

K-12 Social Studies

Glossary

ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS

A

- absolute location** The location of a point on the Earth's surface which can be expressed by a grid reference (e.g., latitude and longitude).
- absolute monarchy** A system of government headed by a monarch as the only source of power controlling all functions of the state.
- artifact** A material object of a culture such as a tool, an article of clothing or a prepared food.

B

- B.C.E.** Before the Common Era (also referred to as B.C.).
- barter** The trade of goods and services for other goods and services without the use of money.
- benefit** That which is received as an improvement or advantage as the result of a decision.
- bicameral** Composed of two legislative chambers.
- bill of attainder** A legislative act that inflicts punishment upon a person or group without a judicial trial.

C

- C.E.** In the Common Era (also referred to as A.D.).
- capital good** A productive resource consisting of human-made materials needed to produce goods and services; capital goods include buildings, machinery, equipment and tools.
- cardinal directions** The four main points of the compass (north, east, south and west).
- circular flow model** A diagram that shows the flow of economic activity among sectors of the economy.
- colonialism** A system where one country extends its control over foreign dependencies, especially for economic benefit.
- command economy** An economic system in which all decisions on production and consumption are made by a central government.
- comparative advantage** The ability to produce goods or services at a lower opportunity cost than other individuals or countries.
- compass rose** An element of a map used to show direction, usually showing cardinal directions and frequently intermediate direction.
- constitutional monarchy** A system of government headed by a monarch whose powers are delineated in the fundamental law of the state.

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consumer	A person whose wants are satisfied by using goods and services.
consumer price index	A number used to measure changes in the cost of a standard group of goods and services bought by a typical urban consumer.
consumption	The purchase and/or use of goods and services.
coordinate	One of a set of numbers that determines the location of a point in a space.
cost	An alternative given up as the result of a decision.
country	A unit of political space, the entire land area of a nation or state.
credibility	The quality or state of offering reasonable grounds for being believed.
cultural institution	An established custom, practice or relationship of importance in a society.
cultural perspective	The complex set of meanings, attitudes, values and ideas belonging to a cultural group.
cultural practice	A pattern of behavior accepted by a society.
cultural product	A tangible (e.g., a painting, a cathedral, a mosque, a piece of literature, a pair of chopsticks) or intangible (e.g., an oral tale, a dance, a sacred ritual, a system of education) aspect produced by a cultural group.
culture	Learned behavior of a group of people, which includes their belief systems and languages, their social relationships, their institutions and organizations, and their material goods such as food, clothing, buildings, tools and machines.
D	
deforestation	The destruction and removal of forest and its undergrowth by natural or human forces.
demand	The quantities of a good or service that consumers are willing and able to buy at various prices during a given time period.
democracy	A system of government in which political control is exercised by all the people, either directly or through their elected representatives.
desertification	The spread of desert conditions in arid and semiarid regions resulting from a combination of climatic changes and increasing human pressures, such as overgrazing, removal of vegetation and cultivation of marginal land.
dictatorship	A system of government in which those who rule usually acquire and maintain authority by force and cannot be held responsible to the will of the people.
diffusion	The spread of people, ideas, technology and products among places.
direct democracy	A democratic system of government in which the people exercise political control and participate directly in decision making.
direction indicator	An element of a map used to show direction, usually labeling north and

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frequently all cardinal directions.

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discrimination	Unfair treatment of a person or group based on a variety of prejudices.
division of labor	The separation of the total work required to produce a good or service into individual interrelated tasks.
due process of law	The right of every citizen to be protected against arbitrary action by the government.
E	
earth-sun relationship	The position of the earth relative to the sun that helps to determine day and night, seasons and time zones.
economic growth	An increase in an economy's ability to produce goods and services over time.
entrepreneur	An individual who organizes the use of productive resources to produce goods or services.
entrepreneurship	The organization of productive resources by a person willing to take risks to start a business.
ex post facto law	A legislative act that retroactively makes an act a crime, makes a crime a more serious crime, makes a criminal punishment more severe, or changes trial rules to make conviction easier.
F	
federalism	A form of political organization in which governmental power is divided between a central government and territorial subdivisions - under the U.S. Constitution, between the national and state governments.
flow resource	A resource that is neither renewable nor nonrenewable, but must be used when or where it occurs (e.g., running water, wind, sunlight).
G	
globalization	The act, process or policy of making something worldwide in scope or application.
goods	Objects that are capable of satisfying people's wants.
graphic organizers	Written or pictorial representations used to organize information (e.g., flow charts, webs, Venn diagrams, T-charts).
gross domestic product	The value of all final goods and services produced within a country's borders in a given year.
H	
habeas corpus (writ of)	A court order demanding that the individual in custody be brought into court and shown the cause for detention. Habeas corpus is guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and can be suspended only in cases of rebellion or invasion.

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human characteristic/feature	An aspect of a place or a quality of the Earth's surface constructed by people including cities, parks, buildings and roads.
human resource	A productive resource consisting of the talents and skills of human beings that contribute to the production of goods and services.
I	
imperialism	A policy used by strong countries to gain social, political and economic control over foreign territories.
initiative	A petition process by which a certain percentage of voters (electors) can put a proposed constitutional amendment or statute on the ballot for popular approval or rejection or submit a proposed statute to a legislative assembly for approval (e.g., Ohio).
institutionalized discrimination	Unfair treatment of a group based on prejudice and carried out by governments, organizations and companies that limit freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.
institutionalized racism	The use of institutional policies, practices and/or procedures to withhold rights, privileges and opportunities from the race that is believed to be inferior.
intermediate directions	The points of the compass that fall between north and east, north and west, south and east, south and west (e.g., NE, NW, SE, and SW).
L	
location	The position of a point on the Earth's surface expressed by means of a grid (absolute) or in relation to the position of other places (relative).
M	
map element	One of the components usually found on a map (e.g., direction indicator, key, scale).
marginal benefit	The change in total benefit resulting from an action.
marginal cost	The change in total cost resulting from an action.
market	The interaction of buyers and sellers exchanging goods or services.
market clearing price	The one price at which quantity supplied equals quantity demanded (also referred to as equilibrium price).
market economy	An economic system in which decisions on production and consumption are made by individuals acting as buyers and sellers.
mixed economy	An economic system that combines features of more than one of the traditional, command and market systems.
monarchy	A system of government headed by a monarch, such as king, queen, shah or sultan whose position is usually inherited.

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multinational corporation	A large corporation that produces and sells its goods and services throughout the world.
multiple-tier timeline	A timeline that utilizes two or more rows of events, with each row representing a different subject or perspective occurring during the period under study (e.g., a timeline of the 19th century with separate rows for political, social, military and technological developments).
N	
nation	A group of people bound together by a strong sense of shared values and cultural characteristics, including language, religion and common history.
natural resource	A productive resource supplied by nature (e.g., ores, trees, arable land).
natural rights	A belief that individuals are naturally endowed with basic human rights that cannot be taken away or given up.
nonrenewable resource	A finite natural resource that cannot be replaced once it is used (e.g., petroleum, minerals).
O	
opportunity cost	The value of the next best alternative given up when a choice is made.
P	
parliamentary democracy	A system of government in which the executive leaders (usually a prime minister and a cabinet) are chosen by and responsible to the legislature (parliament), as well as being members of the legislature, as in Great Britain.
perspective	A specific point of view in understanding or judging things or events.
physical characteristic/feature	A natural aspect or quality of the Earth's surface that includes land formations and vegetation zones.
physical map	A portrayal on a flat surface of the physical features of the Earth (e.g., landforms, elevations).
pictograph	A diagram or graph using pictured objects to convey ideas or information.
place	A location having distinctive characteristics which give it meaning and character and distinguish it from other locations.
political map	A portrayal on a flat surface of the political features of the Earth (e.g., international boundaries, capitals, political subdivisions).
prejudice	An adverse opinion or judgment formed beforehand or without full knowledge or complete examination of the facts; a preconceived idea or preference.
presidential democracy	A system of government characterized by a separation of powers between independent and coequal executive and legislative branches such as the United States.

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primary source	An account of an event by someone who was present at the event.
private sector	The part of the economy that involves transactions of individuals and businesses.
producer	A person who makes goods and services.
product	Something produced by human or mechanical effort or by a natural process.
production	The act of combining natural resources, human resources, capital goods and entrepreneurship to make goods and services.
productive capacity	The maximum output that an economy can produce without big increases in inflation.
productive resources	The resources used to make goods and services (i.e., natural resources, human resources, capital goods).
progressive tax	A tax for which the percentage of income paid in taxes increases as income increases.
proportional tax	A tax for which the percentage of income paid in taxes remains the same for all income levels.
public sector	The part of the economy that involves the transactions of the government.
pull factor	A social, political, economic or environmental attraction of a new area that drew people away from their previous location.
push factor	A social, political, economic or environmental force that drove people from their previous location to search for a new one.
R	
racism	The belief that members of one's own race are superior physically, mentally, culturally and morally to members of other races.
referendum	The process in which a measure passed by a legislature is submitted (referred) to the voters for final approval or rejection or a petition process by which a certain percentage of electors (voters) can order recently passed legislation be submitted to the electors (voters) for approval or rejection.
region	An area with one or more common characteristics or features, which give it a measure of homogeneity and make it different from surrounding areas.
regressive tax	A tax for which the percentage of income paid in taxes decreases as income increases.
relative location	The location of a place in relation to other places (e.g., northwest, downstream).
reliability	The degree to which something is trustworthy or is suitable to be depended upon.
renewable	A natural resource that can be regenerated if used carefully (e.g., fish, timber).

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resource

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representative democracy (republic) A democratic system of government in which the people exercise political control and participate through elected representatives responsible for promoting the common welfare.

responsibilities The conditions or tasks for which a person is accountable or answerable.

rights Just claims that belong to a person by law, nature or tradition.

S

scale The relationship or ratio between a linear measurement on a map and the corresponding distance on the Earth's surface.

scarcity The lack of sufficient resources to produce all the goods and services that people desire.

secondary source An account of an event by someone who was not present at the event.

services Actions that are capable of satisfying people's wants.

specialization The concentration of production on fewer kinds of goods and services than are consumed.

standard of living A person's or group's level of material well-being, as measured by education, housing, health care and nutrition.

supply The quantities of a good or service that producers are willing and able to provide at various prices during a given time period.

T

territory An area of land; the land and waters under the jurisdiction of a state, nation or sovereign.

thematic map A portrayal on a flat surface of geographic topic (e.g., migration routes, resource locations, population densities).

theocracy A system of government headed by one or more religious leaders who claim to rule by divine authority.

trade-off The sacrifice of one option for another when a decision is made.

traditional economy An economic system in which decisions on production and consumption are based upon customs, beliefs, rituals and habits.

W

want A psychological or physical desire that can be fulfilled through the consumption of goods and services.

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