



Question Types and Relationships in Social Studies

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Identify central claims and supporting details in texts and make logical inferences based on them
- Use historical and textual context to interpret words, phrases and assertions in a passage

Focusing Themes in Social Studies

The primary focus of the GED Social Studies Test is the measurement of reasoning skills (or “practices”) such as analysis, evaluation and inference. The content topics focus on key concepts taught in high-school level social studies courses.

On the GED Social Studies Test, these content topics provide context for measuring mastery of Social Studies Practices.

The GED Social Studies Test questions focus on two themes:

- Development of Modern Liberties and Democracy
- Dynamic Responses in Societal Systems

Focusing Themes in Social Studies

The theme of Development of Modern Liberties and Democracy relates to current ideas about how democracy and human rights developed.

Topics on the GED test related to this theme include types and structures of government and the principles underlying them, important ideas and events in US history and economics, and the development of classical civilizations.

The theme of Dynamic Responses in Societal Systems relates to how conditions and events cause human systems, structures and policies to change and evolve.

Topics on the GED test related to this theme include US politics and elections, fundamental concepts of economics on a micro- and macro-scale, US domestic and foreign policy, and nations, borders and migration of populations.

Question Types in Social Studies

The GED question types can be classified in different ways, but one way to think of them is to consider how they test the essential social studies practices of evaluation, analysis, and inference.

Evaluation	Analysis	Inference
Determine the topic or main idea of a passage	Identify a principle or assumption that one or more passages are based on	Identify an accurate paraphrase of the facts or implications of part of a passage
Identify an author's purpose or point of view	Identify the ideas or circumstances that shaped an author's point of view	Recognize an example that illustrates a concept in the passage
Recognize statements that are biased or opinionated	Make quantitative or qualitative conclusions based on a chart, graph, table or other visual	Determine how a particular word is used in context

Mixed Practice

Theater was one of the most popular forms of art in ancient Greece, and one form of drama—tragedy—was central to Greek culture.

Tragedies told familiar stories from Greek myths and epics, but actors portrayed the main roles, and a chorus narrated the background of the story and commented upon the action.

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1. Which of the following is the topic of the paragraph?
 - A. the superiority of Greek theater
 - B. the standard forms of Greek drama
 - C. the characteristics of Greek tragedy
 - D. the most popular Greek tragedies

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2. Which of these inferences is supported by the paragraph?
 - A. Ancient Greeks did not expect to see an original story each time they attended the theater.
 - B. Playwrights in ancient Greece also wrote myths and epics.
 - C. Tragedies in ancient Greece were judged on the basis of how serious their stories were.
 - D. Only highly cultured people attended tragedies in ancient Greece.

Central Claims and Supporting Details

Social Studies passages contain **central claims** and **supporting details**.

Central claims are main points, often stated directly in the introduction and conclusion.

Ask yourself: "What point is the author trying to make?"

Supporting details elaborate on the main point and provide concrete examples that "fill in" the story the author is telling.

Ask yourself: "What does the author provide to support the claim?"

Inferences

Inferences are conclusions based on evidence. These questions require you to find support for the correct answer using one or two statements from the passage.

Use clues in the question stem to quickly locate support for the correct answer.

In the Social Studies section, inferences are **NOT**:

- “out of scope” of the passage or unsupported.
- statements with extreme wording (i.e. “always” or “never”).
- matters of personal opinion.

Mixed Practice

In 1979, Congress passed legislation to allow political parties to raise unlimited amounts of general-purpose money not designated for particular candidates. In 1991, a lawsuit forced disclosure of such “soft money” contributions, and concern grew about the size of individual donations, the extent of total donations, and the ways in which the money was being spent. During the presidential elections of 1996 and 2000, campaign fundraising, especially the raising and spending of soft money, was an issue, with the candidates promising reform.

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Finally, in 2001, after several years of hearings, the Senate passed the McCain-Feingold bill, which would eliminate the unregulated soft money contributions that make up a large proportion of the parties' budgets.

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3. Which of the following is an example of a soft money contribution?
 - A. a \$250 ticket to a fundraising dinner-dance to benefit a mayoral candidate
 - B. a \$3,000 donation to the campaign fund of an incumbent senator
 - C. a \$3,000 contribution to a party fund for TV ads on political issues
 - D. a \$1,000 gift to a senator’s campaign fund in response to a direct mail solicitation

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4. Which of the following is the most likely reason soft money was not a major election issue in the 1980s?
 - A. People were less aware of soft money because disclosure was not required at that time.
 - B. Political campaigns were publicly financed, so soft money was not needed.
 - C. Most candidates spent part of their campaign funds on television ads.
 - D. McCain and Feingold had not submitted their campaign finance reform bill.

Historical Context

It is important to consider **historical context** when reading social studies texts.

Historical context includes events, figures, or ideas prevalent in the popular or political discourse at the time at which something, such as a document, was created.

Context is usually provided in the introduction to the passage.

This is often phrased as "this excerpt is from . . ." or "the graph/chart/map . . ."

When there is no introduction to the passage, look for clues in the passage to help you determine the historical context.

People, places, and dates can often help you figure out when the passage was written.

Text Structures

It's also important to think about the way the author wrote the passage. There are several different ways to structure a nonfiction passage:

- **Description:** focuses on descriptive details, such as the makeup of the Senate
- **Problem/Solution:** focuses on introducing a problem and describing the solution
- **Chronological:** tells events in the **order** they happened; common in primary sources
- **Procedural:** provides steps to accomplish a task
- **Comparison/Contrast:** introduces two or more subjects and describes the similarities and differences between them
- **Cause/Effect:** focuses on the causal relationship between two or more events

Mixed Practice

The excerpt below is from a 1947 speech by President Harry Truman.

I am fully aware of the broad implications involved if the United States extends assistance to Greece and Turkey. . . .

One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion. This was a fundamental issue in the war with Germany and Japan. Our victory was won over

Mixed Practice

countries which sought to impose their will, and their way of life, upon other nations.

To ensure the peaceful development of nations, free from coercion, the United States has taken a leading part in establishing the United Nations. The United Nations is designed to make possible lasting freedom and independence for all its members. We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes. . . .

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 - A. to eliminate public protests
 - B. to prevent government corruption
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Words in Context

Reading Social Studies texts requires understanding key **words and phrases in context**.

To answer words in context questions correctly:

- **Reread** the sentence
- **Predict** a synonym or similar phrase
- **Match your prediction** to the correct answer choice
- **Avoid common meanings**

The GED Social Studies Test will test vocabulary related to history, politics, society, geography, and economics. Luckily, you don't have to memorize vocab lists in advance; you will always be given context.

Mixed Practice

The excerpt below is the text of the first amendment to the United States Constitution.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

6. In the text of the First Amendment, what does **establishment** mean?
- A. Accepted authority
 - B. Creation
 - C. Location where goods or services are sold
 - D. Temporary rule

Cause-and-Effect

Events may have a **single cause** or **multiple causes**. Patterns of cause-and-effect allow historians to explain why things happened in the past.

Every event has at least one cause. However, because history is complex, multiple causes may contribute to a single historical event.

When identifying cause-and-effect, use context clues such as chronological or procedural keywords.

Cause-and-effect keywords include so, as a result, because, therefore, consequently, due to, and which caused.

Causation and Correlation

Causation describes a relationship in which the actions of one event directly or indirectly contribute to producing another event.

*One event is the **cause** and the other is the **effect**.*

Coincidence describes seemingly related events that have no causal relationship.

Coincidental events do NOT have to be related.

Correlation refers to a direct connection between two events that may or may not have a causal relationship.

Example: The more it rains, the more sales for umbrellas go up.

Mixed Practice

From 1820 to 1870, more than 7.5 million immigrants arrived on U.S. shores. That was more people than the entire U.S. population in 1810. Almost all of these immigrants came from Northern Europe, and a majority were Catholic. Historians have often focused on what “pushed” these emigrants out of Europe. During the 1840s, for example, Germany experienced a series of crop failures that, combined with social upheaval triggered by rapid industrialization in urban areas, produced riots, civil unrest, and open rebellion. During the same years, Ireland

Mixed Practice

saw the infamous “potato famine” strike poor and working-class Irish families, killing an estimated 700,000 people. While those crises spurred Europeans to emigrate, a variety of factors created a simultaneous “pull” to immigrate to the United States. Letters home from friends and family members who had immigrated earlier often described the United States as a “land of plenty” and related stories of successful employment and plentiful land. Steamship companies offering passage across the Atlantic advertised with posters that

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7. According to the passage, which of the following was a cause of Northern European immigration to the United States in the 1840s and 1850s?
- A. Americans’ desire to double the population of the United States
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8. Based on the passage, which one of the following was most likely to have been featured on a steamship company poster?
- A. a folk-art painting depicting the life of the rural poor in the United States
 - B. a portrait of an American politician from the 1840s
 - C. an advertisement for an American product
 - D. a painting of pioneers settling and farming productive prairie land

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Questions?

Effort and practice are the keys to Test Day Success. Now that you have completed this lesson, you should reinforce these topics by completing practice questions.

If you have questions between live sessions, email your GED experts at GEDHelp@kaplan.com.

Happy studying!



Answer Key

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P1
tragedy important
to Greeks

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P1
history of soft \$
contributions

P2
soft \$ reform
~96-01

Answer Key

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P2 cont
bill to elim. soft \$

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*Aid – to keep
nations free*

Answer Key

countries which sought to impose their will, and their way of life, upon other nations.

To ensure the peaceful development of nations, free from coercion, the United States has taken a leading part in establishing the United Nations. The United Nations is designed to make possible lasting freedom and independence for all its members. We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes. . . .

US = UN leader

protect against
'aggressive
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P1
history of
immigrants

Answer Key

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P2
why people came

Answer Key

showed majestic scenes of American abundance.

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