# 50 States, 1 Nation Student Contest
# 2019–2020

Elementary school students in Gilder Lehrman Affiliate Schools in grades 4 and 5 are encouraged to take part in the **50 States, 1 Nation Contest**. (Students in grade 6 are also eligible to enter the contest if they are currently enrolled in an elementary or K–8 school, and they are studying US history.) Our goal for this contest is to help expand students' understanding of how their families, towns, and states connect with each other and with American history.

Students will have the opportunity to hone their analytical and creative writing skills through one of three means of expression: essay (3–5 paragraphs), short story/historical fiction (3–5 paragraphs), or poem (not to exceed 12 lines).

All participants will receive a certificate of participation. Selected entries will be recognized with cash prizes and publications by the Gilder Lehrman Institute, as follows:

- 1st Prize for each category in each grade level (essay, short story, poem): $100 and a set of 3 Gilder Lehrman Institute posters
- 2nd Prize for each category in each grade level: $75 and a set of 3 Gilder Lehrman Institute posters
- 3rd Prize for each category in each grade level: $50 and a set of 3 Gilder Lehrman Institute posters
- Two honorable mentions (in the form of a special certificate and a bundle of Gilder Lehrman Institute books) will be awarded to strong entries in each grade level, for a total of four honorable mentions.
- Teachers of each prize winner and honorable mention recipient will receive a copy of *Teaching with Documents: Colonial America to Reconstruction*.

Entries are being accepted now and will be accepted on a rolling basis. To be considered for the 2019–2020 program year, entries must be received by March 30, 2020. Winners for 2019–2020 will be announced on April 21, 2020.

## Grade-Level Guidelines and Common Core State Standards

### Grade 4: My State

For **"My State,"** students are asked to write an essay (3–5 paragraphs), short story/historical fiction (3–5 paragraphs), or poem (not to exceed 12 lines) on their state and its connection to the history of the United States.

Prompts for these pieces can include (but are not limited to) the following:
- Who were the first people living in my state?

- Why did people choose to migrate to my state?
- What was my state like before it was a part of the United States?
- Why did people in my state want it to become a state?
- How has my state changed over time?
- How have different groups of people interacted or come into conflict with each other in my state's history?
- How does a local statue, plaque, or other historical or commemorative marker represent the history of your community, or the connection between your community and your state, or your community and the United States?
- How does a historic building represent the history of your community, or the connection between your community and your state, or your community and the United States?
- How does a moment in your community's history represent the connection between your community and your state or your community and the United States?

*Common Core State Standards*

LANGUAGE

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.1.A Use relative pronouns (who, whose, whom, which, that) and relative adverbs (where, when, why).
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.1.B Form and use the progressive (e.g., I was walking; I am walking; I will be walking) verb tenses.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.1.C Use modal auxiliaries (e.g., can, may, must) to convey various conditions.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.1.D Order adjectives within sentences according to conventional patterns (e.g., a small red bag rather than a red small bag).
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.1.E Form and use prepositional phrases.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.1.F Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.1.G Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., to, too, two; there, their).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.2.A Use correct capitalization.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.2.B Use commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotations from a text.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.2.C Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.2.D Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.3 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.3.A Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.3.B Choose punctuation for effect.

- o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.3.C Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English (e.g., presenting ideas) and situations where informal discourse is appropriate (e.g., small-group discussion).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 4 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.4.C Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.5.A Explain the meaning of simple similes and metaphors (e.g., as pretty as a picture) in context.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.5.B Recognize and explain the meaning of common idioms, adages, and proverbs.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.5.C Demonstrate understanding of words by relating them to their opposites (antonyms) and to words with similar but not identical meanings (synonyms).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.6 Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., quizzed, whined, stammered) and that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., wildlife, conservation, and endangered when discussing animal preservation).

WRITING
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2.A Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2.B Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2.C Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g., another, for example, also, because).
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2.D Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2.E Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.A Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.B Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

- o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.C Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.D Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.E Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.6 With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.9.B Apply grade 4 Reading standards to informational texts (e.g., "Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text").
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

### Grades 5 and 6: My Country

For **"My Country,"** students are asked to write an essay (3–5 paragraphs), short story/historical fiction (3–5 paragraphs), or poem (not to exceed 12 lines) on a topic or era **within the broader history of the United States from 1493 to the present**. Your students' entries can be within the scope of US history taught in the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6th grade in your state or district, or on a topic of their own choosing beyond that scope.

**Note:** Students in grade 6 in Affiliate Schools are eligible to enter this category **only** if
    (a) they are currently enrolled in an elementary or K–8 school, and
    (b) they are studying US history

Prompts for these pieces can include (but are not limited to) the following:
- Has America lived up to its ideals as "a land of opportunity"?
- Was colonial America democratic?
- Would you have been a revolutionary in 1776?
- Could the Constitution be written without compromise?

- Was George Washington's leadership indispensable in the founding of the United States?
- What made Americans want to go west?
- How do US policies affect American Indians and their ability to retain their tribal identities?
- Was slavery the primary cause of the Civil War?
- How did Reconstruction improve (or not improve) the lives of formerly enslaved people?

*Common Core State Standards*

LANGUAGE

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.1.A Explain the function of conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections in general and their function in particular sentences.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.1.B Form and use the perfect (e.g., I had walked; I have walked; I will have walked) verb tenses.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.1.C Use verb tense to convey various times, sequences, states, and conditions.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.1.D Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.1.E Use correlative conjunctions (e.g., either/or, neither/nor).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.2.A Use punctuation to separate items in a series.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.2.B Use a comma to separate an introductory element from the rest of the sentence.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.2.C Use a comma to set off the words yes and no (e.g., Yes, thank you), to set off a tag question from the rest of the sentence (e.g., It's true, isn't it?), and to indicate direct address (e.g., Is that you, Steve?).
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.2.D Use underlining, quotation marks, or italics to indicate titles of works.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.2.E Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.3 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.3.A Expand, combine, and reduce sentences for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.3.B Compare and contrast the varieties of English (e.g., dialects, registers) used in stories, dramas, or poems.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 5 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

- o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.4.C Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.5.A Interpret figurative language, including similes and metaphors, in context.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.5.C Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, homographs) to better understand each of the words.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.6
- Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal contrast, addition, and other logical relationships (e.g., however, although, nevertheless, similarly, moreover, in addition).

WRITING

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2.A Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general observation and focus, and group related information logically; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2.B Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2.C Link ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., in contrast, especially).
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2.D Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2.E Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.A Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.B Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.C Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.D Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
  - o CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.E Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.6 With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of two pages in a single sitting.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.7 Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.9.B Apply grade 5 Reading standards to informational texts (e.g., "Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point[s]"").
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

For additional information, please email affiliate@gilderlehrman.org.

## 50 States, 1 Nation Student Contest Rubric

Essays, short stories, and poems submitted for the 50 States, 1 Nation Contest will be evaluated based on content and style. For each of these areas, each submission will be assigned a score of 1–5.

In our final calculation, the content score will be weighted by 60% and the style score will be weighted by 40% to produce a weighted average. For example, a submission that received a 3 for content and a 5 for style would receive a total score of 3.8 out of 5.[1]

| **5** | *A score of 5 will predominantly have the following characteristics. Entries need not present all characteristics to earn a score of 5.* |
|---|---|
| **CONTENT** | <ul><li>Main ideas and position are clear, focused, and compelling; knowledge, experience, insight, or unique perspective lends a satisfying ring of authenticity, novelty, and inventiveness.</li><li>Provides clear and detailed context for the reader using appropriate background information.</li><li>Shows a grade-appropriate knowledge of relevant historical content.</li><li>Shows a grade-appropriate ability to research and distinguish between primary and secondary source documents.</li><li>*Short story and poem only:* Provides a highly original and creative fictionalizing interpretation of the topic while maintaining the message and meaning of nonfictional content.</li><li>*Short story and poem only:* Very few and minor historical inconsistencies beyond what could be considered artistic license.</li></ul> |
| **STYLE & ORGANIZATION** | <ul><li>Organization guides the reader through the main ideas, and the key ideas stand out.</li><li>Uses grade-appropriate vocabulary accurately and effectively, with an overall natural tone, incorporating some common and uncommon words correctly to enhance overall meaning.</li><li>Sentences or lines are well built and skillfully crafted to reflect logic and sense.</li><li>*Essay only*: Uses a consistent citation style. (Citations need not be in a traditional academic style.)</li><li>*Essay only:* Very few and minor errors.</li><li>*Short story only*: Organization guides the reader through the themes and conflicts such that they stand out.</li></ul> |

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[1] 3 x .60 = 1.8 and 5 x .40 = 2, for a weighted average of 3.8

| **4** | *A score of 4 will predominantly have the following characteristics. Entries need not present all characteristics to earn a score of 4.* |
|---|---|
| **CONTENT** | <ul><li>Main ideas and position and most ideas are clear and focused; some elements may not be fully explored; needs additional details in some places to expand the main topic or provide insight.</li><li>Shows at or near a grade-appropriate knowledge of relevant historical content.</li><li>Shows at or near a grade-appropriate ability to research and distinguish between primary and secondary source documents.</li><li>***Short story and poem only:*** Provides an original and creative fictionalizing interpretation of the topic while maintaining the message and meaning of nonfictional content.</li></ul> |
| **STYLE & ORGANIZATION** | <ul><li>The overall structure of the piece is effective, but the balance of ideas and relationships among ideas could be improved.</li><li>Details fit naturally and effectively where they are placed; sequencing makes the text easy to follow and understand.</li><li>Uses grade-appropriate vocabulary accurately, effectively, and correctly.</li><li>Sentences or lines may not seem skillfully crafted (though sentences are grammatically correct). Most sentences or lines reflect logic, and, for the most part, show how ideas relate.</li><li>***Essay only***: Citations may be in an inconsistent style and may contain minor errors. (Citations need not be in a traditional academic style.)</li><li>***Essay only:*** Contains few errors, though they are occasionally serious enough to be mildly distracting.</li><li>***Short story and poem only:*** Few and minor historical inconsistencies, occasionally serious enough to be mildly distracting.</li></ul> |

| **3** | *A score of 3 will predominantly have the following characteristics. Entries need not present all characteristics to earn a score of 3.* |
|---|---|
| **CONTENT** | <ul><li>Main ideas are identifiable, but could be more precisely worded and a lack of clarity interferes with the reader's interest.</li><li>Shows a nearly grade-appropriate knowledge of relevant historical content.</li><li>Shows a nearly grade-appropriate ability to research and distinguish between primary and secondary source documents.</li><li>***Short story and poem only:*** Provides an original interpretation of the topic. Message and meaning of corollary nonfictional content may be somewhat misunderstood or conflated.</li></ul> |
| **STYLE & ORGANIZATION** | <ul><li>The structure of the piece is functional, but may be so dominant or predictable that it smothers the ideas; the main ideas are appropriately sequenced, but may be better arranged; lingers too long on some ideas and skims over other points.</li><li>Vocabulary is used correctly in most cases; words may occasionally interfere with meaning.</li><li>The structure shows control over simple structure, and reflects some logic, but may not always show how ideas relate. Some fragments or (in the case of essays or short stories) run-on sentences may be present.</li><li>***Essay only***: Citations may be in an inconsistent style, may contain errors which may be a bit distracting. (Citations need not be in a traditional academic style.)</li><li>***Essay only***: Errors are numerous or serious enough to be a bit distracting, but the writer handles most conventions well.</li><li>***Short story and poem only:*** Historical inconsistencies are numerous or serious enough to be distracting.</li></ul> |

| **2** | *A score of 2 will predominantly have the following characteristics.* |
|---|---|
| **CONTENT** | ● Main ideas are vague and require the reader to infer the position. The ideas are unfocused and rarely compelling.<br>● Shows well below a grade-appropriate knowledge of relevant historical content.<br>● Shows well below a grade-appropriate ability to research and distinguish between primary and secondary source documents.<br>● ***Short story only:*** Provides a somewhat derivative fictionalizing interpretation of the topic. Message and meaning of corollary nonfictional content is largely misunderstood or conflated.<br>● ***Poem only:*** Shows some control over simple structure, but little or no control over more complex structure. Few lines reflect logic and show how ideas relate; frequent fragments are present. |
| **STYLE & ORGANIZATION** | ● The structure feels more random than purposeful, often leaving the reader with a sense of being adrift; the pacing is very rough, and main ideas should be more effectively arranged and delivered.<br>● Vocabulary is frequently incorrect, superficial, and/or inadequate, interfering with meaning.<br>● Shows some control over simple structure, but little or no control over more complex structure. Few sentences or lines reflect logic and show how ideas relate; frequent run-ons and (in the case of essays or short stories) fragments are present.<br>● ***Essay only:*** Citations may be in an inconsistent style, may contain errors which are serious enough to distract the reader frequently. Some citations may be missing entirely. (Citations need not be in a traditional academic style.)<br>● ***Essay only:*** Errors are numerous or serious enough to distract the reader frequently.<br>● ***Short story and poem only:*** Historical inconsistencies are numerous or serious enough to distract the reader frequently. |

| **1** | *A score of 1 is the minimal score of the contest. Entries with a score of 1 will predominantly have the following characteristics.* |
|---|---|
| **CONTENT** | ● Main ideas are unclear, out of focus, indistinct, or not known.<br>● Does not present a grade-appropriate knowledge of relevant historical content.<br>● Does not present a grade-appropriate ability to research and distinguish between primary and secondary source documents<br>● ***Short story and poem only:*** Provides a derivative fictionalizing interpretation of the topic. Message and meaning of corollary nonfictional content is overwhelmingly misunderstood or conflated. |
| **STYLE & ORGANIZATION** | ● The structure of the piece is haphazard and disjointed, severely inhibiting the reader's comprehension of ideas; there is no clear sense of pace or direction to carry the reader smoothly from point to point.<br>● Vocabulary is incorrect and inappropriate, and words corrupt meaning and confuse the reader.<br>● Little or no control over structure, which tends to obscure meaning, rather than showing how ideas relate; persistent run-ons and/or fragments are present.<br>● ***Essay only:*** Citations are in an inconsistent style, contains errors which are continually distracting and/or are largely or entirely absent. (Citations need not be in a traditional academic style.)<br>● ***Essay only:*** Errors continually distract the reader, and the reader must read once to decode and again for meaning.<br>● ***Short story and poem only:*** Historical inconsistencies continually distract the reader. |