

Social Studies Spectacular!



Believe it or not, Social Studies is the second most failed GED® test. How can we help our students be successful with the primary sources, graphic literacy, and other challenges this test presents? Find out in this interactive session!

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Today's Objectives

At the end of today's workshop, I will be able to:

- Explain three skill and knowledge gaps students have in preparing for the GED® Social Studies Test
- Describe teaching methods to improve students' inference and critical thinking skills
- Discuss methods for improving students' social studies background knowledge



Social Studies Skill and Knowledge Gaps

Gap 1

Cite or identify specific evidence to support inferences or analyses of primary and secondary sources, attending to the precise details of explanations or descriptions of a process, event or concept.

Gap 2

Compare treatments of the same social studies topic in various primary and secondary sources, noting discrepancies between and among the sources.

Gap 3

Test questions assume test-takers have a basic understanding of the social studies subject matter and terminology used in the content topics and indicators. Civics/government and economics are students' weakest areas.

Developing Inference Skills

Inference allows readers to draw a conclusion that an author may not have directly said in a text. Inference is making an educated guess based on:

- a person's own experience
- information (evidence) from a text

To make an inference, read like a detective. Look for clues the author leaves behind in their writing to see beyond what they say. Our students make inferences all the time. For example, they can tell what emotions someone is feeling by seeing their body language and facial expressions. If they find a chewed-up shoe and their dog running away from them acting guilty, they can guess that Fido the dog is responsible.

Help students learn inference skills by teaching from concrete to abstract. Start with pictures, move to comics/cartoons, and finish with readings. Use shorter, simpler readings at first and then continue to longer, more complex ones.

Adapted from GED® Testing Service

From Video to Picture to Comic to Sentence to Social Studies GED® Material

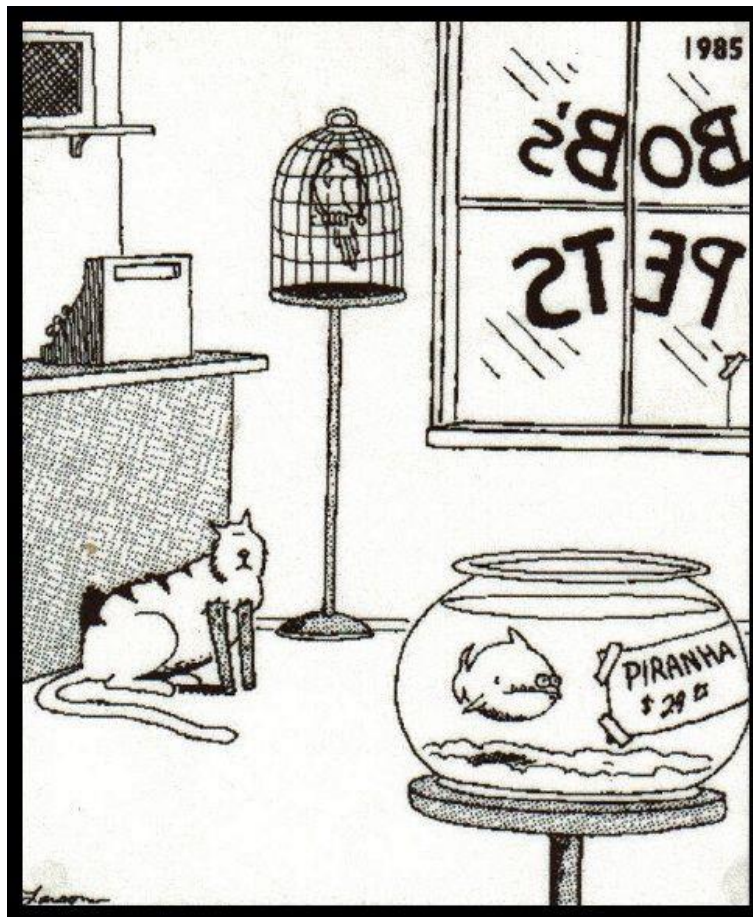
Video

[Chevy Happy Grad \(Full Ad\) - Super Bowl XLVI Commercial 2012](#)

Picture – “Burst of Joy”



Far Side Comic



Sentence

A woman is standing on a podium smiling, holding a medal.

GED® Social Studies Material

This excerpt is from a 2012 press release by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The nation's urban population increased by 12.1 percent from 2000 to 2010, outpacing the nation's overall growth rate of 9.7 percent for the same period. . . . The Census Bureau released the new list of urban areas today based on 2010 Census results.

Urban areas—defined as densely developed residential, commercial and other nonresidential areas—now account for 80.7 percent of the U.S. population, up from 79.0 percent in 2000. Although the rural population—the population in any areas outside of those classified as "urban"—grew by a modest amount from 2000 to 2010, it continued to decline as a percentage of the national population.

Based on the excerpt, which statement describes a way the population changed from 2000 to 2010?

- ☐ Immigration into the country increased the urban population.
- ☐ Migration from rural areas increased the urban population.
- ☐ The number of people living in rural areas increased.
- ☐ The number of rural communities increased.

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Berlin Airlift: Same Event, Different Views

This lesson focuses on how to help students compare treatments of the same social studies topic in various primary and secondary sources, noting discrepancies between and among the sources. We will show how being a fan of different sports teams' shapes our reaction to a game. Then we will transfer the skill to show how people view events differently depending on who they are in history.

Materials Needed:

- YouTube video: [Music City Miracle HD](#)
- YouTube video: [American Experience The Berlin Airlift](#)
- Berlin Airlift Documents
- Berlin Airlift Graphic Organizer

Directions:

1. Divide students into two groups, one who supports the team in blue (Tennessee Titans) and one who supports the team in white (Buffalo Bills). Play the **Music City Miracle HD** video and ask:

How would a Buffalo Bills (white team) fan react to this play?

How would a Tennessee Titans (blue team) fan react to this play?

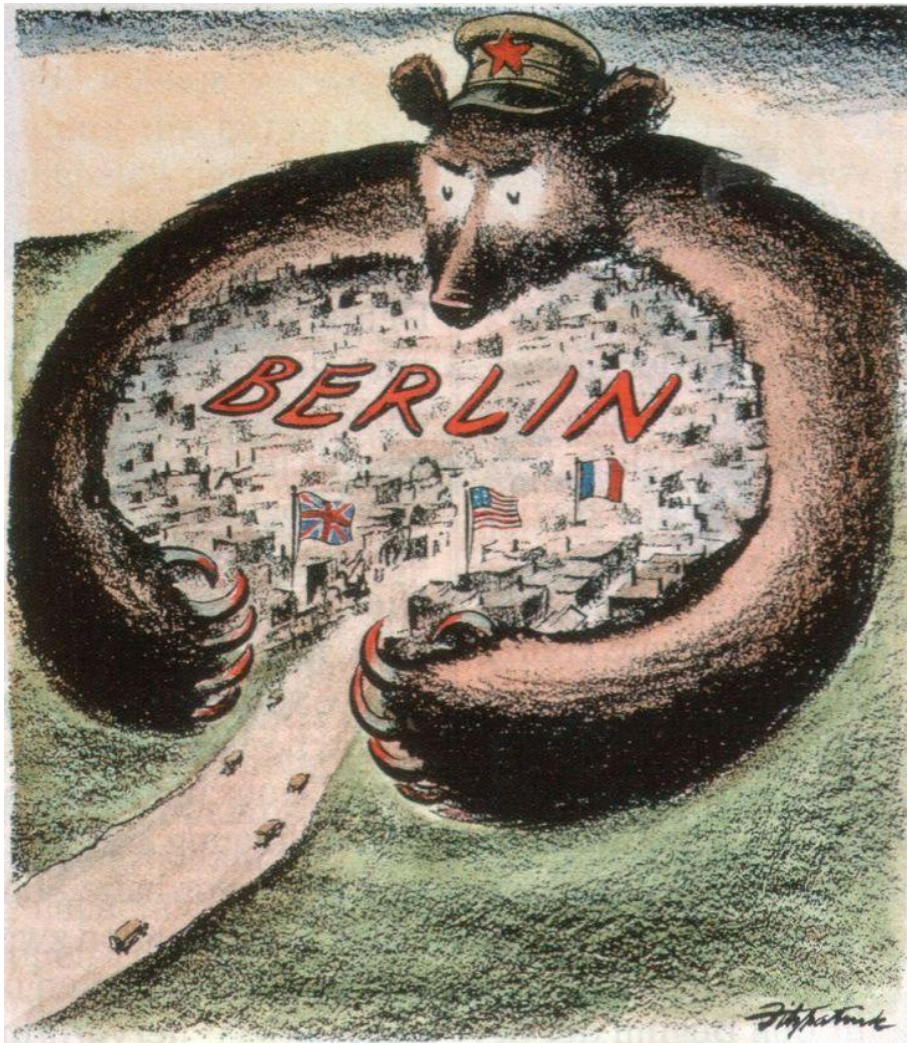
How does being a fan of a certain team affect how one views a certain play?
2. Mention to students: "In the same way, people view historical events differently depending on their relationship to it. We will look at Berlin Airlift using a variety of sources. Think how you might feel if you represented the United States, the Soviet Union, or lived in Berlin."
3. To gain some background, play the **American Experience The Berlin Airlift** video from the 1:22 to 9:13 mark. Explain that the Airlift was one of the first events of the Cold War, the war of words and ideas between the United States and its allies and the Soviet Union and its allies. Discuss how the Soviet Union (Russia) had been invaded several times in history and wanted to keep a buffer zone of friendly countries around them to prevent a future attack. Mention how the United States wished to revive the economies of western European countries to provide a market for U.S. manufactured goods and to prevent them from becoming communist like the Soviet Union and its allies.
4. Give students the Berlin Airlift graphic organizer and document package. Model how to fill out the graphic organizer by doing the first two documents together.
5. Have students work in pairs or groups to fill out the organizer on the other documents and pictures.

6. Debrief the activity by having students share their responses from the graphic organizer.
Discuss some current events and have students look at the event from the point of view of different participants.
7. Discuss other questions such as:

How would a resident of Berlin have felt during the airlift? Why?

What might have happened if the United States had not done the Berlin Airlift? Why?

Source # 1 Political Cartoon – “How to Close the Gap?”



Source # 2 Russian History Book

"The Americans had introduced a new currency into Berlin. Old money flooded into the Soviet Zone. Some restrictions were placed on links between Berlin and western zones, but the Soviet side was ready to supply food to all Berlin. Yet every day 380 American planes flew into Berlin. It was simply a propaganda move intended to make the cold war worse. The crisis was planned in Washington behind a smokescreen of anti-Soviet propaganda. . . The self-blockade of the Western powers hit the West Berlin population with harshness. The people were freezing and starving. In the Spring of 1949 the USA was forced to yield."

Source # 3 Truman/Stalin Political Cartoon



Source: mrose.longwoodteachers.com

Source # 4 Bingham Telegram

Telegram from Alfred M. Bingham (head of Americans for Democratic Action) to U.S. President Harry S. Truman on June 25, 1948

Russian efforts to drive western powers from Berlin are a crucial challenge to American foreign policy. Surrender would deliver to Russian vengeance two million Germans who have defied communist totalitarianism. There are disturbing rumors of plan to evacuate Berlin because of Russian blockade against German civilian supplies.

Essential supplies for the German population can be delivered by air and if necessary must be at whatever cost. We urge you to make this country's position unmistakable by declaring that under all circumstances short of war we will remain in Berlin and maintain supplies for the civilian population. Nothing less can adequately reassure democratic forces in Germany and elsewhere that this country will not desert them.



Source # 5 Memoir of Tilli Schulze, a young girl living in Berlin

"The second day I was in Berlin, Herr [Mr.] Berg took me to Templehof Airport to see the American planes in action. We joined a crowd gathered on the low hills encircling the airfield, which was loud with the droning whine of airplane engines. I craned my head back, and in flew a fat-bellied white plane with an American star and red and white stripes painted on its side. It swooped onto the runway, gliding to a stop.

"American soldiers dressed in green jumped out and began unloading box after box, a mountain of brown and white boxes, as the crowd on the hills cheered. Less than five minutes later, another plane shot in, pulling up parallel to the first. More soldiers jumped out; there were more boxes of food and more cheers. A few minutes later, another plane arrived. And another. Every five to ten minutes, a new plane landed and another one left.

"Without the Americans, we would all die," said Herr Berg. "That's right," a man standing beside us said. "First they destroyed us. Now they are keeping us alive." "They did what they had to do to win the war," said Herr Berg. "They stopped Hitler. They saved us from him. I don't blame them for that. They don't need to be doing this now, bringing us food like this. This is what I admire them for."

"As we rode the tram back to Herr Berg's apartment, I thought about what he had said and decided that I was even more determined, if that were possible, to live in America, a land that would reach out to save the lives of millions of people in a city of its enemies an ocean away."

Source: *Tilli's Story*. My Thoughts are Free, 2005

Source # 6 Payushkin Letter

Translation of a letter, dated July 14, 1948, by Alexander S. Payushkin [the Soviet Ambassador to the United States] to the U.S. Secretary of State

“The Government of the United States declares that the temporary measures put into effect by the Soviet Command for the restriction of transport communications between Berlin and the western zones have created difficulties in supplying the Berlin population of the western sectors. It is impossible however to deny the fact that these difficulties were [caused] by the actions of the Governments of the U.S.A., Great Britain and France, and primarily by their separate actions in the introduction of new currency in the western zones of Germany and special currency in the western sectors of Berlin.

“Berlin lies in the center of the Soviet zone and is a part of that zone. The interests of the Berlin population do not permit a situation in which in Berlin or only in the western sectors of Berlin there [will] be introduced special currency which has no validity in the Soviet zone.... The Soviet Command has been forced therefore to adopt certain urgent measures for the protection of the interests of the German population and also of the economy of the Soviet zone . . . “



Building Background Knowledge in Civics/Economics

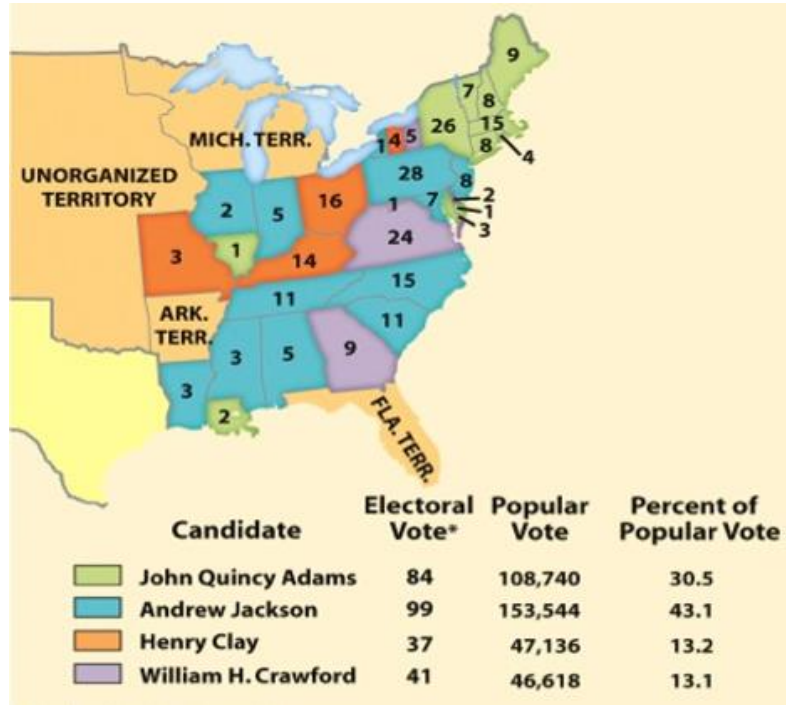
Annenbergclassroom.org – This site has free classroom resources for teaching the Constitution including 65 videos on constitutional concepts and Supreme Court cases.

DocsTeach – This site from the National Archives has resources for teaching primary source documents.

[Stanford History Education Group](http://StanfordHistoryEducationGroup) – This site has both history and civics content.

Questions 1 to 3 are based on the following information:

1824 Presidential Election Results



Note: In order to win election, a presidential candidate must have a majority of electoral votes. In the 1824 election, a majority was 131 electoral votes.

Twelfth Amendment to the United States Constitution

"The person having the greatest Number of votes for President, shall be the President, if such number be a majority of the whole number of Electors appointed; and if no person have such majority, then from the persons having the highest numbers not exceeding three on the list of those voted for as President, the House of Representatives shall choose immediately, by ballot, the President. But in choosing the President, the votes shall be taken by states, the representation from each state having one vote; a quorum for this purpose shall consist of a member or members from two-thirds of the states, and a majority of all the states shall be necessary to a choice."

- Which of the following statements about the Election of 1824 is true?
 - John Quincy Adams received a majority of the popular vote
 - Henry Clay received a majority of the electoral votes
 - William Crawford won the most states
 - Andrew Jackson received the most popular votes
- According to the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution:
 - The Senate chooses the who the President will be in a tie election
 - The House of Representatives chooses the President if no candidate receives a majority of electors
 - If no candidate receives a majority of electors, each state has 3 votes to choose the President
 - The candidate with the largest number of popular vote wins
- Based on the data shown above, who should win the 1824 presidential election?
 - Andrew Jackson
 - John Quincy Adams
 - William H. Crawford
 - The House of Representatives will decide the winner

Reflection

Think about what we have done today. Write (or discuss) one best practice or activity for each of the following:

What is something that:

1. Reinforced something good that I already am doing?
2. Reminded me of something I used to do and will try again?
3. Gave me a new idea that I plan to try?

References

Faucette, D., Pittman, S., & Duran, P. (2022, April 12). *Addressing students' knowledge and skill gaps in science and social studies*. [Webinar]. COABE 2022.

About the Presenter

Steve Schmidt is an adult education consultant and moderator of the LINCS Reading and Writing Community of Practice. He has worked in adult basic education for more than 29 years as an instructor, program director, professional developer, and author. From 2010 to 2019, Steve served as a professional developer at Appalachian State University. He has delivered hundreds of workshops on a variety of topics including at COABE (2012 through 2022). He can be reached at:

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