

**Grade 4**  
**Waterways and Settlement**

**Standard 5 – People and Land** Students compare and contrast the physical and human characteristics of each United States region in order to understand their similarities and differences.

**GLE 4.5.1** Compare and contrast the distinguishing physical characteristics of the five regions of the United States

**GLE 4.5.3** Identify and explain how the physical characteristics of a region influenced human settlement

**Item 4: Extended Response**

Based on the sources and your knowledge of social studies, describe how the geography of the Mississippi River basin is different from the geography of the rest of the country and how it affected the settlement of the region.

As you write, follow the directions below.

- Address all parts of the prompt.
- Include information and examples from your own knowledge of social studies.
- Use evidence from the sources to support your response.

## Scoring

The response should be scored **holistically** on its adherence to two dimensions: Content and Claims. Each response should be given the score that corresponds to the set of bulleted descriptors that **best** describes the response.

<b>Dimension: Content</b>	
<b>Score</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>4</b>	The student's response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflects <b>thorough</b> knowledge of how the geography of the Mississippi River basin is different from the geography of the rest of the country and how it affected the settlement of the region, by incorporating ample focused factual information from prior knowledge and the sources</li> <li>• Contains accurate understandings with no errors significant enough to detract from the overall content of the response</li> <li>• Fully addresses all parts of the prompt</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	The student's response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflects <b>general</b> knowledge of how the geography of the Mississippi River basin is different from the geography of the rest of the country and how it affected the settlement of the region, by incorporating adequate factual information from prior knowledge and the sources</li> <li>• Contains mostly accurate understandings with minimal errors that do not substantially detract from the overall content of the response</li> <li>• Addresses all parts of the prompt</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	The student's response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflects <b>limited</b> knowledge of how the geography of the Mississippi River basin is different from the geography of the rest of the country and how it affected the settlement of the region, by incorporating some factual information from prior knowledge and the sources</li> <li>• Contains some accurate understandings with a few errors that detract from the overall content of the response</li> <li>• Addresses part of the prompt</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	The student's response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflects <b>minimal</b> knowledge of how the geography of the Mississippi River basin is different from the geography of the rest of the country and how it affected the settlement of the region, by incorporating little or no factual information from prior knowledge and the sources</li> <li>• Contains few accurate understandings with several errors that detract from the overall content of the response</li> <li>• Minimally addresses part of the prompt</li> </ul>
<b>0</b>	The student's response is incorrect or does not address the prompt.

<b>Dimension: Claims</b>	
<b>Score</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>4</b>	The student's response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops a <b>valid</b> claim which effectively expresses a solid understanding of the topic</li> <li>• Thoroughly supports the claim with well-chosen evidence from the sources</li> <li>• Provides a logically organized, cohesive, and in-depth explanation of the connections, patterns, and trends among ideas, people, events, and/or contexts within or across time and place</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	The student's response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops a <b>relevant</b> claim which expresses a general understanding of the topic</li> <li>• Supports the claim with sufficient evidence from the sources</li> <li>• Provides an organized explanation of the connections, patterns, and trends among ideas, people, events, and/or contexts within or across time and place</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	The student's response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presents an <b>inadequate</b> claim which expresses a limited understanding of the topic</li> <li>• Includes insufficient support for the claim but does use some evidence from the sources</li> <li>• Provides a weak explanation of the connections, patterns, and trends among ideas, people, events, and/or contexts within or across time and place</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	The student's response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not develop a claim but provides evidence that relates to the topic; <b>OR</b> Develops a substantially flawed claim with little or no evidence from the sources</li> <li>• Provides a vague, unclear, or illogical explanation of the connections among ideas, people, events, and/or contexts within or across time and place</li> </ul>
<b>0</b>	The student's response is incorrect, too brief to evaluate, or lacks a claim that addresses the prompt.

### Scoring Notes for Claims Rubric

A response that develops a **valid** claim expresses a **solid** understanding of the social studies topic. The response is supported by **ample and well-chosen** evidence from the sources. The explanation is logical, organized, and cohesive, as demonstrated by connections, patterns, or trends among ideas, people, events, and contexts within or across time and place. A **valid** claim shows a deep understanding of the complexity of social studies themes that is supported by convincing evidence. The analysis may include the ability to discuss cause-and-effect relationships; analyze the importance of and connection between source documents; classify patterns of continuity and change; evaluate differing perspectives; provide in-depth interpretations of historical events, etc.

A response that develops a **relevant** claim expresses a **general** understanding of the social studies topic. The response is supported by **sufficient** evidence from the sources. The explanation is organized and includes connections, patterns, or trends among ideas, people, events, and contexts within or across time and place but fails to reach the valid level. A **relevant** claim shows an accurate understanding of social studies themes but is less complex and includes more generalized evidence. The explanation may identify cause-and-effect relationships; describe patterns of continuity or change; recognize perspectives on a single topic or theme; identify the importance of or connection between source documents; provide general interpretations of historical events, etc.

A response that includes an **inadequate** claim expresses a **limited** understanding of the social studies topic and uses insufficient evidence from the sources to develop the claim. The explanation includes weak connections, patterns, or trends among ideas, people, events, and contexts within or across time and place. An **inadequate** claim shows some understanding of social studies themes but is limited in its analysis and evidence. The explanation may include insufficient understanding of cause and effect relationships; little recognition of patterns of continuity or change; limited knowledge of perspectives on a single topic or theme; misconceptions regarding the importance of or connections between source documents; limited interpretation of historical events, etc.

A response that develops a **substantially** flawed claim expresses **little** understanding of the social studies topic. The explanation, if present, may include vague or illogical connections, patterns, or trends among ideas, people, events, and contexts within or across time and place. It fails to reach the inadequate level for a variety of reasons. For example, the response may provide some evidence that relates to the topic, but is ineffective in supporting a claim, if one is made.

### **Characteristics of a Strong Response**

A strong response is logically organized into several paragraphs. Any errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, or capitalization do not interfere with the ability of the reader to understand the ideas presented.

A strong response may develop one or more lines of reasoning to support the claim. Here are some examples.

- The Mississippi River basin has more fertile soil, minerals, and navigable rivers than many other parts of the country. These features attracted settlers, who founded cities and towns that thrived on agriculture, mining, and trade.
- The geography of the Mississippi River basin (watershed) makes up about 40% of the country. It is largely lowlands with forests in the northern, eastern, and southern parts of the basin. The northeastern part of the basin also has the rolling hills and touches the western slopes of the Appalachian Mountains. The western part of the Mississippi basin is made up of the grasslands of the Great Plains. The southern part of the Mississippi basin is also noted for swamps and wetlands. The rich soil of the basin and natural resources of the region attracted settlers who wanted to establish farms or to harvest timber.
- The northern part of the Mississippi basin has abundant iron ore deposits and timber reserves. The northeastern part of the basin has large coal reserves. The iron ore deposits and the coal deposits of the region attracted settlers in the mid-nineteenth century following the opening of the Erie Canal the building of railroads.
- The Mississippi River system is the largest river system in the United States and is comprised of four major rivers: the Mississippi River, the Arkansas River, the Ohio River, and the Missouri River. The navigable river network of the Mississippi Basin made it attractive to settlement. Cities emerged along the river basin at key points where rivers met, such as St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and New Orleans. Because transportation of goods along the river network was possible, trade developed and cities such as New Orleans grew rapidly.
- The Mississippi Basin differs from other regions in the United States by being a navigable river network. Flat bottom boats can travel along most of the Mississippi and its tributaries. The river basin has some of the most fertile soil in the country for growing crops. The rich fertile soil and the flatlands of the basin made it attractive for settlement. Farmers began to migrate to the northern and central part of the basin in the eighteenth century. They settled the southern part of the basin during the early nineteenth century.

A strong response shows understanding of the topic by analyzing the required sources and including well-chosen evidence from the sources, such as:

- The river basin was made up of four major rivers: the Mississippi River, and three tributaries—the Missouri, the Arkansas, and the Ohio. Other important rivers are the Tennessee, the Cumberland, and the Wabash. These rivers made travel up and down the basin quicker than it was in other regions (Source 1 and Source 3).
- The river network of the river basin was easily traversed on flat-bottomed boats. This promoted settlement and trade in the region (Source 2 and Source 3).
- All of the rivers on the basin eventually flowed reach the Mississippi delta. This made the region an integrated economic region. It led to New Orleans becoming one of the largest ports in the United States (Source 3 and Source 4).
- The introduction of steam powered river boats allowed trade to grow and flourish along the river network of the basin (Source 4).

A strong response also includes important information beyond what is presented in the sources, such as:

- The building of the Erie Canal and railroad networks in the Midwest increased settlement the Mississippi River basin as it became easier to transport farm products from the Midwest to the Northeast.
- New Orleans became a major port for international trade between the United States and other countries because goods flowed down the Mississippi River and were later exported from New Orleans to other parts of the world.
- The Mississippi River basin has a temperate continental climate, particularly in the lower part of the basin that made it attractive to settlers. The region has a longer growing season than the upper basin or the Northeast.



Response 1

- Follow the steps on the checklist as you write your response.

The Mississippi River basin is different from the geography of the rest of the country. The Mississippi River basin also affected the settlement of the region. The Mississippi River basin made the land more fertile. The river was a great water source that made the land around it perfect for growing crops. It also provided water power for industries nearby. The rest of the country didn't have this. The Mississippi River basin also affected the settlement of the region. The land was fertile so you could grow crops and water them with water from the river. People settled near the Mississippi River because you could trade your

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goods along the river. The Mississippi River has the needs for humans which makes it easy for humans to live. This is how and why the Mississippi River basin is different from the geography of the rest of the country. This is also how and why the Mississippi River basin affected the settlement of the region.

**Score Points:** Content 4 / Claims 4

This student's response demonstrates a thorough knowledge of how the geography of the Mississippi River basin is different from the geography of the rest of the country, how the river affected the settlement of the region, and it fully addresses all parts of the prompt. A valid claim ("The Mississippi River has the needs for humans which makes it easy to live") is provided and shows a solid understanding of the topic. The claim is also supported with evidence, for example: "made the land more fertile," "perfect for growing crops," "water power for industries nearby," and "you could grow crops and water them." Use of evidence from sources is not explicit, but "you could trade your goods along the river" shows an understanding and connections made using source 4. The response is logically organized. It focuses on how the geography impacted settlement using ample and well-chosen evidence.

Response 2

Follow the steps on the checklist as you write your response.

In the Mississippi River basin, the land is more fertile, allowing more to grow there. This may have brought settlers to the reason so that they could seize the rich land for their crops.

Another reason the Mississippi River basin's geography is different from the rest of the country's is because the basin's land is lower. The basin is more prone to floods because of this, and it may have driven a few settlers away.

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In conclusion, this is how the geography of the Mississippi River basin affected settling in the region.

**Score Points:** Content 4 / Claims 3

This response provides a clear and strong claim: "In the Mississippi River basin, the land is more fertile, allowing more to grow there. This may have brought settlers to the reason that they could seize the rich land for their crops." The claim is then supported with clear connections to how the geography affected the settlement. The evidence used ("rich land"; "land is lower"; "more prone to floods") supports the claim about fertile soil. Ample background knowledge is provided, but the lack of evidence from the sources hinders the student from achieving a 4 in claims. The response is organized and presented in a logical manner.



Response 3

The Mississippi River has changed the settlement of the region. It is one of the biggest trade routes in America. Since the Mississippi River leads all the way down to New Orleans it has become one of the biggest parts of the trade route. It is a much better than other rivers for trade routes because it flows from Minnesota, passed Wisconsin, Missouri, and Arkansas, through Louisiana.

The Mississippi is the longest river in America which makes it easy for

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boats to get places a lot faster, so they can trade and bargain with different states in the U.S.A., and it helped people to get to places to settle like New Orleans, Louisiana.

**Score Points:** Content 3 / Claims 3

The response reflects general knowledge of how the geography of the Mississippi River basin is different from the geography of the rest of the country and of how the region's geography affected its settlement. A relevant claim ("It is one of the biggest trade routes in America") provides a general understanding of how the geography of the area impacted its settlement. The response is limited in the explanation of the geography but does include some prior knowledge of the states the Mississippi River flows through, for example, "Minnesota, passed Wisconsin, Missouri, and Arkansas, through Louisiana." A misconception of the Mississippi being the "longest river in America" is noted, but it is not enough to detract from the overall response. The student provides an organized explanation with general evidence of how settlement was affected, i.e., "and it helped people to get places to settle like New Orleans, Louisiana."

Response 4

Follow the steps on the Checklist as you write your response.

I think the Mississippi River basin is affecting the settlement because the river helps with trading. Also it helps with a businesses. The river imports and exports goods. The basin helps bring goods from other countries. Its a huge river. Mississippi River leads to the Golf of Mexico, into a huge Ocean. The River is super important to our contry.

That is what I think of the river. It helps alot of people. Also helps a buissy place.

**Score Points:** Content 2 / Claims 2

The response presents a limited understanding of how the geography affected the settlement of the region. The claim that “the river helps with trading” expresses a limited understanding of the topic. Some accurate content understanding is presented, for example, “river imports and exports goods” and “leads to the Golf of Mexico,” but this is not presented with clear connections or further development.

Response 5

- Follow the steps on the Checklist as you write your response.

The Mississippi River basin is different from the rest of the country. In some ways. One way is it was very big and lots of other rivers ran into the river. Another way is the river and its branches drained more than 1.2 million square miles of the country. This is how the Mississippi River basin is different from the rest of the country. The Mississippi River basin also affected the settlement of the region. The river took up a lot of space. You couldn't settle around it.

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because it floods. The river also ships goods to other countries. This is how the Mississippi River basin affected the settlement of the region.

**Score Points:** Content 2 / Claims 1

The response answers only a portion of the question, focusing on a limited understanding of how the geography is different from the rest of the country. Evidence from sources is general to the prompt, i.e., "1.2 million square miles" and "ships goods to other countries." The student makes a limited connection to how the geography affected the settlement ("you couldn't settle around it because it floods"), and no further evidence to support or develop this idea is offered.

Response 6

To begin with, the Mississippi River is different from the rest of the country. However, this is why it is different. The waters of the Mississippi River drain more than 1.2 million square miles of the United States. Some people used the Mississippi River to trade things. Flatboats were often used on the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River runs from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. several tributaries

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flow into the Mississippi River. In 1885 there were many buildings and factories along the bank of the Mississippi River.

In conclusion, that is how the Mississippi River is different from the rest of the country. Also, those are the many ways they are different.

**Score Points:** Content 1 / Claims 1

The response consists of mostly repeated information from sources. Although no clear claim made is made, some evidence that relates to the prompt is included. "Some people used the Mississippi River to trade things" alludes to how settlement of the area was affected, but there is no specific supporting evidence to earn higher scores.

**Response 7**

Follow the steps on the Checklist as you write your response.

The river gave people water

**Score Points:** Content 1 (low)/ Claims 1

This student's response reflects minimal knowledge of how the river affected the settlement of the region. The response is just enough to earn points because the supporting evidence also counts as the claim.



Response 8

The Mississippi River is a very big river. It is a good route for transportation. Many things that are shipped from up North are transported by boat. They will go down the Mississippi River to get to their location. Although it might take the boat a while if it farther away from its location. Many boats use this route of the Mississippi River every day.

**Score Points:** Content 1 / Claims 0

This response provides a minimal understanding of the geography of the Mississippi River, and lacks a claim. “Go down the Mississippi River” and “many things that are shipped from up North” relate to the prompt and is connected to the sources. The response does not make a clear connection to settlement, nor does it provide any additional background knowledge.

Response 9

The mississippi river's geography  
is different is different from  
the geography of the rest of  
the country because it was  
made by weathering. It  
affects the settlement of  
region because of how close  
it is to Canada.

**Score Points:** Content 0 / Claims 0

The response is incorrect and insufficient enough to earn credit. "The rest of the country because it was made by weathering" and "how close it is to Canada" are both too vague to receive a score.

Response 10

The Mississippi River is different from  
the other region because The Mississippi  
River has a mouth

**Score Points:** Content 0 / Claims 0

The response provides a correct fact but neither addresses the prompt nor makes a claim that relates to the prompt.