

Grade 5: Sample Social Studies Extended Response Questions

The following is a sample of a social studies extended response question with a range of student answers. These answers were written by Tennessee students during the field test from the 2014-15 school year and are accompanied by a numeric score and reasoning for the score. The rubric was scored on a 4-point scale.

Please note that during the 2015-16 school year, answers will be scored on a 12-point scale (8 points for content, and 4 points for literacy). This sample from the 2014-15 school year can still be used for reference because it reflects the same expectations for student writing that will be assessed during the 2015-16 school year.

The following extended response question addresses standard 5.66.

Read the excerpt from a speech and answer the question below.

Explain what President Kennedy's goals were and what he wanted Congress to do.

- After President Kennedy was assassinated, what happened to his goals?
- Use prior knowledge and evidence from the excerpt to support your response.

This Nation was founded . . . on the principle that all men are created equal. . . .

. . . It ought to be possible, therefore, for American students of any color to attend any public institution they select without having to be backed up by troops.

It ought to be possible for American consumers of any color to receive equal service in places . . . such as hotels and restaurants and theaters and retail stores, . . . and it ought to be possible for American citizens of any color to register and to vote in a free election without interference or fear. . . .

It ought to be possible, in short, for every American to enjoy the privileges of being American without regard to his race or his color. . . .

Next week I shall ask the Congress of the United States to act. . . .

President John F. Kennedy,
June 11, 1963

Sample A:

President Kennedy's goals were to make rights for every American Citizen equal and fair. He wanted congress to almost back him up and help him achieve those goals. After President Kennedy was assassinated his goal came true and all American Citizens were considered equal no matter what race they were. Stating this, some people disagreed with the decision and did not like the fact. I say this because it is common sense. Not everybody in the United States is going to change their mind because people changed the laws. I feel this is part of the reason President Kennedy was assassinated.

I love how this letter says "American students of any color to attend any public institution they select without having to be backed up by troops," and I say this because this did happen. A few students attended that were black attended an all white high school and entered the building with troops and exited the building with the troops.

In the second paragraph of President Kennedy's letter it says "American citizens of any color to register and to vote in a free election without interference or fear," I feel this is important because if you live in America and you are a legal citizen then you should have the right to vote for who runs the country that you live in or the state that you live in.

In the third paragraph it says "For every American to enjoy the privileges of being American without regard to his race or to his color," and this is very important because in my rightful opinion this is the best country and I would not have the right to say that if there was freedom of speech. This is a free country and as long as you are an American citizen you are free to do what you want.

In conclusion, President Kennedy was correct and had every right to think that.

Score Point: Content 4, Literacy 4

Content: The student presents a thorough understanding of President Kennedy's goals (*President Kennedy's goals were to make rights for every American citizen equal and fair*) and a thoughtful and accurate analysis of what happened to those goals after he was assassinated (*After president Kennedy was assassinated his goals came true and all American citizens were considered equal no matter what race they were*). The student further analyzes using prior knowledge (*Stating this, some people disagreed with the decision and did not like the fact...Not everybody is going to change their minds just because people changed the laws*). The student cites evidence from stimulus, and most all of the aspects are addressed in the questions. Although the response contains some conjecture, the conjecture does not detract from the overall social studies comprehension.

Literacy: The student presents a clear topic statement (*President Kennedy's goals were to make rights for every American Citizen equal and fair*). The student organizes their claims in a clear and focused manner by introducing a statement from the stimulus, and then developing that claim with examples and information (*In the second paragraph of President Kennedy's letter it says, "American student's of any color to register and vote in a free election without interference or fear. I feel this is important because..."*) Finally, the student consistently uses appropriate social studies vocabulary, and an overall command of grammar and mechanics is demonstrated, even citing where the stimulus was used.

Sample B:

After President Kennedy was assassinated his goals were finally listened to. Kennedy had made speeches every chance he could so that he could be heard. He finally was heard once he had been assassinated. Kennedy's goals were very important to him, and he hoped he could at least make a difference in somebodys life. Some of Kennedy's goals had to do with African Americans having the same rights as whites. The article above states that Kennedy thought it could be possible if people really cared (wich they did not.) Kennedey knew that he would have to try hard to be heard, but he wasn't heard until he had been assassinated. His assassination changed the minds of the whites . After he was assassinated people began to care. His assassination served everyone well in a way. It helped him to be heard, it helped the African Americans be heard, but most of all it opened the eyeys to the withes, so they could see what Kennedey meant when he gave his many speeches. Kennedy was an important man, and i am glad that his goals were finally heard. They were meant to be heard, that is what Kennedy's goals were made for. That is what happened to Kennedey's goals after he was assassinated.

Score Point: Content 3, Literacy 3

Content: The student demonstrates a general understanding of the goals of President Kennedy (*Some of Kennedy's goals had to do with African Americans having the same rights as whites*) and an adequate analysis of what happened to the goals after he was assassinated (*He was finally heard once he had been assassinated.*) Prior knowledge of the content is demonstrated by the further analysis that (*After he was assassinated people began to care. His assassination served everyone well in a way. It helped him be heard.*) The response addresses many of the aspects of the question; however, more development on what exactly Kennedy's goals were and the larger significance of those goals was somewhat lacking. Evidence from the stimulus is discussed in the paragraphs about his assassination, and overall the response contains few content errors.

Literacy: The student focuses on topics generally related to the question and makes the topical sentence claim that (*After president Kennedy was assassinated his goals were finally listened to*). The student develops the claim with adequate details and references from the stimulus (*The article above states that Kennedy thought it could be possible {to pass the Civil Right Act} if people really cared*) and links ideas about his assassination and the achieving of his goals throughout the response. A brief concluding statement is included, but a repetitive nature to the essay and the ideas about his assassination hold the essay back from a higher score point.

Sample C:

John F. Kennedy wanted black citizens to have the same rights as the white citizens. This was known as the Civil Rights Act. During a parade, JFK was assassinated. Lyndon B. Johnson took his place as president. He continued JFK's Civil Rights Act and many other acts.

Score Point: Content 2, Literacy 2

Content: This student's concise but accurate response demonstrates a partial understanding of what Kennedy's goals were (*John F Kennedy wanted black citizens to have the same right as the white citizens*). The student brings in a reference of prior knowledge to further explain the goals (*This was known as the Civil Right Act*). And the response does answer several aspect of the question, despite being very brief (*During a parade, JFK was assassinated. Lyndon B Johnson took his place as president*), and finally the student answers the main question succinctly (*He {LBJ} continued JFK's civil Rights Act and man other acts*). The response would need to develop the ideas more thoroughly, and use more information from the stimulus to get a higher score point.

Literacy: This response represents a very boiled down, but accurate and many faceted writing performance still capable of getting a 2. This is because the topic sentence is stated clearly, development from the stimulus is presented, ideas are connected across the brief response, and the minimal amount of writing necessary to demonstrate an occasional command of the conventions of standard English is present.

Sample D:

His gole was too see his first rocket ship go to the moon. His gole was too see black and white people get along.His gole was too make America happy.His gole was too make the world happy.His gole was too make sure every body have food. His goal was spark the nation.His gole was too brave president. His last gole was too be the greateset president who ever lived. But he was.

Score Point: Content 1, Literacy 1

Content: Although the student does address several aspects of the question, there is no analysis or explanation toward any of the ideas presented in the response. It is simply a list of some partially accurate but all very generalized and unexplained goals that the president had (*His gole was to see his first rocket ship go to the moon...His gole was too make the world happy.. His gole was to make sure everybody have food*).

Literacy: This response lacks a clear topic sentence, and no development toward the student's haphazard statements is ever given. Additionally, the response generally produces information not appropriate for the task at hand, and is simply a list with numerous grammatical and conventions errors.