

Sixth Grade History

Overview for Parents

Teacher: Dr. Bruce Freeberg

Content or Content Goals

The goal of our history curriculum is to expose students to the whole story of human civilization in its broad outlines before they leave Crossroads to enter high school. This will give students a narrative framework within which to locate and make sense of texts and ideas they encounter in high school and beyond. In addition to providing this broad frame of reference, the study of history will help to build reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking skills. It will also promote a respect for other cultures, an appreciation of the debts we owe the past, and an understanding of how we arrived where we are as a civilization.

The sixth grade curriculum begins with a review of ancient traditions that form the foundation of Western Civilization:

- Judaism and Christianity
- The Golden Age of Ancient Greece: The rise of democracy, the “classical” ideal of human development of the mind and body, the great philosophers, Alexander the Great and the spread of Greek culture (Hellenism).
- Rome from Republic to Empire, with emphasis on key political developments and socio-cultural institutions.

After our review of the foundations of Western Civilization, we pick up where the fifth grade curriculum left off with the unfolding of early modern European history:

- The Age of Reason: the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, with emphasis on the contributions of Galileo, Newton, Descartes, Rousseau, Hobbes, Locke, an Montesquieu, and the role of this period in the development of the American Revolution. Emphasis is also placed on the *creative tension between the worlds of faith and reason* as a core characteristic of Western culture, still very much with us today.
- The French Revolution and Europe under Napoleon.
- Industrialism and the economic theories of Capitalism, Socialism, and Marxism.
- Romanticism as a response to the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution.

The year’s World History component concludes with a look at one result of the American and French Revolutions: the growth of nationalism in Latin America and the independence revolutions that occurred there in the early nineteenth century.

Main topics in American history include an in-depth look at late nineteenth and early twentieth century urbanization, immigration and industrialization, the post-Civil War expansion and success of industrial capitalism (including the monopolies created by Rockefeller, Carnegie, Morgan, and Vanderbilt), and the rise of organized labor (Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor).

Expectations for Students

Students should arrive on time with textbook, history binder, and writing utensils. They should complete all homework assignments in a thoughtful and timely manner. In class students are expected to make corrections and enhancements to written answers to homework questions, to take careful notes when asked to do so, to listen attentively and contribute meaningfully during class presentations and discussions, and to work productively in small groups.

Homework Requirements

There are three history blocks per week, and there will usually be a reading lesson assigned for homework in preparation for each class. Reading lessons will generally be accompanied by assigned reading questions, and a complete set of questions for all lessons will be given out at the beginning of each unit. Students should endeavor to provide thorough answers to all questions. Providing written answers to questions will promote an active approach to reading and will build reading comprehension over time. The questions will serve as a springboard for class discussions. They will also be a valuable resource in preparing for tests. For this reason, students are urged to remedy any inadequacies in their answers as we discuss the questions in class. Review sheets will be provided before unit tests and both class time and homework time will be allotted for test preparation. Most reading assignments will be drawn from the textbook, but occasionally students will also be assigned to read and respond to primary source documents which will be handed out in class. Along with reading questions and test preparation, history homework will occasionally involve short writing assignments or preparation for oral class presentations.

Contacting the Teacher

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