



2025-2026

GEORGIA HISTORY FESTIVAL
EDUCATORS GUIDE



*G*EORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The *Georgia History Festival* is the signature K-12 educational program of the Georgia Historical Society (GHS), reaching hundreds of thousands of students statewide. Beginning with the new school year in September, a variety of public programs, exhibits, events, and educational resources bring history to life for students of all ages and encourage Georgians to explore the richness and diversity of our state's past. In addition to new online and in-person programming, the *Festival* includes popular annual events, such as the Colonial Faire and Muster living-history program, Super Museum Sunday, the Georgia Day Expo, and the Governor's induction of two modern-day Georgia Trustees at the elegant Trustees Gala.

Georgia History Festival 2025-2026

A Nation of Laws: Courts and the Foundation of Freedom

This focus of study, aligned to the Georgia Standards of Excellence, will support students' understanding of the role and impact of the press in Georgia and American history through online and in-person programs and events.

Each year, GHS selects a significant topic in Georgia's history as the focus of the *Festival's* educational programs and resources. As we approach the 250th commemoration of the founding of the United States, GHS programs, resources, and publications explore the vital role that democratic institutions play in sustaining a republican form of government.

The 2025-2026 focus of study will be, *A Nation of Laws: Courts and the Foundation of Freedom*. From online and in-person programs and events for the public to new classroom resources and teacher training opportunities, the 2025-2026 *Georgia History Festival* will explore from a historical perspective the vital role of an independent judiciary in maintaining the separation of powers and the rule of law, while ensuring a just and orderly society where all people are equal before the law and no one is above it. We will explore the original design for the three branches of government in lawmaking as laid out by the Constitution, focusing on the specific role of the judicial branch at the local, state, and federal levels. This focus of study, aligned to the Georgia Standards of Excellence, will support students' understanding of the role and impact of an independent judiciary in Georgia and American history.



Schedule of Events



Visit GeorgiaHistoryFestival.org for full details.

Constitution Day

September 17, 2025
Savannah

Visit the Georgia Historical Society (GHS) Research Center on Wednesday, September 17, 2025, to view unique objects and documents highlighting Georgia's role in the development and evolution of our national story. This free event will feature materials and activities related to this year's *Georgia History Festival* theme and a showing of a rare draft copy of the US Constitution.

Rick Atkinson

October 9, 2025
Savannah

Join GHS for an evening with acclaimed author and historian Rick Atkinson. Enjoy a lively discussion between Atkinson and Dr. Stan Deaton, the Dr. Elaine B. Andrews Distinguished Historian at the Georgia Historical Society, about Atkinson's book, *The Fate of the Day: The War for America, Fort Ticonderoga to Charleston, 1777-1780*.

Colonial Faire and Muster

February 7-8, 2026
Wormsloe State Historic Site
Savannah

Explore this living-history event at Wormsloe State Historic Site and learn about life in eighteenth-century Georgia through cooking, dancing, craft, and military demonstrations. Fees apply on Saturday, but admission is free on Sunday.

Super Museum Sunday

February 8, 2026
Multiple sites statewide

Explore history, arts, and culture in communities throughout Georgia as over 100 museums and historic sites across the state open to the public for free during this popular event.

Georgia Day Expo

February 12, 2026
Savannah

A Rule of Law in Georgia's History. Students explore Georgia history through demonstrations and hands-on activity booths during this commemoration of the founding of Georgia at Savannah on February 12, 1733. Educators, parents, historical interpreters, and community and civic leaders take part in this fun and engaging program that utilizes an all-weather, indoor venue to encourage students to explore the *Georgia History Festival* theme. Related to the 2025-2026 *Festival* theme, activities may include lawmakers, lawbreakers, judges, and interesting and important court cases throughout Georgia's history.

Trustees Gala

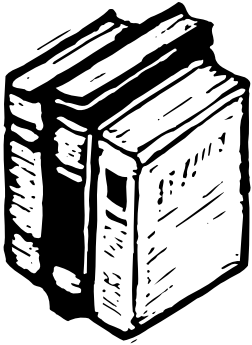
April 18, 2026
Savannah

In conjunction with the Office of the Governor, the Georgia Historical Society reestablished the Georgia Trustees to recognize Georgians whose accomplishments and community service reflect the highest ideals of the founding body of Trustees. This elegant evening includes cocktails, dinner, and a lively conversation with the inductees—two exemplary Georgians whose history-making accomplishments and service reflect the original Trustees' ideals.

Hosting a School-Based Georgia Day Expo

If your school is too far away to participate in the annual Georgia Day Expo in Savannah, we invite you to consider hosting a version of the event at your school. Please contact the GHS education team at education@georgiahistory.com to receive a copy of the Georgia Day Expo Toolkit for inspiration and guidance for your event.

CLASSROOM RESOURCES



A Nation of Laws: Courts and the Foundation of Freedom

Classroom Educational Resources

Visit the [Georgia History Festival Educator Page](#) for full details

A Nation of Laws Digital Resources

- Student Overview
- Primary Source Investigation
- Educators' Guide

Soundbites with Dr. Stan Deaton

Dr. Stan Deaton, the Dr. Elaine B. Andrews Distinguished Historian, leads the listener through several groundbreaking court cases in Georgia and American history. This audio resource is accompanied by a classroom-ready, standards-based discussion guide.

Georgia Day Video

In recognition of the anniversary of Georgia's founding, this short online program is a visual exploration of the colony's founding and early development. Featuring greetings from friends and leaders across the state, this all-ages presentation includes classroom resources for varying grade levels connecting the video content to the *Festival* theme.



New educational activities aligned to the Georgia Standards of Excellence will connect the story of the founding to law and order within the colony.

Informational Videos

What is the Georgia History Festival and how can you participate?

September 1, 2025 Post date

Educators will be introduced to the 2025-2026 *Georgia History Festival* theme and activities. The video will highlight specific online and in-person resources and events that utilize GHS's unique collection of archival materials to support classroom engagement around Georgia and American history.

Georgia Day Expo Informational Webinar

December 5, 2025 Post Date

An informational webinar for educators, parents, chaperones, etc. to learn about the logistics of the annual Georgia Day Expo, which will take place on February 12, 2026.

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Georgia Day Classroom Competition and Statewide Student Art Contest

In keeping with the *Georgia History Festival* theme, “A Nation of Laws: Courts and the Foundation of Freedom,” this year’s Georgia Day Statewide Art Contest and Georgia Day Classroom Competition challenge students to explore the topic “A Rule of Law in Georgia’s History.” Using a variety of artistic media, students will illustrate lawmakers, lawbreakers, judges, and interesting and important court cases throughout Georgia’s history.

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Field Trips to the GHS Research Center

During the 2025-2026 *Georgia History Festival*, GHS will host field trips to the Research Center. Field trip options include a theme-based Research Round-Up, a program that encourages K-12 students to conduct primary and secondary source research using materials from the GHS collection.

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EXTENTION ACTIVITIES

GHS has created several C3 inquiries and primary source activities over the past several years that connect to the theme of this year’s *Georgia History Festival*. They are brought together here for easy access, connected to the appropriate section of the digital booklet.

SECTION I

The Constitution and the Three Branches of Government

- C3 Inquiry: **How Far Does the President’s Power Reach?**
- C3 Inquiry: **Was the Great Compromise of 1787 Fair?**
- C3 Inquiry: **Why Do the Courts Matter?**

SECTION II

Groundbreaking Cases in American and Georgia History

- **Yazoo Land Fraud Primary Source Analysis**

Separate but Equal: On the Trail of Change

- C3 Inquiry: **What Was Georgia’s Response to School Desegregation?**

GHS Monthly Educational Newsletter

On the first Friday of each month, GHS sends out an Educational Newsletter that covers upcoming events, recaps of past events, primary source investigations from the collections, and much more. Short activities or additional resources connected to the *Festival* theme will be highlighted throughout the school year.

Sign up [here](#) to receive the newsletter.



CHART OF RELEVANT GA STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE BY GRADE LEVEL

There are a variety of ways educators can connect to the *Georgia History Festival* theme. While there are specific connections to 2nd and 8th grade Georgia Studies standards, educators across all grade levels and content areas will find ways to incorporate the *Festival* content into their classrooms. Several relevant Georgia Standards of Excellence are included below, but there are many more to explore!

Map & Globe Skills K - 12	SSMGS6 Use map key/legend to acquire information from historical, physical, political, resource, product, and economic maps. SSMGS7 Use a map to explain impact of geography on historical and current events. SSMGS8 Draw conclusions and make generalizations based on information from maps.
Information Processing Skills K-12	SSIPS1-6, 10-11, 13-14, 17
2nd Grade	SS2H1 Describe the lives and contributions of historical figures in Georgia history. SS2CG3 Give examples of how the historical figures in SS2H1 demonstrate positive citizenship traits such as: honesty, dependability, trustworthiness, honor, civility, good sportsmanship, patience, and compassion.
3rd Grade	SS3CG1 Describe the elements of representative democracy/republic in the United States. SS3CH2 Explain the importance of Americans sharing certain democratic beliefs and principles, both personal and civic.
4th Grade	SS4H2 Analyze the challenges faced by the framers of the Constitution. SS4H3.b Describe the impact of westward expansion on American Indians; include the Trail of Tears, Battle of Little Bighorn and the forced relocation of American Indians to reservations. SS4H6 Analyze the effects of Reconstruction on American life. SS4CG2 Explain the importance of freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. SS4CG3 Describe the structure of government and the Bill of Rights.
5th Grade	SS5CG1 Explain how a citizen's rights are protected under the U.S. Constitution.

8th Grade	<p>SS8H2 Analyze the colonial period of Georgia's history.</p> <p>SS8H4.b Evaluate the impact of land policies pursued by Georgia; include the headright system, land lotteries, and the Yazoo Land Fraud.</p> <p>SS8H4.e Analyze how key people and events led to the removal of the Cherokees from Georgia known as the Trail of Tears.</p> <p>SS8H5.a Explain the importance of key issues and events that led to the Civil War.</p> <p>SS8H7.b Analyze how rights were denied to African Americans or Blacks through Jim Crow laws, <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i>, disenfranchisement, and racial violence, including the 1906 Atlanta Race Massacre.</p> <p>SS8H11.a Explain Georgia's response to <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> including the 1956 flag and the Sibley Commission.</p> <p>SS8CG1 Explain the basic structure of the Georgia state constitution, as well as its relationship to the United States Constitution.</p> <p>SS8CG4 Analyze the role of the judicial branch in Georgia.</p>
6th-8th Grade	<p>8.P.EICC.3 Comprehension Strategies - Engage with a range of complex texts for a variety of tasks and purposes, accessing and using strategies for comprehension* before, during, and after reading as part of the meaning-making process.</p> <p>8.P.ST II. BIG IDEA: Situating Texts - Students develop and apply a multilayered understanding of context, author, audience, and purpose to ground and propel the interpretation and construction of texts.</p> <p>8.L.GC I. BIG IDEA: Grammar Conventions - Students observe, analyze, and use the structures and conventions of Standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics as they interpret and construct texts.</p> <p>8.L.V II. BIG IDEA: Vocabulary - Students engage in a wide range of written and spoken activities during which they expand and deepen their vocabularies, build word analysis skillsets (morphology), and determine or clarify the meanings of words and phrases.</p> <p>8.T.RA.2 Curating Sources & Evidence - Utilize multiple print and digital texts to address a specific topic or question, assessing source credibility and relevance and integrating evidence properly to avoid plagiarism.</p>
9th – 12th Grade	<p>SSCG4 Demonstrate knowledge of the organization and powers of the national government.</p> <p>SSCG7 Demonstrate knowledge of civil liberties and civil rights.</p> <p>SSCG13 Demonstrate knowledge of the operation of the judicial branch of government.</p> <p>SSUSH8 Explore the relationship between slavery, growing north-south divisions, and westward expansion that led to the outbreak of the Civil War.</p>

Answer Key for Questions in the Digital Resource

“The Supreme Court Explained” video

1. How are Supreme Court justices selected? **Nominated by the president; confirmed by the Senate.**
2. What are the qualifications for justices to serve? **There are no set qualifications.**
3. The term of a justice is “during good behavior.” What does this mean? **For the duration of their lives, unless they retire, resign, or are impeached and convicted.**
4. How many cases does the Supreme Court typically hear each year? **Approximately 100**
5. How does the Supreme Court implement its decisions? **It must rely on the executive or legislative branch to implement laws based on their decisions.**

State of Georgia Court Structure and Purpose

- How many justices serve at any one time on the Supreme Court? **No more than 9**
- Paragraph II states the Supreme Court “shall exercise exclusive appellate jurisdiction...” What does “appellate” mean? **Dealing with applications for court decisions to be reversed.**
- How are the Supreme Court justices selected? How long do they serve? **They are elected on a non-partisan basis (meaning they are not attached to a political party). They serve a 6-year term and may seek re-election.**

Supreme Court of Georgia “Firsts”

Supreme Court

- On what date did the Supreme Court of Georgia meet for the first time? **January 26, 1846**
- In what county did the court meet? **Talbot**
- Based on the marker text, how many justices served on that first court? **3**

First Chief Justice

- In what year was Mr. Lumpkin elected to the Georgia Supreme Court? **1845**
- How long did he serve on the court? **22 years**
- Where is this marker located? **At his home in Athens, GA; Clarke County.**

First African American Justice

- In what year was Justice Benham elected to the Georgia Supreme Court? **1989**
- How long did he serve on the court? **12 years**
- In what Georgia town was he born? **Cartersville**

First Female Justice

- Justice Sears eventually settled in Atlanta, but where was she born? **Germany**
- When was she appointed to the Georgia Supreme Court? **1992**
- How long did she serve on the court? **17 years**



Laws That Built Georgia

Year	Who	Law/Rule	Why do you think this law/rule was implemented?
1732	Georgia Charter	Land ownership capped at 500 acres	To limit large estates so no one landowner became too powerful.
1732	Georgia Charter	No slavery	To encourage self-sufficiency.
1732	Georgia Charter	No rum or hard liquor	To discourage laziness and idleness.
1751	By Royal Decree	Slavery was allowed in GA	A response to discontented landowners and to increase economic prosperity.
1752	Governor John Reynolds	White males owning 500+ acres could vote	Instituted a legislative body for colonists to participate in the governing process. They could not vote under the Trustees leadership.
1758	Royal Assembly	The Anglican Church (Church of England) was established as the official church of Georgia.	In Great Britain, the state church was closely aligned with the government.
1777	Georgia Constitution	Schools will be built in each county and supported by the State.	To educate future citizens.
1777	Georgia Constitution	Freedom of the press and trial by jury will never be violated.	A reflection of the U.S. Constitution; a protection against government overreach.
1777	Georgia Constitution	No clergyman of any denomination can hold a seat in the legislature.	To limit the influence of specific religions on government decisions.

To learn more about the educational resources of the Georgia Historical Society, please contact the GHS education team at education@georgiahistory.com.

