



# **TOPIC 4: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS**

GRADE 8 CIVICS LOCAL-LEVEL CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE TASK



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# INTRODUCTION TO THE MCAS GRADE 8 CIVICS ASSESSMENT

## MCAS GRADE 8 CIVICS ASSESSMENT

The MCAS Grade 8 Civics assessment offers multiple, interrelated components to assess students' understanding of civics and the foundations of the Massachusetts and U.S. governments. The test provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their civic knowledge and skills through an in-depth exploration of topics from the [Massachusetts 2018 History and Social Science \(HSS\) Curriculum Framework](#), while also presenting a comprehensive indicator of student and school performance on the breadth of the standards.

The MCAS Grade 8 Civics assessment has two components: (1) a state-level performance task, and (2) an end-of-course (EOC) test. The state-level performance task aligns to one of the seven civics topics from the grade 8 standards, and the EOC test covers the breadth of the standards.

To help prepare students for the state-level performance task, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has created local-level classroom performance tasks for each civics topic. This document describes procedures for the local-level tasks. (See [Grade 8 Civics Test Design](#) for additional information about the state-level performance task and the end-of-course test.)

## LOCAL-LEVEL CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE TASK OVERVIEW

The local-level classroom performance tasks are designed to model best practices for classroom assessment and complement the content and skills that appear on the state-level performance task. Similar to the state-level task, each local-level task focuses on one topic from the grade 8 standards and assesses both content and practice standards.

Local tasks should be completed **after** regular instruction has occurred for the topic being addressed. These tasks include group work and discussions about the civics topics. In addition, the tasks ask students to analyze and evaluate sources to describe and explain civics concepts. Students will also be expected to write answers to questions related to the task topic. DESE will not collect student work or scores for these classroom tasks. Teachers may use these tasks for either formative or summative purposes in the classroom.

## NOTE TO TEACHERS ABOUT THE LOCAL-LEVEL TASK MATERIALS AND TIMING

The local-level task materials include a task summary and standards alignment, task directions, presentation slides, student handouts, and a scoring rubric and notes. These materials have been reviewed and edited by the MCAS grade 8 civics educator review committee. In addition, a bias and sensitivity educator review committee has also reviewed the materials. The student handouts may be printed or distributed digitally for students to complete on a computer. Teachers should read through all materials, including the scoring notes, *prior* to administering the task to students. Although the tasks incorporate group work, each student should complete their own handout(s).

The time given to complete each part of the task is an estimated time. DESE estimates that, on average, each task will take one to two 50-minute class periods. It is important for teachers to review all the materials and estimate the amount of time it will take their students to complete the local-level task and adjust the timing as needed.

Although the tasks have been developed with the input of grade 8 civics teachers, DESE recognizes that classroom work may be different depending on the classroom context. Therefore, teachers may modify tasks and adapt them to their classrooms as needed. Modifications may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- adapting materials including sources, presentations, instructions, or student handouts for additional clarity for specific populations (such as English learners)
- changing the scoring notes by adding additional student answers
- incorporating previous class work during discussions
- administering a task in more than one class session

## TOPIC 4: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS

### TASK SUMMARY

For this task, **Topic 4: Rights and responsibilities of citizens**, students will analyze, discuss, and explain the roles of citizens and elected leaders in the United States. The standards that will be addressed are listed below.

### STANDARDS ADDRESSED

#### Practice Standards

- 8.PS.1. Demonstrate civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions.
- 8.PS.3. Organize information and data from multiple primary and secondary sources.
- 8.PS.6. Argue or explain conclusions, using valid reasoning and evidence.
- 8.PS.7. Determine next steps and take informed action, as appropriate.

#### Content Standards

- 8.T4.7. Apply knowledge of the meaning of leadership and the qualities of good leaders to evaluate political leaders at the community, the state and national levels.
- 8.T4.8. Explain the importance of individuals working cooperatively with their elected leaders.
- 8.T4.11. Examine the varied understandings of the role of elected representatives and discuss those who have demonstrated political courage or those whose actions have failed to live up to the ideals of the Constitution.
- 8.T4.12. Examine the role of political protest in a democracy.
- 8.T4.13. Examine the influence of public and private interest groups in a democracy, including policy research organizations (e.g. Pew Research Center, Brookings Institute, Heritage Foundation) in shaping debate about public policy.

### TIMING

There are three components to this local-level classroom performance task:

1. an activator discussion to be completed as a whole class (10 min)
2. small-group work (30 min)
3. a short whole-class discussion (5 min)

Teachers may vary the time for each component as needed.

### MATERIALS

- Task directions and scoring notes (for educators only)
- Slides with activator image and student directions (for educators only)
- Handout 1 (one for each student)
- Handout 2 (one for each student)
- Handout 3 (one for each student)

## LOCAL TASK DIRECTIONS

1. At the beginning of class, provide students with the following directions for the class period, which teachers may modify as needed:

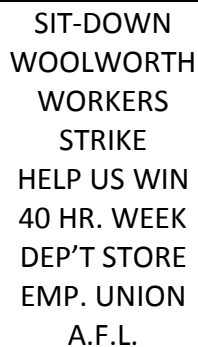
“We will complete two activities about the role of individuals in a healthy democracy. First, we will analyze an image together. Each of you will use Handout 1 to write down some ideas about the image. We will then discuss these ideas as a whole class. Next, you will each work with a partner to read, discuss, and analyze an historical example about the roles of citizens and elected representatives on Handouts 2 and 3. Finally, the whole class will have a discussion about the group work.”

2. Activator Image (10 min)

- Divide students into pairs or groups of three. Students may also work independently.
- Distribute Handout 1 to each student.
- Project the Activator Image to the class.
- Read aloud the prompt for the Activator Image on Handout 1:

“This photograph of employees at a New York Woolworth department store was taken in 1937. Woolworth was a company with many department stores throughout the United States. It is similar to Target or Walmart today. Let’s analyze and discuss the photograph as a class. Then answer the questions below with your group. Each student should complete their own handout.”

- Analyze and discuss the image as a class. If necessary, explain that the workers in the photograph are participating in a workers’ strike, refusing to work until their employer agrees to provide better working conditions. If students need additional context, let them know that the photograph was taken during a sit-down strike at a New York City Woolworth department store in 1937. During the 1930s workers from underrepresented groups, including women, African-Americans, and Latinos, collaborated to advocate for better working conditions from their employers. This sit-down strike is an example of one of these efforts. The text in the photograph is shown below.



SIT-DOWN  
WOOLWORTH  
WORKERS  
STRIKE  
HELP US WIN  
40 HR. WEEK  
DEP'T STORE  
EMP. UNION  
A.F.L.

- Ask students to complete the questions on Handout 1 with their group. After students have completed Handout 1, have a brief discussion to share a few student responses.

### 3. Small-group work (30 min)

- Distribute Handouts 2 and 3 to each student.
- Explain to students that they will examine the sources on Handout 2 and then work with their group to answer the questions on Handout 3. Each student should complete their own handout, but the group should discuss their answers all together. The following is an example of the directions to provide to students:

“Examine the sources on Handout 2. Then work with your group to complete Handout 3. For some questions, you will first respond individually (without talking to each other); write your response in the box labeled “Individual Response.” Then you will each share your answers with the group and write a combined answer in the box labelled “Group Response.” What you write in the “Group Response” box will be scored.”

- Teachers can answer questions that arise from the discussions but should not provide the answers to questions on the handout.
- Have groups complete the entire handout prior to the whole-class discussion.

### 4. Whole-class discussion (5 min)

- After the groups have completed their handouts, ask a few students to share how their group answers were different from their individual answers. Conclude the class with a class discussion. Discussion questions may include the following (modify these as needed):
  - Sometimes it takes courage and leadership to change society. What examples of leadership and courage did you notice in the sources you looked at today?
  - How does civic engagement help ensure an effective democratic society?

### 5. Scoring

- The Scoring Notes may be used to facilitate and evaluate the whole-class discussions and as well as to evaluate individual student work after the task is complete.
- Teachers may collect the completed handouts and grade student responses based on the Scoring Notes.
- Teachers may choose to go over any parts of the task that students did not understand (either during the group discussion and/or after the handouts are graded).



Massachusetts Civics Local-Level Classroom Performance Task  
Topic 4: Rights and responsibilities of citizens

Activator Image



Courtesy of the Library of Congress.