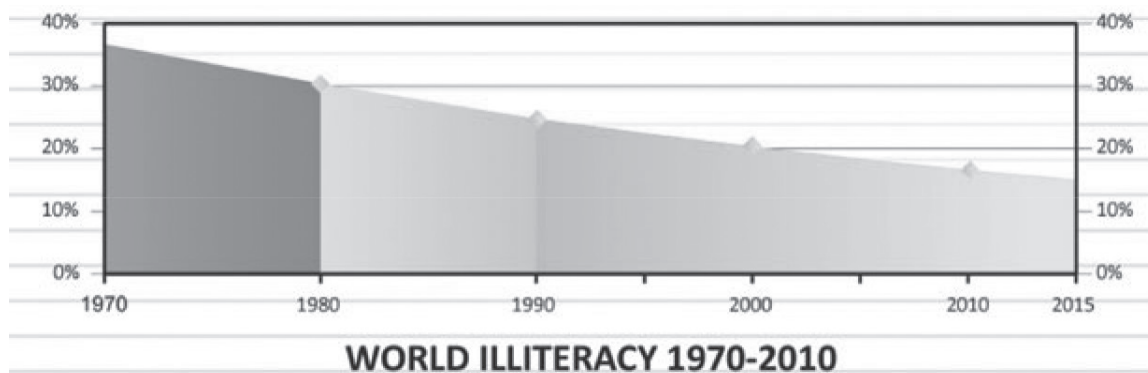
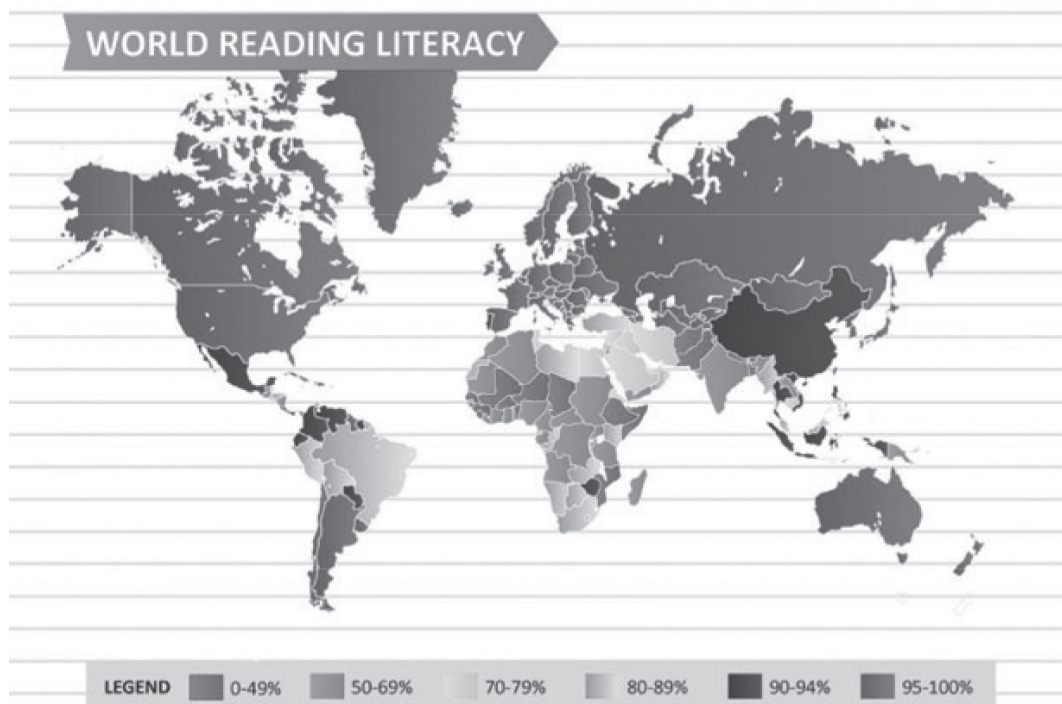
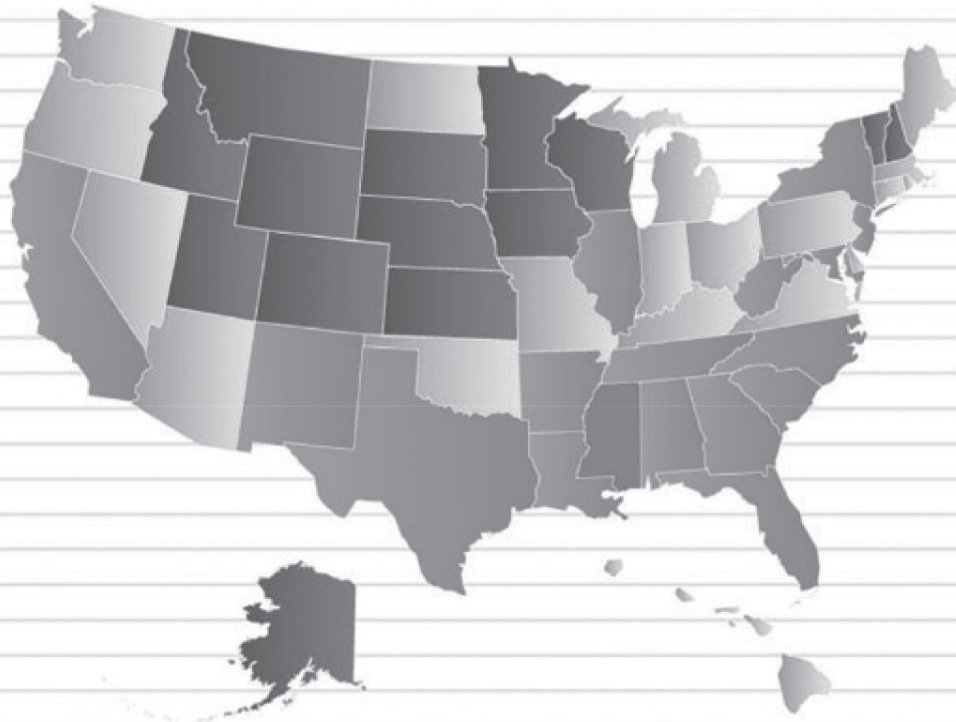


## Data Sources



## US READING LITERACY

Percentage of the population of each state that has below a 5th-grade level of literacy



LEGEND



30% or greater



20% to 30%



15% to 20%



10% to 15%

**42**  
MILLION

**50**  
MILLION

**AMERICAN ADULTS  
CAN'T READ AT ALL**

American adults are unable to read above a 5th-grade level.



**THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN ADULTS WHO ARE CLASSIFIED AS FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE INCREASES BY ABOUT 2.25 MILLION EACH YEAR.**



**20%**

Of high school seniors can be classified as being functionally illiterate at the time they graduate.



**70%**

Of prisoners in state and federal systems can be classified as illiterate.



**85%**

Of all juvenile offenders rate as functionally or marginally illiterate.



**43%**

Of those with the lowest literacy skill live in poverty.

## U.S. MATH LITERACY

**According to the Department of Education's National Assessment of Adult Literacy, U.S. adults are terrible at solving real-world math problems like calculating tips or comparing prices in grocery stores. Here are some dismal facts:**



**42%**

Of Americans are able to pick out two items on a menu, add them, and calculate a tip.



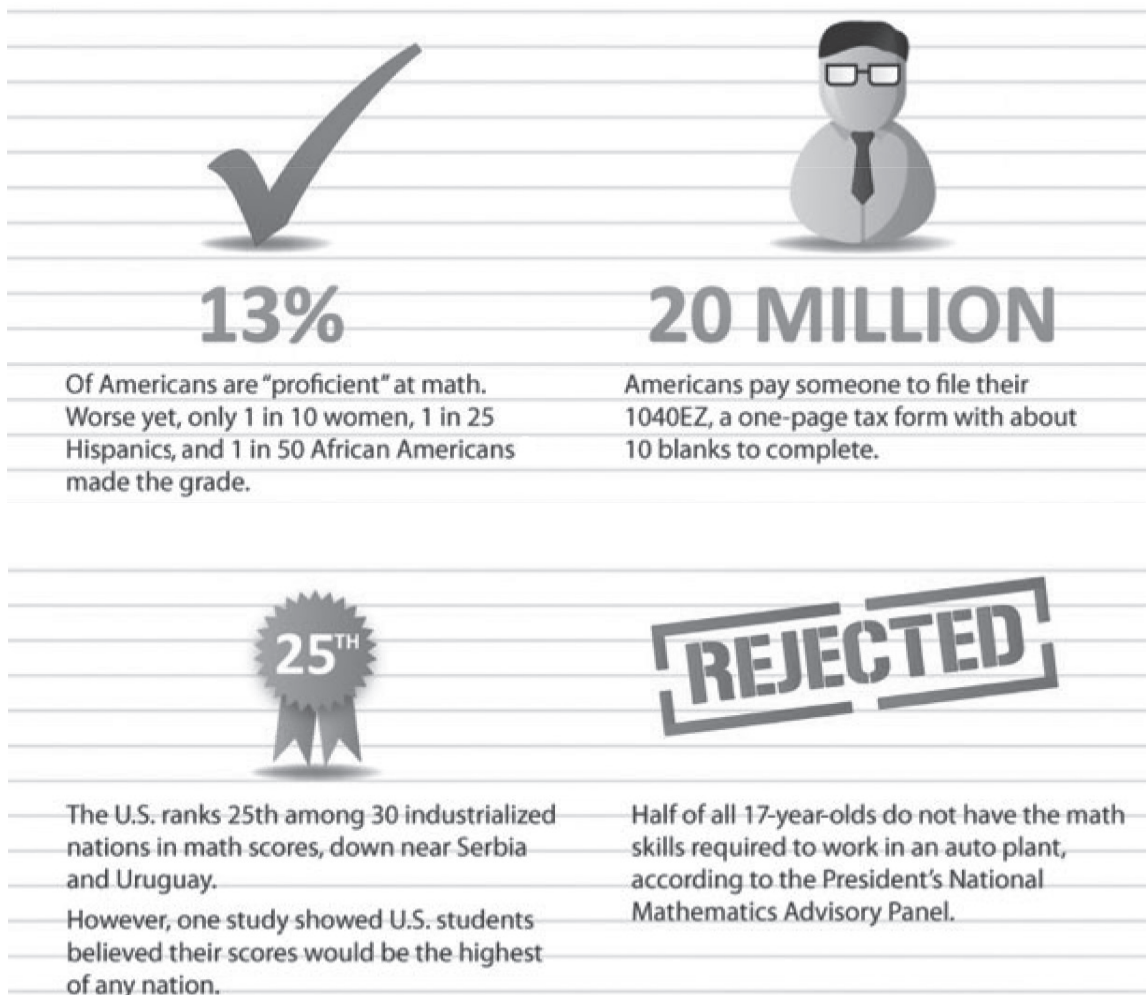
**1 IN 5**

Americans can reliably calculate mortgage interest. The other 4 can't.



**1 IN 5**

Americans can't calculate weekly salary when told an hourly pay rate.



Sources: Online MBA. (2014). Understanding illiteracy infographic. Degree Scout. Used with permission.

Two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of fourth grade will end up in jail or on welfare. Over 70 percent of America’s inmates cannot read above a fourth-grade level.

Nearly 85 percent of the juveniles who face trial in the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate, proving that there is a close relationship between illiteracy and crime. More than 60 percent of all inmates are functionally illiterate.

Fifty-three percent of fourth graders admitted to reading recreationally “almost every day,” while only 20 percent of eighth graders could say the same.

Seventy-five percent of Americans who receive food stamps perform at the lowest two levels of literacy, and 90 percent of high school dropouts are on welfare.

Teenage girls ages sixteen to nineteen who live at or below the poverty level and have below-average literacy skills are six times more likely to have children out of wedlock than the girls their age who can read proficiently.

Reports show that low literacy directly costs the health care industry over \$70 million every year.

Nationally, first graders from low-income families have 50 percent smaller vocabularies than their peers from higher-income families.

Retrieved from the companion website for *High School Mathematics Lessons to Explore, Understand, and Respond to Social Injustice* by Robert Q. Berry III, Basil M. Conway IV, Brian R. Lawler, and John W. Staley. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, www.corwin.com. Copyright © 2020 by Corwin Press, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction authorized for educational use by educators, local school sites, and/or noncommercial or nonprofit entities that have purchased the book.

Over 60 percent of low-income families have no children’s books in the home.

There are some really interesting pieces of data in this excerpt from an interview with Linda Darling-Hammond. You might consider giving this passage to one group and ask them to make sense of what she is saying here: <http://bit.ly/2kvwXsw>

With that very high poverty rate, our average scores on international tests look a little above the average in reading, about at the average in science and somewhat below the average in math, and a lot has been made out of that in the United States. But in fact, students in American schools where fewer than 10 percent of the students live in poverty actually are number one in the world in reading. Students in schools with up to 25 percent of kids living in poverty would rank number three in the world in reading, and even schools with as many as 50 percent of kids in poverty scored well above the averages in the OECD nations—which is mostly the European and some Asian nations. Our teachers are doing something very right in terms of educating kids to high levels in much more challenging circumstances than children face in other countries. The place where we really see the negative effects are in the growing number of schools with concentrated poverty, where more than 75 percent of children are poor. And there—the children in those schools score at levels that are near those of developing countries, with all the challenges that they face.

In response to this statement, the interviewer says:

Let’s talk about how this dynamic works. I can see at least two ways: you’d expect poor kids to have problems with preparation rising directly from being poor, and you’d also expect them to go to schools with fewer resources.

What do you think of these explanations?

Sources for this lesson: “11 facts” (n.d.); Holland and Darling-Hammond (2013); Lauer (2010); “Understanding illiteracy” (n.d.).