**Seventh Grade Social Studies: Ancient World History**

**Unit 1: An Introduction to World History**

**Big Picture Graphic**

**Overarching Question:**

*How can we know about the past?*

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**Historians investigate continuity and change over time**

**Use Invisible Thinking Tools**

**Examine Sources**

**Questions To Focus Assessment and Instruction:**

1. Why is it important to treat maps and “history” as accounts?
2. How do historians know and create accounts about the past?
3. Why might historians have different and sometimes conflicting versions of the same event?

**Types of Thinking**

- Description
- Evidentiary Argument
- Generalizing
- Identifying perspectives
- Issue Analysis
- Problem Solving
Historians investigate continuity and change over time

Invisible Thinking Tools
- Significance
- Social Institutions
- Temporal Frames
- Spatial Scales

Examining Sources
- Sourcing – determining author’s knowledge, experience, motive
- Corroborating – internal and external consistency
- Contextualizing – putting the event in time and space

Historical Accounts
- Illuminate complexity of human history
- Written as arguments supported by evidence
- Perspectives often visible
- Inquiry based
- Provides detailed information on any one event

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Unit Abstract

Rationale: Why study history? Why study the distant past? Why does historical thinking matter?

To fully realize history’s humanizing qualities, to draw on its ability to, . . . ‘expand our conception and understanding of what it means to be human,’ we need to encounter the distant past -- a past even more distant from us in modes of thought and social organization. It is this past, one that initially leaves us befuddled or, worse, just plain bored, that we need most if we are to achieve the understanding that each of us is more than the handful of labels ascribed to us at birth. The sustained encounter with this less-familiar past teaches us the limitations of our brief sojourn on the planet and allows us to take membership in the entire human race.2

History provides us with the “invaluable mental power we call judgment.”3 Recent research supports the “basic assumption that history teaches us a way to make choices, to balance opinions, to tell stories, and to become uneasy – when necessary – about the stories we tell.”4 Ultimately, democracy and effective citizenship rests significantly on each generation’s ability to think historically.

The Oakland Schools’ curriculum moves students beyond mere events, people, and dates. It encourages students to think like historians, geographers, economists, political scientists, anthropologists, and other social scientists. Such sophisticated thinking is, as some have argued, “unnatural” and often challenging for young students.5 Students whose schools have adopted the MC3/Oakland Schools’ curriculum will have encountered this type of thinking beginning in second grade. Building on discipline-focused thinking, this unit extends students’ understanding of historical thinking as they approach the study of world history. By unpacking historical and geographic thinking, students learn how these disciplines are distinct in how they ask questions and frame problems to organize and drive inquiry. They investigate how these social scientists select, analyze, and organize evidence, and then use that evidence to create accounts that answer questions or problems. These skills would be “useful every time they faced a take-home exam or research paper: how to get started when they lack necessary information, how to prepare their minds to deal with new topics, how to develop a hunch. The benefits would extend far beyond the intellectual.”6 Through the development of the historical habits of mind, students build both social and content literacy. As such, the Common Core State Standards for Literacy are a deliberate focal point of the unit.

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3 Ibid. p. ix, quoting Woodrow Wilson.
4 Ibid. p. ix.

For students, historical habits of mind constitute major intellectual hurdles. Students see their professors’ thoughts as finished products, tidied up and packaged for public presentation in books, articles, and lectures. Historians shield from view their raw thinking, the way they try to make sense of their subject. Wineburg, Sam. “Teaching the mind good habits.” The Chronicle of Higher Education. Vol. 49, No.31, p. B2. 11 April 2003.

World Geography
The unit begins by building on students’ prior knowledge of world geography studied in sixth grade. Students review how geographers examine, frame, and reframe the world by using topographical features and big “invented” geographic categories. They explore how maps are representations of places and how representations of the same place can differ based on the purposes, knowledge, and points of view of the cartographer. They consider how these differences shape how people create accounts of places and that the names geographers, historians or other people use -- “Europe,” the “Rhine River,” “Indonesia”, “Eastern Hemisphere” or “continents” – are interpretative ideas created by people for specific reasons. Throughout the course students will be using others’ historical accounts or maps. Understanding what went into creating an account or map is a key feature in learning to “read” them. Being able to understand and use these ideas in reading are critical, advanced literacy skills and therefore, these ideas are introduced early in the curriculum and are built upon throughout the course. By examining the perspectives and language of historians and geographers, students enrich their understanding of the past.

History as “Events” Versus History as “Accounts”
Students also engage in a deeper understanding of history. Scholars of student thinking in history have demonstrated how vital the distinction between “history as an event” and “history as an account” is for students to understand. If students think that “history” really is “all the events in the past,” then learning history must mean memorizing the events in the past. However, if students can see the distinction between these two uses of the word, and can understand that all studies of history are “accounts” of the past, then that opens students to understand the importance of thinking skills other than memorization – such as selecting events or evidence, or perspective taking, all of which are essential in historical thinking. Accordingly, the distinction of history as events versus accounts is foundational for student understanding.

Historical Thinking
Students consider how it is possible for historians to create representations or accounts of events in which they were not present or that happened thousands of years before they were even born. They learn that historians must have some evidence to support the claims they make in their accounts. Therefore, this unit introduces students to some of the content area literacy skills central entailed in teaching people “to do” history and geography. Students review the difference between primary and secondary sources (evidence) and begin to employ methods of analysis using strategies called sourcing and corroborating. They are introduced the ideas of internal and external validity, two forms of corroboration involved in reading primary and secondary sources. Students assess the internal validity by examining whether a source contradicts itself. Determining external validity requires students to explore other sources or other pieces of information that supports or challenges the source under investigation.

7 Teacher Note: Avoid the use of the word “bias” in this work with students. That is, don’t say or allow students to use ideas such as “the author of that account has a bias.” Adults might be able to differentiate the two uses of the word “bias” as either “point-of-view” or “prejudicial, unfair preference” but students tend not to make this distinction. Students who are told an author was biased will often reject the author or go through a facile analysis in determining point of view. Even when reading prejudicial texts, it is always preferable to ask “What purpose did the author have in writing that? What knowledge did they have? And what point-of-view?” instead of “What biases did the author have?”
After learning about the importance of framing a historical problem, students explore four thinking tools that historians use to organize and analyze information: significance, social institutions, temporal frames (time), and spatial scales (space). In determining significance, students consider the characteristics that make an event significant and then apply these characteristics to their own lives. To assist students in analyzing and describing past societies, they identify how societies address their needs through the creation of social institutions (e.g., organizing power = government; producing and distributing resources including food, shelter, and clothing = economy; raising and educating children = family; disseminating culture = education; developing common beliefs and values = religion; and communicating = language). In considering time, students explore a variety of calendar systems. They also learn how historians use eras, periodization schemes, and turning points to organize and analyze information. Students then explore how historians use space to organize and analyze past events. In thinking of places as geographic “containers” in which we place historical events, students are introduced to how some containers can be too big for events and make the events difficult to see. They also explore how geographic containers that are too small for an event cut out features of the event. This is important for people who use others’ historical accounts or maps. Understanding what went into creating an account or map is a key feature in learning to “read” historical accounts and/or maps. In considering how geographers frame and reframe the earth, students refine their use and understanding of these big spatial categories throughout the unit.

These are critical and challenging lessons for students and teachers because all historical study builds upon these elements. They are the “invisible” tools that historians use to create historical accounts. Sometimes, teachers and students pay no attention to such things as institutions, or the temporal and spatial organization of the historical accounts they are teaching and learning. Too often, teachers and students simply assume that since something is in the curriculum or the textbook it is significant for some reason, and never consider significance at all.

**Content Literacy**

The development of content literacy skills is a critical component in this course and is integrated throughout the unit. Students are introduced to the features and structure of their history textbook. Comparing the disciplines of history and science reinforces the fact that history has its own ways of thinking, knowing, and using evidence. Students begin to examine some potential limitations of history textbooks by exploring to what extent their textbook reflects the evidentiary, problem-based, and interpretative nature of history. The unit culminates with students challenging the official and ‘unbiased’ version of historical events found in their textbooks. By comparing a textbook account of a historical event with two primary sources, students uncover that the textbook offers one narrow version of history that is often void of the ongoing investigative nature of historical inquiry and practice. Students write reflectively on the benefits of using historical habits of mind in and out of the history classroom. The concluding activity of the unit not only reinforces the big ideas explored throughout the unit, but helps establish classroom rules for small group discussions which will be employed throughout the course.

**Focus Questions**

1. Why is it important to treat maps and “history” as accounts?
2. How do historians know and create accounts about the past?
3. Why might historians have different and sometimes conflicting versions of the same event?
Content Expectations

6-G1.1.1: Describe how geographers use mapping to represent places and natural and human phenomenon in the world.

6 and 7
G1.1.2: Draw an accurate sketch map from memory of the world showing the major regions (Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia/Oceania, Antarctica, Canada, United States, Mexico, Central America, South America, and Caribbean).  

6 and 7
G.1.2.6: Apply the skills of geographic inquiry (asking geographic questions, acquiring geographic information, organizing geographic information, analyzing geographic information, and answering geographic questions) to analyze a problem or issue of importance to a region of the Eastern Hemisphere.

6 and 7
G.1.3.3: Explain the different ways in which places are connected and how those connections demonstrate interdependence and accessibility.

6 and 7
G2.2.3: Analyze how culture and experience influence people’s perception of places and regions (examples omitted).

6 and 7
H1.1.1: Explain why and how historians use eras and periods as constructs to organize and explain human activities over time.

6 and 7
H1.1.2: Compare and contrast several different calendar systems used in the past and present and their cultural significance (e.g., Olmec and Mayan calendar systems, Aztec Calendar Stone, Sun Dial, Gregorian calendar – B.C. /A.D.; contemporary secular – B.C.E. /C.E.; Chinese, Hebrew, and Islamic/Hijri calendars).

6 and 7
H1.4.1: Describe and use cultural institutions to study an era and a region (political, economic, religion/belief, science/technology, written language, education, family).

6 and 7
H1.4.2: Describe and use themes of history to study patterns of change and continuity.

7 – G1.1.1: Explain and use a variety of maps, globes, and web based geography technology to study the world, including global, interregional, regional, and local scales.

7 - G1.1.2: Draw an accurate sketch map from memory of the Eastern Hemisphere showing the major regions (Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia/Oceania, Antarctica).

7 – G2.1.2: Use information from GIS, remote sensing and the World Wide Web to compare and contrast the surface features and vegetation of the continents of the Eastern Hemisphere.

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8 Although the 6th grade expectation refers only to the Western Hemisphere and the 7th grade expectation to the Eastern Hemisphere, they have been combined here to provide for a more global perspective.
7 - G1.2.2: Explain why maps of the same place may vary as a result of the cultural or historical background of the cartographer.

7 – G.4.1.1: Identify and explain examples of cultural diffusion within the Eastern Hemisphere (e.g., the spread of sports, music, architecture, television, Internet, Bantu languages in Africa, Islam in Western Europe).

7-H1: Evaluate evidence, compare and contrast information, interpret the historical record, and develop sound historical arguments and perspectives on which informed decisions in contemporary life can be based.⁹

7-H1.2.1: Explain how historians use a variety of sources to explore the past (e.g., artifacts, primary and secondary sources including narratives, technology, historical maps, visual/mathematical quantitative data, radiocarbon dating, DNA analysis).

7-H1.2.2: Read and comprehend a historical passage to identify basic factual knowledge and the literal meaning by indicating who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led to the development, and what consequences or outcomes followed.

7- H1.2.3: Identify a point of view (perspective of the author) and context when reading and discussing primary and secondary sources.

7 – H1.2.4: Compare and evaluate competing historical perspectives about the past based on proof.

7 – H1.2.5: Describe how historians use methods of inquiry to identify cause/effect relationships in history noting that many have multiple causes.

7-H1.4.3: Use historical perspectives to analyze global issues faced by humans long ago and today.

Common Core State Standards
RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

RH.6-8.2: Determine the main ideas or information of a primary or a secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

RH.6-8.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

RH.6-8.5: Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

⁹ Although the curriculum usually only designates specific content expectations, the essence of several expectations are best understood by the sub-heading provided in the state document. Accordingly, we are referencing it here.
RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

RH.6-8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

RH.6-8.8: Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

RH.6-8.9: Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

RH.6-8.10: By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

WHST.6-8.1: Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.

WHST.6-8.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WHST.6-8.7: Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

WHST.6-8.8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

WHST.6-8.9: Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

WHST.6-8.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Key Concepts
close-reading
contextualizing
corroborating
event
evidence
framing
geographic features
historical argument
historical problem
history
perspective
primary sources
representations/accounts
secondary sources
significance
social institutions
sourcing
spatial scales
temporal frames (time)

**Duration**
7 weeks

**Lesson Sequence**
Lesson 1: What Are Maps?
Lesson 2: What Can a Map Tell Us?
Lesson 3: What Does History Mean?
Lesson 4: How Do Historians Create Accounts of Past Events?
Lesson 5: What Process Do Historians Use to Investigate the Past?
Lesson 6: Tools to Organize and Analyze the Past -- Establishing Significance
Lesson 7: Tools to Organize and Analyze the Past -- Using Social Institutions
Lesson 8: Tools to Organize and Analyze the Past -- Using Temporal Frames
Lesson 9: Tools to Organize and Analyze the Past -- Using Spatial Scales
Lesson 10: History as a Discipline
Lesson 11: Challenging the Power and Authority of the History Textbook

**Resources**
**Equipment/Manipulative**
11 x 17 inch paper
A classroom amount of oranges or grapefruits
Chart paper
Lined paper
Markers
Overhead projector or Document Camera/Projector
Permanent markers, one per student (or they can share)
Student journal or notebook

**Student Resources**
A present-day map of the world.


Oakland Schools
<http://books.google.com/books?id=MylwbO2NnCkC&pg=PA233&lpg=PA233&dq=%22Children+from+seven+years+of+age+upward+were+engaged+by+the+hundreds+from+London+and+the+other+large+cities,+and+set+to+work+in+the+cotton+spinning+factories+of+the+north.+Since+there+were+no+other+facilities+for+boarding+them,%22&source=bl&ots=k0VpP6_uDv&sig=iYjdiJdVdiRCQmRSmBfhBzbhWU9FQ&hl=en&ei=U3Tf2DMcGB8gaUgg3YAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CBUQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false>

*Islamic Calendar.* Social Studies for Kids. 8 Aug. 2012

*The Jewish Calendar.* Social Studies for Kids. 8 Aug. 2012


*The Sadler Committee Report (1832).* Hanover College History Department. 8 Aug. 2012
<http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111sad.html>.


Teacher Resources
<https://sites.google.com/a/wolfpackweb.net/ap-review-09/topics/a6>.


“Why Historical Thinking Matters.” Historical Thinking Matters. 8 Aug. 2012 <http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/why/> (Offers a module that illustrates HOW historians go about the work of historical inquiry. Based on conflicting sources on the Battle of Lexington.)


For Further Professional Knowledge


Bentley, Jerry H. “Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization in World History,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 3 (Jun., 1996), pp. 749-770. This raises and addresses some fundamental questions about spatial scale and periodization in pre-modern world history that help connect some of the issues of this unit to the coming content in later units.


