

Grade 6 | History and Geography



Teachers: The World History guidelines for sixth grade begin with a study of ancient civilizations introduced in earlier grades in the Core Knowledge Sequence. Topics include Judaism, Christianity, and the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome. The focus in sixth grade should be on the legacy of enduring ideas from these civilizations—ideas about democracy and government, for example, or about right and wrong. After this study of lasting ideas from ancient civilizations, the World History guidelines pick up the chronological thread from earlier grades with a study of the Enlightenment. You are encouraged to use timelines and engage students in a brief review of some major intervening events in order to help students make a smooth transition across the gap in centuries between the ancient civilizations and the Enlightenment. In sixth grade, the World History guidelines catch up chronologically with the American History guidelines. The World History guidelines take students up to the consequences of industrialization in the mid-nineteenth century, and this is where the American History guidelines begin.

It is important that students learn about the people who shaped our world, as well as those who continue to do so. Thus, it is recommended that students read biographies. Reading stories about the individuals listed in the Sequence, and others, allows students to draw from a broader perspective.

World History and Geography

Note: In earlier grades, students were introduced to major rivers (see Geography Grade 3), mountains (see Geography Grade 4), and lakes (see Geography Grade 5) of the world.

I. World Geography

Teachers: By sixth grade, students should have a good working knowledge of map-reading skills, as well as geographic terms and features introduced in earlier grades. The study of geography embraces many topics throughout the Core Knowledge Sequence, including topics in history and science. Geographic knowledge includes a spatial sense of the world, an awareness of the physical processes that shape life, a sense of the interactions between humans and their environment, an understanding of the relations between place and culture, and an awareness of the characteristics of specific regions and cultures. Many geographic topics are listed below in connection with historical topics.

A. Spatial Sense (Working with Maps, Globes, and Other Geographic Tools)

Teachers: As necessary, review and reinforce topics from earlier grades, including:

- Continents and major oceans
- How to read maps and globes using longitude and latitude, coordinates, degrees
- Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn: relation to seasons and temperature
- Climate zones: Arctic, Tropic, Temperate
- Time zones (review from Grade 4): Prime Meridian (0 degrees); Greenwich, England; 180° Line (International Date Line)
- Arctic Circle (imaginary lines and boundaries) and Antarctic Circle

B. Great Deserts of the World

- What is a desert? Hot and cold deserts, oasis
- Major deserts in Africa:
 - Sahara, Kalahari
- Australia: a mostly desert continent, the outback
- Asia: Gobi; much of Arabian Peninsula
- North America: Mojave, Chihuahuan, Sonoran
- South America: Atacama Desert

II. Lasting Ideas from Ancient Civilizations

A. Ancient Greece

Teachers: Briefly review from Grade 2: religion, art, architecture, daily life of ancient Greece.

- The Greek polis (city-state) and patriotism

See also English Grade 6: Homer, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* and Classical Mythology.

See also Visual Arts Grade 6: *Raphael's School of Athens*. You may also want to examine *David's Death of Socrates*.

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- Beginnings of democratic government: Modern American democratic government has its roots in Athenian democracy (despite the obvious limitations on democracy in ancient Greece, for example, slavery, vote denied to women).
 - The Assembly
 - Suffrage, majority vote
- The “classical” ideal of human life and works
 - The ideal of the well-rounded individual and worthy citizen
 - Pericles and the “Golden Age”
 - Architecture: the Parthenon
 - Games: The Olympics
- Greek wars: victory and hubris, defeat and shame
 - Persian Wars: Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis
 - The Peloponnesian War: Sparta defeats Athens
- Socrates and Plato
 - Socrates was Plato’s teacher; we know of him through Plato’s writings.
 - For Socrates, wisdom is knowing that you do not know.
 - The trial of Socrates
- Plato and Aristotle
 - Plato was Aristotle’s teacher.
 - They agreed that reason and philosophy should rule our lives, not emotion and rhetoric.
 - They disagreed about where true “reality” is: Plato says it is beyond physical things in ideas (cf. the “allegory of the cave”); Aristotle says reality is only in physical things.
- Alexander the Great and the spread of Greek (“Hellenistic”) culture: the library at Alexandria

See also English
Grade 6: Shakespeare’s
Julius Caesar

B. Ancient Rome

Teachers: Briefly review from Grade 3: Romulus and Remus, Roman gods, legends, daily life, etc.

- The Roman Republic
 - Builds upon Greek and classical ideals
 - Class and status: patricians and plebeians, slaves
 - Roman government: consuls, tribunes, and senators
- The Punic Wars: Rome vs. Carthage, Hannibal
- Julius Caesar
- Augustus Caesar
 - Pax Romana
 - Roman law and the administration of a vast, diverse empire
 - Virgil, *The Aeneid*: epic on the legendary origins of Rome
- Christianity under the Roman Empire
 - Jesus’s instruction to “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s” [Matthew 22:21]
 - Roman persecution of Christians
 - Constantine: first Christian Roman emperor
- The “decline and fall” of the Roman Empire
 - Causes debated by historians for many hundreds of years (outer forces such as shrinking trade, attacks and invasions vs. inner forces such as disease, jobless masses, taxes, corruption and violence, rival religions and ethnic groups, weak emperors).
 - Rome’s “decline and fall” perceived as an “object lesson” for later generations and societies.

See also Science Grades K, 3, 4, and 5: Science Biographies: Isaac Newton.

III. The Enlightenment

Teachers: You are encouraged to use timelines and engage students in a brief review of some major intervening events in order to help students make a smooth transition across the gap in centuries between the ancient civilizations and the Enlightenment. Place the Enlightenment (17th and 18th centuries) in chronological context, in relation to eras and movements studied in earlier grades (Middle Ages, Age of Exploration & Renaissance, American Revolution, etc.).

- Faith in science and human reason, as exemplified by
 - Isaac Newton and the laws of nature
 - Descartes: “cogito ergo sum”
- Two ideas of “human nature”: Thomas Hobbes and John Locke
 - Hobbes: the need for a strong governing authority as a check on “the condition of man . . . [which] is a condition of war of everyone against everyone”
 - Locke: the idea of man as a “tabula rasa” and the optimistic belief in education; argues against doctrine of divine right of kings and for government by consent of the governed
- Influence of the Enlightenment on the beginnings of the United States
 - Thomas Jefferson: the idea of “natural rights” in the Declaration of Independence
 - Montesquieu and the idea of separation of powers in government
 - Voltaire and idea of limited monarchy

See also Visual Arts Grade 6: David, *Oath of the Horatii*; Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*.

IV. The French Revolution

Teachers: While the focus here is on the French Revolution, make connections with what students already know about the American Revolution, and place the American and French Revolutions in the larger global context of ideas and movements.

- The influence of Enlightenment ideas and of the English Revolution on revolutionary movements in America and France
 - French aristocrat Marquis de Lafayette
- The American Revolution: the French alliance and its effect on both sides
- The Old Regime in France (L’Ancien Régime)
 - The social classes: the three Estates
 - Louis XIV, the “Sun King”; Versailles Louis XV: “Après moi, le déluge”
 - Louis XVI: the end of the Old Regime
 - Marie Antoinette: the famous legend of “Let them eat cake”
- 1789: from the Three Estates to the National Assembly
 - July 14, Bastille Day
 - Declaration of the Rights of Man
 - October 5, Women’s March on Versailles
 - “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”
- Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette to the guillotine
- Reign of Terror: Robespierre, the Jacobins, and the “Committee of Public Safety”
- Revolutionary arts and the new classicism
- Napoleon Bonaparte and the First French Empire
 - Napoleon as military genius
 - Crowned Emperor Napoleon I: reinventing the Roman Empire
 - The invasion of Russia
 - Exile to Elba
 - Wellington and Waterloo

See also English Grade 6: Wordsworth, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”; Byron, “Apostrophe to the Ocean” (from *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*); Visual Arts Grade 6, Romantic Art; and Music Grade 6, Romantic Music.

V. Romanticism

- Beginning in early nineteenth century Europe, Romanticism refers to the cultural movement characterized by:
 - The rejection of classicism and classical values

- An emphasis instead on emotion and imagination (instead of reason)
- An emphasis on nature and the private self (instead of society and man in society)
- The influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s celebration of man in a state of nature (as opposed to man in society): “Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains”; the idea of the “noble savage”
- Romanticism in literature, the visual arts, and music

Note: In Grade 6, the World History guidelines catch up chronologically with the American History guidelines. The World History guidelines take students up to the consequences of industrialization in the mid-nineteenth century, and this is where the American History guidelines begin. See American History Grade 6, Industrialization and Urbanization.

See also American History Grade 6: Labor, *International Workers of the World*; Eugene Debs

VI. Industrialism, Capitalism, and Socialism

A. The Industrial Revolution

- Beginnings in Great Britain
 - Revolution in transportation: canals, railroads, new highways
 - Steam power: James Watt
- Revolution in textiles: Eli Whitney and the cotton gin, factory production
- Iron and steel mills
- The early factory system
 - Families move from farm villages to factory towns
 - Unsafe, oppressive working conditions in mills and mines
 - Women and child laborers
 - Low wages, poverty, slums, disease in factory towns
 - Violent resistance: Luddites

B. Capitalism

- Adam Smith and the idea of laissez faire vs. government intervention in economic and social matters, division of labor
- Law of supply and demand
- Growing gaps between social classes: Disraeli’s image of “two nations” (the rich and the poor)

C. Socialism

- An idea that took many forms, all of which had in common their attempt to offer an alternative to capitalism.
 - For the public ownership of large industries, transport, banks, etc., and the more equal distribution of wealth
- Marxism: the Communist form of Socialism
 - Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*: “Workers of the world, unite!”
 - Class struggle: bourgeoisie and proletariat, workers’ rights
 - Communists, in contrast to Socialists, opposed all forms of private property.

VII. Latin American Independence Movements

A. History

- The name “Latin America” comes from the Latin origin of the languages now most widely spoken (Spanish and Portuguese).
- Haitian revolution
 - Toussaint L’Ouverture
 - Abolition of West Indian slavery
- Mexican revolutions
 - Miguel Hidalgo
 - José María Morelos
 - Santa Anna vs. the United States
 - Benito Juárez
 - Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata

- Liberators
 - Simon Bolivar
 - José de San Martín
 - Bernardo O'Higgins
- New nations in Central America: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua
- Brazilian independence from Portugal

B. Geography of Latin America

- Mexico: Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico City
- Panama: isthmus, Panama Canal
- Central America and South America: locate major cities and countries including
 - Caracas (Venezuela)
 - Bogota (Colombia)
 - Quito (Ecuador)
 - Lima (Peru)
 - Santiago (Chile)
 - La Paz (Bolivia)
- Andes Mountains
- Brazil: largest country in South America, rain forests, Rio de Janeiro, Amazon River
- Argentina: Rio de la Plata, Buenos Aires, Pampas

American History and Geography

Teachers: The sixth grade American History guidelines pick up chronologically with the World History guidelines on mid-nineteenth century industrialism and its consequences.



See below, Reform: Jane Addams, settlement houses; Jacob Riis, ghettos in the modern city.

See also World History Grade 6: Industrial Revolution.

See also World History Grade 6: Capitalism, laissez-faire.

I. Immigration, Industrialization, and Urbanization

A. Immigration

- Waves of new immigrants from about 1830 onward
 - Great migrations from Ireland (potato famine), Germany, and Russia (pogroms)
 - From about 1880 on, many immigrants arrive from southern and eastern Europe.
 - Immigrants from Asian countries, especially China
 - Ellis Island, "The New Colossus" (poem on the Statue of Liberty, written by Emma Lazarus)
 - Large populations of immigrants settle in major cities, including New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Cleveland, Boston, San Francisco.
- The tension between ideals and realities
 - The metaphor of America as a "melting pot" or "mosaic"
 - America perceived as "land of opportunity" vs. resistance, discrimination, and "nativism"
 - Resistance to Catholics and Jews
 - Chinese Exclusion Act

B. Industrialization and Urbanization

- The post-Civil War industrial boom
 - The "Gilded Age"
 - The growing gap between social classes
 - Horatio Alger and the "rags to riches" story
 - Growth of industrial cities: Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh
 - Many thousands of African-Americans move north.
 - Urban corruption, "machine" politics: "Boss" Tweed in New York City, Tammany Hall

- The condition of labor
 - Factory conditions: “sweat shops,” long work hours, low wages, women and child laborers
 - Unions: American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers
 - Strikes and retaliation: Haymarket Square; Homestead, Pennsylvania
 - Labor Day
- The growing influence of big business: industrialists and capitalists
 - “Captains of industry” and “robber barons”: Andrew Carnegie, J. P. Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt
 - New inventions and patents
 - John D. Rockefeller and the Standard Oil Company as an example of the growing power of monopolies and trusts
 - Capitalists as philanthropists (funding museums, libraries, universities, etc.)
- “Free enterprise” vs. government regulation of business: Interstate Commerce Act and Sherman Antitrust Act attempt to limit power of monopolies

See also Language Arts Grade 6: Poetry, Paul Laurence Dunbar, “Sympathy.”

Note: Briefly review people and ideas studied in Grade 4, American History, *Reformers: Women’s Rights*.

See also World History Grade 6: Socialism and Capitalism.

See Language Arts Grade 6: “A More Perfect Union,” which expands on key people during this era and beyond to civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

II. Reform

- Populism
 - Discontent and unrest among farmers
 - The gold standard vs. “free silver”
 - William Jennings Bryan
- The Progressive Era “Muckraking”: Ida Tarbell on the Standard Oil Company; Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, on the meat packing industry
 - Jane Addams: settlement houses
 - Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*: tenements and ghettos in the modern city
 - President Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt: conservation and trust-busting
- Reform for African-Americans
 - Ida B. Wells: campaign against lynching
 - Booker T. Washington: Tuskegee Institute, Atlanta Exposition Address, “Cast down your bucket where you are”
 - W. E. B. DuBois: founding of NAACP, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line,” *The Souls of Black Folk*
- Women’s suffrage
 - Susan B. Anthony
 - Nineteenth Amendment (1920)
 - The Socialist critique of America: Eugene V. Debs