

Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/ Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts include standards for use in English language arts courses, as well as literacy standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. The standards for English language arts describe expertise that students will develop in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. The standards also describe how students use and strengthen these skills—particularly reading and writing—in other subjects at their grade level.

Let's look at how a grade 9 student might learn reading and writing in history. A sample ninth-grade standard for literacy is shown in the box below. A typical assignment tied to this standard might be:

Select a case that is scheduled to come before the United States Supreme Court. Use the text of the U.S. Constitution and at least two other sources to support two decisions the court could make: one arguing for the case and the other against it. Support your arguments using the information you gathered.

This type of assignment requires a student to define an issue, research it in an unbiased way, read carefully, and compare and contrast elements of the issue. In the age of the Internet, students must learn about trustworthy and reliable sources, the difference between an opinion and a fact, and how to verify statements made with additional sources of information. Then, students must be able to write about the issue, their conclusions, and the supporting evidence in a convincing manner.

Key Features of the Standards

Reading: Text complexity and growth of comprehension

The reading standards place equal emphasis on the sophistication of what students read and the skill with which they read.

Writing: Text types, responding to reading, and research

The writing standards acknowledge the fact that while some writing skills (e.g., the ability to plan, revise, edit, and publish) apply to many types of writing, other skills relate to specific types of writing: arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives.

Speaking and listening: Flexible communication and collaboration

The speaking and listening standards require students to develop a range of broadly useful oral communication and interpersonal skills, not just skills needed for formal presentations.

Language: Conventions (grammar), effective use, and vocabulary

The language standards include the essential “rules” of standard written and spoken English, but they also look at language as a matter of craft and making choices.

Example Standard for Literacy in Ninth-Grade History

Compare and contrast findings presented in a text to those from other sources, noting when the findings support or contradict previous explanations or accounts.