance level as well as all content and skills in any performance levels that precede the students own, if any. For example, a student who Meets Expectations should also possess the knowledge and skills described at the Minimally Meets Expectations and Does Not Meet Expectations performance levels.

	Standard	Does Not Meet Expectations	Minimally Meets Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Policy		The student Does Not Meet the Expectations of the course content standards.	The student Minimally Meets the Expectations of the course content standards.	The student Meets the Expectations of the course content standards.	The student Exceeds the Expectations of the course content standards.
Range		The student needs substantial academic support to be on track for college and career readiness.	The student needs additional academic support to be on track for college and career readiness.	The student is prepared to be on track for college and career readiness.	The student is well prepared to be on track for college and career readiness.
	USHC.1.CO	Can identify or recall characteristics of the northern or southern colonies from 1607 to 1763.	Can describe or explain the similarities and differences between the northern and southern colonies from 1607 to 1763.	Can compare the northern and southern colonies from 1607 to 1763 by analyzing reasons for the similarities and differences.	Can compare the northern and southern colonies from 1607 to 1763 by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions.
	USHC.1.CE	Can identify or recall causes or effects of the American Revolution or identify turning points in the debates over independence and self-government from 1763 to 1791.	Can describe or explain causes and effects of the American Revolution and identify significant turning points in the debates over independence and self-government from 1763 to 1791.	Can describe and explain causes and effects of the American Revolution and analyze the impact of significant turning points in the debates over independence and self-government from 1763 to 1791.	Can assess short- and long-term causes and effects of the American Revolution and evaluate significant turning points in the debates over independence and self-government from 1763 to 1791 by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.
	USHC.1.P	Can identify or recall relationships between individuals, states, and the federal government from 1607 to 1800.	Can describe or explain the changing relationship between individuals, states, and the federal government from 1607 to 1800.	Can summarize the changing relationship between individuals, states, and the federal government from 1607 to 1800 by defining and explaining major characteristics of the era.	Can summarize the changing relationship between individuals, states, and the federal government from 1607 to 1800 by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.

	Standard	Does Not Meet Expectations	Minimally Meets Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
	USHC.1.CX	Can identify or recall historical events that sparked republican developments in North America from 1607 to 1815.	Can describe or explain significant republican developments within North America’s connection to the Atlantic World from 1607 to 1815.	Can describe and explain significant republican developments within North America’s connection to the Atlantic World from 1607 to 1815 by connecting events to historical themes and developments.	Can contextualize multiple significant republican developments within North America’s connection to the Atlantic World from 1607 to 1815 by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.
	USHC.1.CC	Can identify or recall debates over the proper role of the central government or neutrality in foreign affairs from 1789 to 1815.	Can describe or explain continuities and changes in the debates over the proper role of the central government and neutrality in foreign affairs from 1789 to 1815.	Can describe and explain continuities and changes in the debates over the proper role of the central government and neutrality in foreign affairs from 1789 to 1815 by analyzing continuities that transcend periods and changes within a period.	Can analyze continuities and changes in the debates over the proper role of the central government and neutrality in foreign affairs from 1789 to 1815 by examining evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions.
	USHC.1.E	Can identify or recall information from a primary or secondary source related to the development of republicanism or federalism in the United States between 1607 and 1815.	Can use primary or secondary sources to describe or explain the Atlantic influence on the development of republicanism and federalism in the United States between 1607 and 1815.	Can use primary and secondary sources to draw conclusions about the impact of the Atlantic influence in the regional and national development of republicanism and federalism in the United States between 1607 and 1815.	Can analyze multiple primary and secondary sources and use multistep thinking to draw and support conclusions about the impact of the Atlantic influence in the regional and national development of republicanism and federalism in the United States between 1607 and 1815.
	USHC.2.CO	Can identify or recall characteristics of the antebellum North or South from 1803 to 1860.	Can describe or explain the similarities and differences between the characteristics of the economic, political, or social development of the antebellum North and South from 1803 to 1860.	Can compare the characteristics of the economic, political, and social development of the antebellum North and South from 1803 to 1860 by analyzing reasons for and the impact of the similarities and differences.	Can compare the characteristics of the economic, political, and social development of the antebellum North and South from 1803 to 1860 by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions.

	Standard	Does Not Meet Expectations	Minimally Meets Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
	USHC.2.CE	Can identify or recall causes or consequences of economic or geographic expansion or identify significant turning points from 1803 to 1865.	Can describe or explain the causes and consequences of economic or geographic expansion and identify significant turning points from 1803 to 1865.	Can describe and explain causes and consequences of economic and geographic expansion and analyze the impact of significant turning points from 1803 to 1865.	Can evaluate short- and long-term causes and consequences of economic and geographic expansion through significant turning points from 1803 to 1865 by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.
	USHC.2.P	Can identify or recall technological changes or social developments in the United States during the period from 1815 to 1865.	Can describe or explain the impact of the technological changes and social developments on the United States during the period from 1815 to 1865.	Can summarize the impact of technological changes and social developments on the United States during the period from 1815 to 1865 by defining and explaining major characteristics of the era.	Can summarize the impact of technological changes and social developments on the United States during the period from 1815 to 1865 by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.
	USHC.2.CX	Can identify or recall historical perspectives about the role of the federal government in securing natural rights during the period from 1830 to 1877.	Can describe or explain perspectives on the role of the federal government in securing natural rights during the period from 1830 to 1877.	Can describe and explain perspectives on the role of the federal government in securing natural rights during the period from 1830 to 1877 and contextualize by connecting events to historical themes and developments.	Can contextualize multiple perspectives on the role of the federal government in securing natural rights during the period from 1830 to 1877 by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.
	USHC.2.CC	Can identify or recall continuities or changes within the development of sectionalism and reunion from 1803 to 1877.	Can describe or explain continuities and changes within the development of sectionalism and reunion from 1803 to 1877.	Can describe and explain the patterns of continuities and changes within the development of sectionalism and reunion from 1803 to 1877 by citing continuities that transcend periods and changes within a period.	Can differentiate the patterns of continuities and changes within the development of sectionalism and reunion from 1803 to 1877 by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions.

	Standard	Does Not Meet Expectations	Minimally Meets Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
	USHC.2.E	Can identify or recall information from a primary or secondary source related to the impact of economic or continental expansion on the evolving disagreements over natural rights or federalism between 1803 and 1877.	Can use primary or secondary sources to describe or explain the impact of economic or continental expansion on the evolving disagreements over natural rights or federalism between 1803 and 1877.	Can use primary and secondary sources to draw conclusions about the impact of economic and continental expansion on the evolving disagreements over natural rights and federalism between 1803 and 1877.	Can analyze multiple primary and secondary sources and use multistep thinking to draw and support conclusions about the impact of economic and continental expansion on the evolving disagreements over natural rights and federalism between 1803 and 1877.
	USHC.3.CO	Can identify or recall characteristics, strategies, or goals of the industrial leaders or the labor leaders from 1862 to 1924.	Can describe or explain the similarities and differences in the strategies or goals of the industrial leaders and labor leaders from 1862 to 1924.	Can compare the strategies and goals of the industrial leaders to those of labor leaders from 1862 to 1924.	Can compare the strategies and goals of industrial leaders to those of the labor leaders from 1862 to 1924 by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions.
	USHC.3.CE	Can identify or recall causes or effects of the Populist or Progressive movements or identify significant turning points from 1877 to 1924.	Can describe or explain the causes and effects of the Populist or Progressive movements and identify significant turning points from 1877 to 1924.	Can describe and explain causes and effects of the Populist and Progressive movements and analyze the impact of significant turning points from 1877 to 1924.	Can assess short- and long-term causes and effects of the Populist and Progressive movements through significant turning points from 1877 to 1924 by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.
	USHC.3.P	Can identify or recall relationships between the expanding corporate economy and the American government during the period of 1862 to 1924.	Can describe or explain the relationship between the expanding corporate economy and the American government during the period of 1862 to 1924.	Can summarize the relationship between the expanding corporate economy and the American government during the period of 1862 to 1924 by defining and explaining major characteristics of the era.	Can summarize the relationship between the expanding corporate economy and the American government during the period of 1862 to 1924 by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.

	Standard	Does Not Meet Expectations	Minimally Meets Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
	USHC.3.CX	Can identify or recall demographic changes resulting from economic development and growth during the Gilded Age.	Can describe or explain reasons for the demographic changes resulting from economic development and growth during the Gilded Age.	Can describe and explain the demographic changes resulting from economic development and growth during the Gilded Age and contextualize by connecting events to historical themes and developments.	Can contextualize multiple demographic changes resulting from economic development and growth during the Gilded Age by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.
	USHC.3.CC	Can identify or recall developments in the settlement of the frontier between 1862 and 1924.	Can describe or explain significant developments in the settlement of the frontier between 1862 and 1924.	Can describe and explain significant developments in the settlement of the frontier between 1862 and 1924 by analyzing continuities that transcend periods and changes within a period.	Can analyze significant developments in the settlement of the frontier between 1862 and 1924 by examining evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions.
	USHC.3.E	Can identify or recall information from a primary or secondary source related to the impact of innovation or industrialization on demographic change, reform, or American identity in the United States between 1862 and 1924.	Can use primary or secondary sources to describe or explain the impact of innovation or industrialization on demographic change, reform, or American identity in the United States between 1862 and 1924.	Can use primary and secondary sources to draw conclusions about the impact of innovation and industrialization on demographic change, reform, and American identity in the United States between 1862 and 1924.	Can analyze multiple primary and secondary sources and use multistep thinking to draw and support conclusions about the impact of innovation and industrialization on demographic change, reform, and American identity in the United States between 1862 and 1924.
	USHC.4.CO	Can identify or recall motives for or outcomes of American policies regarding foreign intervention.	Can describe or explain the similarities and differences of the motives for or the outcomes of American policies regarding foreign intervention.	Can compare the motives for and the outcomes of American policies regarding foreign intervention by analyzing reasons for the similarities and differences.	Can compare the motives for and the outcomes of American policies regarding foreign intervention by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions.

	Standard	Does Not Meet Expectations	Minimally Meets Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
	USHC.4.CE	Can identify or recall causes or effects of the business cycles of capitalism or identify significant turning points in the boom and bust cycles of the 1920s and 1930s.	Can describe or explain causes and effects of the business cycles of capitalism and identify significant turning points in the boom and bust cycles of the 1920s and 1930s.	Can describe and explain causes and effects of the business cycles of capitalism and analyze the impact of significant turning points in the boom and bust cycles of the 1920s and 1930s.	Can evaluate significant turning points, including immediate and long-term causes and effects of the business cycles of capitalism, in the 1920s and 1930s by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.
	USHC.4.P	Can identify or recall relationships between the government and the economy during the period of 1917 to 1945.	Can describe or explain the changing role of the government in the economy during the period of 1917 to 1945.	Can summarize the changing role of the government in the economy during the period of 1917 to 1945 by defining and explaining major characteristics of the era.	Can summarize the changing role of the government in the economy during the period of 1917 to 1945 by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.
	USHC.4.CX	Can identify or recall changes in American culture within new migration patterns, participation in global conflict, or capitalist business cycles during the 1920s and 1930s.	Can describe or explain the reasons for the changes in American culture within new migration patterns, participation in global conflict, or capitalist business cycles during the 1920s and 1930s.	Can describe and explain changes in American culture within new migration patterns, participation in global conflict, and capitalist business cycles during the 1920s and 1930s and contextualize by connecting events to historical themes and developments.	Can contextualize changes in American culture within new migration patterns, participation in global conflict, and capitalist business cycles during the 1920s and 1930s by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.
	USHC.4.CC	Can identify or recall characteristics of the U.S. home front surrounding World War I or World War II.	Can describe or explain continuities and changes on the U.S. home front surrounding World War I and World War II.	Can describe and explain continuities and changes on the U.S. home front surrounding World War I and World War II by citing continuities that transcend periods and changes within a period.	Can examine continuities and changes on the U.S. home front surrounding World War I and World War II by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions.

	Standard	Does Not Meet Expectations	Minimally Meets Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
	USHC.4.E	Can identify or recall information from a primary or secondary source related to the impact of changes in American foreign policy, worldwide conflicts, or business cycles in capitalism between 1893 and 1945.	Can use primary or secondary sources to describe or explain the impact of changes in American foreign policy, worldwide conflicts, or business cycles in capitalism between 1893 and 1945.	Can use primary and secondary sources to draw conclusions about the impact of changes in American foreign policy, worldwide conflicts, and/or business cycles in capitalism between 1893 and 1945.	Can analyze multiple primary and secondary sources and multistep thinking to draw and support conclusions about the impact of changes in American foreign policy, worldwide conflicts, and/or business cycles in capitalism between 1893 and 1945.
	USHC.5.CO	Can identify or recall technological developments or economic changes in the United States during the Cold War or post-Cold War eras.	Can describe or explain the similarities and differences of the technological developments or economic changes in the United States during the Cold War and post-Cold War eras.	Can compare the technological developments and economic changes in the United States during the Cold War and post-Cold War eras by analyzing reasons for similarities and differences.	Can compare the technological developments and economic changes in the United States during the Cold War and post-Cold War eras by analyzing evidence and using multi-step thinking to draw conclusions.
	USHC.5.CE	Can identify or recall causes or effects of events or turning points of the Cold War.	Can describe or explain causes and effects of significant events or turning points of the Cold War.	Can describe and explain immediate and long-term causes and effects of significant events and turning points of the Cold War.	Can assess immediate and long-term causes and effects of significant events and turning points of the Cold War by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.
	USHC.5.P	Can identify or recall major American political party platforms during the period from 1945 to the present.	Can describe or explain major American political party platforms during the period from 1945 to the present.	Can summarize the changes in the major American political party platforms during the period from 1945 to the present by defining and explaining major characteristics of the era.	Can summarize the changes in the major American political party platforms during the period from 1945 to the present by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.

	Standard	Does Not Meet Expectations	Minimally Meets Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
	USHC.5.CX	Can identify or recall characteristics of domestic economic development or American national identity within global politics from 1945 to the present.	Can describe or explain reasons for domestic economic development and American national identity within global politics from 1945 to the present.	Can describe and explain domestic economic development and American national identity within global politics from 1945 to the present and contextualize by connecting events to historical themes and developments.	Can contextualize multiple domestic economic developments and American national identity within global politics from 1945 to the present by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions or express justifications.
	USHC.5.CC	Can identify or recall characteristics of the Civil Rights Movement or other subsequent movements for equal rights from 1945 to the present.	Can describe or explain continuities and changes of the Civil Rights Movement and other subsequent movements for equal rights from 1945 to the present.	Can describe and explain continuities and changes during the Civil Rights Movement and other subsequent movements for equal rights by citing continuities that transcend periods and changes from 1945 to present.	Can evaluate continuities and changes during the Civil Rights Movement and other subsequent movements for equal rights from 1945 to the present by analyzing evidence and using multistep thinking to draw conclusions.
	USHC.5.E	Can identify or recall information from a primary or secondary source related to the impact of evolving American foreign policy on American identity or capitalism from 1945 to the present.	Can use primary or secondary sources to describe or explain the impact of evolving American foreign policy on American identity and capitalism from 1945 to the present.	Can use primary and secondary sources to draw conclusions about the impact of evolving American foreign policy on American identity and capitalism from 1945 to the present.	Can analyze multiple primary and secondary sources and use multistep thinking to draw and support conclusions about the impact of evolving American foreign policy on American identity and capitalism from 1945 to the present.