

## Sample Extended Response Passages and Prompts for Classroom Practice – Social Studies

Help your students get ready for the extended responses on the GED® test – Social Studies test by practicing with these sample prompts and source materials in the classroom.

Fully answering a Social Studies ER prompt often requires 3 to 5 paragraphs of 3 to 7 sentences each – that can quickly add up to 200 to 400 words of writing! A response that is significantly shorter could put you students in danger of scoring a 0 just for not showing enough of their writing skills.

### Passage #1 - Bakke

#### Extended Response Stimulus Materials:

##### Source Material #1

Quotation:

“Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful.”

-- John Marshall Harlan, Supreme Court Justice, 1896

##### Source Material #2

Letter to the Editor  
October 7, 1977

Sir:

In 1965, less than 5% of college students in the U.S. were black. As a first year medical student I was among them. Thanks to President Kennedy, who first used the term “affirmative action,” and President Johnson, who required government contractors to hire members of minority groups, things are changing. Universities have joined the effort to provide more opportunities to minorities. Affirmative action policies have started to level the playing field for black and Hispanic applicants.

Due to centuries of discrimination, children in minority neighborhoods receive an inferior education to those in affluent white areas. This puts minority children at a disadvantage in the competitive world of higher education. With a little boost from affirmative action,

however, these young people can improve not only their own lives and the lives of their communities, but also the prospects of future generations. Our nation is better, and fairer, because of this.

Next week, this progress faces a test when the U.S. Supreme Court hears the case of Allan Bakke. Mr. Bakke, a white applicant to the medical school at the University of California at Davis, believes he has been subjected to “reverse discrimination” because of the school’s affirmative action program. The program reserves 16 percent of admission spots for minorities. Mr. Bakke was rejected twice from the school even though some admitted students from “disadvantaged” groups had lower grades and test scores than his. He believes that this violated the California and U.S. Constitutions, specifically the 14th Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause, as well as the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The California Supreme Court agreed, ruling the admissions policy unconstitutional.

Now the Supreme Court must decide: cling to an unjust system, or allow minorities a chance to succeed in America. To me, the choice is obvious.

Herbert A. Borchard, M.D.

### Extended Response Prompt:

In your response, analyze the relationship between the letter to the editor and the enduring issue expressed in the quotation from Justice Harlan. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from the quotation and the letter, as well as your knowledge of the enduring issue and affirmative action, to support your analysis.

### References

- Affirmative Action: History and Rationale. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://clinton2.nara.gov/WH/EOP/OP/html/aa/aa02.html>
- Legal Information Institute. (n.d.). Regents of the Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke. Retrieved from <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/438/265>
- Posner, R.A. (1979). The Bakke case and the future of affirmative action. 67 Cal. L. Rev.171. Retrieved from <http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2342&context=californialawreview>
- The Oyez Project at IIT Chicago Kent College of Law. (n.d.). Regents of the University of California v. Bakke. Retrieved from [http://www.oyez.org/cases/1970-1979/1977/1977\\_76\\_811/6\\_811/](http://www.oyez.org/cases/1970-1979/1977/1977_76_811/6_811/)
- U.S. National Archives & Records Administration. (n.d.). Transcript of Plessy v. Ferguson (1896). Retrieved from <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=52&page=transcript>

## Passage #2 – Gideon

### Extended Response Stimulus Materials:

#### Source Material #1

Excerpt

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury...to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him... and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

- Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, 1791

#### Source Material #2

Memo

June 5, 1962

To: Cam Sparks, Assistant Managing Editor, National Desk

From: Eden Kennagh, Beat Reporter (Courthouse)

You saw the piece I filed about yesterday's surprising Supreme Court decision to hear the case of a prisoner here in Florida. I believe following this case would make a great story for the paper, maybe a multi-part article with sidebars about the Bill of Rights and the justice system. So I'm requesting permission and a budget to travel to Washington when this case is argued in January and when the decision is announced.

The prisoner, Clarence Gideon, is an unexpected campaigner for constitutional rights, to say the least. I've interviewed people who attended his original trial, where the guy had to provide his own defense. Apparently the state of Florida is not required to pay for a poor person's defense unless he's charged with a capital crime. Gideon had been arrested, on the word of one witness, for a pool hall burglary in Panama City. He had only an eighth grade education, but knew enough to say he had the right to an attorney. The judge disagreed.

Needless to say, Gideon's courtroom skills were lacking. He was convicted of breaking and entering and petty larceny, and sentenced to five years. Clearly he's been using his time in prison well, studying law books. He petitioned the Supreme Court of Florida to release him, saying his constitutional rights had been violated. When he was turned down, he wrote his petition—in pencil!—to the U.S. Supreme Court asking them to hear his case. The Court has agreed. Very unexpected!

Now Gideon will have his day in court, this time with an attorney. I believe the decision in *Gideon v. Wainwright* will affect a lot of cases, past and pending. Perhaps the poor in this country will finally have the opportunity for a fair trial. So what do you think? Worth following?

## Extended Response Prompt:

In your response, analyze the relationship between the reporter's memo and the enduring issue expressed in the excerpt from the Sixth Amendment. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from the memo and the excerpt, as well as your own knowledge of the enduring issue and the case of *Gideon v. Wainwright* or similar cases to support your analysis.

### References

- Fox, C. (2009). NARA staff favorites: online records. Retrieved from <http://blogs.archives.gov/online-public-access/?p=305>
- National Technical Information Service. (n.d.). *Gideon v. Wainwright* 372 U.S. 335. Retrieved from [http://supcourt.ntis.gov/page4.html?cmd=search&cn\\_words1=Gideon&cn\\_words2=Wainwright&m ode=casename](http://supcourt.ntis.gov/page4.html?cmd=search&cn_words1=Gideon&cn_words2=Wainwright&m ode=casename)
- U.S. National Archives & Records Administration. (n.d.). Bill of Rights. Retrieved from [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill\\_of\\_rights.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights.html)
- United States Courts. (n.d.). Facts and case summary – *Gideon v. Wainwright*. Retrieved from <http://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/facts-and-case-summary-gideon-v-wainwright>

## Passage #3 – Kennedy

### Extended Response Stimulus Materials:

#### Source Material #1

##### Quotation

“[N]o subject shall be hurt, molested, or restrained, in his person, liberty, or estate... for his religious profession or sentiments; provided he doth not disturb the public peace, or obstruct others in their religious worship.”

– Massachusetts Constitution, Part One, 1780

#### Source Material #2

##### Speech

*In this excerpt from his 1960 speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, then-presidential candidate John F. Kennedy addressed concerns that had been raised about the effect his Catholic faith would have on his presidency.*

[B]ecause I am a Catholic, and no Catholic has ever been elected president, the real issues in this campaign have been obscured ... So it is apparently necessary for me to state once again not what kind of church I believe in — for that should be important only to me — but what kind of America I believe in.

I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute, where no Catholic prelate would tell the president (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference; and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the president who might appoint him or the people who might elect him...

For while this year it may be a Catholic against whom the finger of suspicion is pointed, in other years it has been, and may someday be again, a Jew— or a Quaker or a Unitarian or a Baptist. It was Virginia's harassment of Baptist preachers, for example, that helped lead to Jefferson's statute of religious freedom. Today I may be the victim, but tomorrow it may be you — until the whole fabric of our harmonious society is ripped at a time of great national peril.

Finally, I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end; where all men and all churches are treated as equal; where every man has the same right to attend or not attend the church of his choice; where there is no Catholic vote, no anti-Catholic vote, no bloc voting of any kind...

## Extended Response Prompt:

In your response, analyze the relationship between the excerpt from Kennedy's speech and the enduring issue expressed in the quotation. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from the speech and the quotation, as well as your own knowledge of the enduring issue and the circumstances surrounding Kennedy's run for the presidency, to support your analysis.

### References

- Library of Congress. (n.d.). Massachusetts Constitution of 1780. Retrieved from <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel05.html>
- John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. (n.d.). Address of Senator John F. Kennedy to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, September 12, 1960. Retrieved from <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/ALL6YEBJMEKYGMCntnSCvg.aspx>

## Passage #4 – Lucas

### Extended Response Stimulus Materials:

#### Source Material #1

Excerpt

No person shall be ... deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

- Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, 1791

#### Source Material #2

South Carolina Tribune

February 27, 1992

Whose Coast Is It, Anyway?

Next week, the U.S. Supreme Court will take up the case of local developer David H. Lucas versus the South Carolina Coastal Council. Readers of this newspaper will recall that in 1986 Mr. Lucas bought two beachfront lots on one of our state's beautiful but fragile barrier islands for \$975,000. His plan was to build two homes on the property. Between purchase and construction, however, the state passed the Beachfront Management Act. The Act, which was created to protect our state's unstable coastline from further erosion caused by construction, prevented Mr. Lucas from building on the site.

Mr. Lucas sued, contending that this law made his land "worthless." He believed that he was owed "just compensation" by the state for "taking" his property. A lower court agreed, awarding him approximately \$1.2 million. However, the state Supreme Court overturned that decision, arguing that the Coastal Council was using its "police powers" to protect the public good.

We hope the Supreme Court will confirm the South Carolina ruling. First, Mr. Lucas still owns the land; it was not physically "taken" from him. But more important, just as government can use its police power to keep heavy industry out of neighborhoods, it can and should use that power to protect the coastline, a precious public resource which cannot be replaced.

The right to own property comes with the responsibility to cause no damage to the community. Because the restriction on building along certain coastal lands was designed to prevent public harm, this paper believes the state's action did not constitute a "taking" of the Lucas property. We therefore believe the government owes him no compensation. A ruling in favor of Mr. Lucas would make it much more difficult for states to do the important work of preserving our environment.

## Extended Response Prompt:

In your response, analyze the relationship between the editorial and the enduring issue expressed in the excerpt from the Fifth Amendment. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from the memo and the excerpt, as well as your own knowledge of the enduring issue and the case of *Lucas v. South Carolina Coastal Council* or similar cases, to support your analysis.

### References

- Legal Information Institute. (n.d.). *Lucas v. South Carolina Coastal Council*. Retrieved from <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/505/1003>
- The Oyez Project at IIT Chicago Kent College of Law. (n.d.). *Lucas v. South Carolina Coastal Council*. Retrieved from [http://www.oyez.org/cases/1990-1999/1991/1991\\_91\\_453](http://www.oyez.org/cases/1990-1999/1991/1991_91_453)
- U.S. National Archives & Records Administration. (n.d.). Bill of Rights. Retrieved from [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill\\_of\\_rights.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights.html)
- Washburn, R.M. (1993). Land use control, the individual, and society: *Lucas v. South Carolina Coastal Council*. *52 Md. L. Rev.* 162. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2858&context=mlr>



## Passage #5 – Near

### Extended Response Stimulus Materials:

#### Source Material #1

Quotation

“[O]ur liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost.”

-- Thomas Jefferson, 1786

#### Source Material #2

Speech

*Speech delivered to the Association of Newspaper Editors by Erskine Halls, Editor of the Lansing Independent, June 5, 1931*

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you, my fellow journalists, on a topic we all hold dear: the First Amendment to the Constitution. My speech could not have come at a more fitting moment, as the U.S. Supreme Court has just issued its ruling in the case of *Near v Minnesota*. While none of us would have chosen Jay Near as our champion, the Court’s five-to-four decision to void Minnesota’s so-called “press gag law” is a milestone in the history of our profession.

As you know, six years ago the Minnesota legislature passed the Public Nuisance Law, which allowed judges to suppress the publication of any “malicious, scandalous and defamatory newspaper, magazine or other periodical.” Without benefit of a jury, judges could stop future publication of any newspapers they decided were “nuisances.”

Two years later, Mr. Near and a colleague began publishing “The Saturday Press,” a paper devoted to stories of police and government corruption, but presented in vile language that was racist, anti-labor, anti-Semitic, and anti-Catholic. After the county attorney filed a complaint against the paper under the state’s gag law, Minnesota courts prohibited Mr. Near from publishing any future editions.

Fortunately, this week the U.S. Supreme Court overruled the lower courts’ decisions, recognizing the gag law for what it actually is: censorship. By citing the Fourteenth Amendment as well as the First Amendment in its ruling, the Court has made clear that states cannot create laws which violate our most precious freedoms. Offensive as “The Saturday Press” and papers like it are, we must acknowledge what it means when a court can use its power to stop publication of any newspaper it deems objectionable. Yes, some people abuse our constitutionally protected freedoms. That’s all the more reason the rest of us must zealously guard them.

## Extended Response Prompt:

In your response, analyze the relationship between the speech and the enduring issue expressed in the quotation from Thomas Jefferson. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from the speech and the quotation, as well as your own knowledge of the enduring issue and the case of *Near v. Minnesota* or other cases involving controversial publications, to support your analysis.

### References

- Legal Information Institute. (n.d.). *Near v. Minnesota*. Retrieved from <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/283/697>
- Library of Congress. (n.d.). Selected quotations from the Thomas Jefferson papers. Retrieved from [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/jefferson\\_papers/mtjquote.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/jefferson_papers/mtjquote.html)
- The Oyez Project at IIT Chicago Kent College of Law. (n.d.). *Near v. Minnesota ex rel. Olson*. Retrieved from [http://www.oyez.org/cases/1901-1939/1929/1929\\_91/](http://www.oyez.org/cases/1901-1939/1929/1929_91/)