

Social Studies LPA Assessment

7th Grade –“From Gutenberg to the Internet”

Instructions:

Read the following article carefully and **make notes in the margin** as you read.

Your notes should include:

- Comments that show that you **understand** the article. (A summary or statement of the main idea of important sections may serve this purpose.)
- Questions you have that show what you are **wondering** about as you read.
- Notes that differentiate between **fact** and **opinion**.
- Observations about how the **writer’s strategies** (organization, word choice, perspective, support) and choices affect the article.

Your **margin notes** are part of your score for this assessment.

Student _____ SSID _____
Teacher _____ Class Period _____
School _____ School District _____



1. The year is 1455, and Johannes Gutenberg sits in a courtroom. Across from him is Johann Fust, who has sued Gutenberg. The two men are bitter enemies. Gutenberg shifts nervously, waiting for the judges’ decision. If the judges rule against him, he will lose everything—including the printing press that he has worked for 20 years to perfect.

2. In 1428, Gutenberg moved from Mainz to Strasbourg. He started a business cutting gemstones to make jewelry. The company thrived, and he formed a business partnership with three other men. Soon they were making mirrors and other quality products. During the 1430s, Gutenberg saw the chance to do something even greater—to develop a printing press that lowered the cost of books.

Printing Success and Business Setbacks

3. Gutenberg made great progress on the printing press, but he faced some

*Notes on my thoughts,
reactions and questions as I
read:*

serious business problems. First, one of his partners died. Then the man's relatives sued Gutenberg to get control of the business. Gutenberg was relieved when the court ruled in his favor. But even though he won, the lawsuit kept him from finishing his printing press.

4. Gutenberg's problems got worse. He ignored the jewelry business, and his income sank. Yet he was spending money to buy metals, a press, and inks. He went into debt, but he kept working on the printing press. Finally, in 1446, he had his first major triumph, when he printed a short poem. Soon after, he printed a grammar book. It became a bestseller throughout Europe.

5. These early books were plain, and Gutenberg wanted to print something wonderfully beautiful. Money was still a big problem. So Gutenberg formed a partnership with Johann Fust, a wealthy businessman in Mainz. Fust loaned him 1,600 guildens, which at that time was a fortune. Historians have estimated that just 100 guildens could buy a small farm. The two men planned to print a book that would sell extremely well and give them a good return on their investment. But what kind of a book should it be?

Printing a Bible

6. Finally they came up with a brilliant idea—they would print a Bible that was extraordinary in every way. While Gutenberg was aiming for perfection, Fust was growing impatient. He had invested 1,600 guildens, golden coins, in the printing press, but in five years, the investment had not earned him one penny. He filed a lawsuit against Gutenberg, demanding that his money be returned. Gutenberg simply didn't have the money. He desperately needed the judges to find in his favor.



7. But the judges ruled against Gutenberg. They said that Fust had waited long enough to earn a profit on the money that he had invested. Gutenberg had to repay Fust. Since Gutenberg didn't have the funds, the court allowed Fust to take over the business, including the typefaces and the printing press. Fust even hired away Gutenberg's most skilled assistant. Together, they finished work on the Bible that Gutenberg had started and began to sell it. This remarkable book became an instant bestseller. Fust made a good deal of money from the sweat,

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tears, and genius that Gutenberg had poured into the project.

8. Yet Gutenberg was an amazingly stubborn man. Fust had taken away his business, but he couldn't take away Gutenberg's knowledge and skills. He found another financial backer, Dr. Konrad Humery, who helped him set up a printing shop in Mainz. Gutenberg printed philosophical writings, a dictionary, and other works, all with the extraordinary quality that was his trademark. He also trained printers, who spread his printing technology throughout Europe.

Books: The Internet of the Time

9. Gutenberg's amazing invention made books the Internet of the time. The printing press made it possible to produce books much more quickly and cheaply than ever before. By 1463, printed Bibles cost one-tenth of hand-copied Bibles. The demand for books exploded. By 1500, Europe had more than 1,000 printers and 7,000 books in print.

10. Like the Internet, books spread new ideas quickly and sped up the process of change. For example, as a young sailor in Genoa, Christopher Columbus read Marco Polo's famous Travels, in which he described his journeys to China. Columbus was thrilled by Polo's descriptions. Books also planted the seeds of democracy and human rights in the next generation of thinkers. Newspapers and pamphlets generated information and ideas even faster. Gutenberg would always be known as the father of an invention that truly changed the world.

Demonstrate Understanding

1. *Summarize the text for someone who has not read it. Make sure you include the main idea and supporting details.*

Demonstrate Understanding

2. *What effect did the judge's ruling have on Gutenberg's career in printing?*

Develop and Interpretation

3. *Based on evidence from the text of how Gutenberg made his printing press a success, what can you conclude about Gutenberg's personality?*

Develop an Interpretation

4. *What would be the effect on society if Gutenberg had focused on his jewelry business instead of printing? Be sure to include specific words and phrases from the text.*

Analyze Text

5. *Why did the author call books, “the internet of the time”? Cite evidence from the text to support your claim.*