

**SIXTH GRADE CONTENT STANDARDS**

**TOPICS FROM THE CALIFORNIA STATE HISTORY~SOCIAL SCIENCE  
FRAMEWORK**

What students should know:

**World History and Geography: Ancient Civilization**

**EARLY HUMANKIND**

~ Demonstrate an understanding of the main characteristics of prehistoric civilizations and Mesopotamia.

**EGYPT AND KUSH**

~ Demonstrate an understanding of the major characteristics of early civilizations of Africa.

**GREEKS AND HEBREWS**

~ Demonstrate an understanding of some of the ideas and sources that form the foundation of Western Civilization.

**ANCIENT INDIA**

~ Explain how civilization developed in the Indus River Valley. **ANCIENT CHINA**

~ Demonstrate an understanding of major people and developments in the rise of ancient Chinese civilizations.

**RISE AND FALL OF ROME**

~ Demonstrate an understanding of the development of the Roman republic and the spread of the Roman empire.

~ Demonstrate an understanding of the lasting contributions of Roman civilization and some of the reasons for the fall of Rome

Sixth Grade Skills Based on Standardized Tests ~ Know how to read latitude and longitude

~ Make inferences from non-pictorial maps ~ Analyze cartoons

~ Interpret a circle chart ~ Read a line graph

~ Use scale on a map

~ Understand the purpose of scale on a map ~ Locate the equator on a map

~ Estimate distances on a map

~ Make inferences based on topographical features on a map

**SIXTH GRADE CONTENT STANDARDS  
HISTORICAL THINKING MIDDLE GRADES  
6TH - 8TH GRADES**

What students should be able to do:

**Chronological/Spatial Thinking**

1. Students know the key events of the historical eras they are studying, and place them in chronological sequence.
2. Students understand the relationships between a year (e.g., 1865) ,and the century (e.g., the nineteenth) in which it occurred. /
3. Students identify places on maps of neighborhoods, cities, and countries which they are studying.
4. Students understand that change happens at different rates at different times; that some aspects of a thing can change while others remain the same; that change is complicated and not always what it seems.
5. Students understand that we use periodization to divide the past into meaningful chunks of time (e.g., Middle Ages, the Civil Rights Era, Reagan years).
6. Students understand that the present is connected to the past. They identify both similarity (continuity) and difference (change) between past and present (e.g., compare a historical photograph of a street scene with the same street today).

**Evidence**

1. Students become familiar with artifacts, photographs, stories, music and short written sources from other times. They use these sources to generate questions about the past.
2. Students identify the uses of an artifact. They identify parts of the artifact and how they might contribute to its usefulness, They identify the main subject of a photograph. They identify details in a photograph and explain how they contribute information to the picture. The students understand the meaning of the vocabulary used in written sources and accurately read information from them. They identify the main idea or ideas stated in the source as well as supporting details.
3. Students understand that some sources are more reliable than others. They compare reliable and unreliable sources and offer reasons why a particular source is more or less reliable than another

4. Students understand that primary sources can tell us about the person or people who created them. They use the source to help figure out the purposes and perspectives of the author(s). He or she identifies vocabulary in printed documents which reveal the author's perspectives.
5. Students begin to relate two or more different primary sources from a time period to each other They explain the influence of the time in which they were produced.

### **Diversity/Multiple Perspectives**

1. Students examine beliefs, values, and conditions of life of a variety of different people from different times and places.
2. Students imaginatively place themselves in the position of others in different circumstances-today or in the past-and explain what things would look like from those other' people's positions. They explain differences between two or more participants' views of a particular event. They tell a story incorporating the views of two or more characters.
3. Students understand the importance of considering the actions and perspectives of all of those involved in a particular event. They discuss how a person's circumstances were connected to how they viewed the world (e.g., a person who lived in the desert valued water highly; an enslaved person saw being able to travel at will as part of the meaning of freedom). They understand how actions of different people are connected to their values, beliefs, and circumstances.
4. Students do not dismiss others because they are different. They value diversity; they value the attempt to understand why others act as they do.

### **Historical Interpretation**

1. Students understand that historical accounts may be provided through stories about real people or fictional characters.
2. Students understand that it is possible to tell different stories about the same events.
3. Students identify differences in two or more historical accounts,
4. Students understand that historical accounts on television, in film, in fiction and elsewhere, are interpretations which can be subjected to critical questioning.
5. Students use several sources to construct a narrative of a historical event.

**Historical/Geographic Significance**

1. Students explain how the people, events, and trends they are studying are significant for people today.
2. Students explain how certain events and decisions had consequences for others. They evaluate the consequences as positive or negative (or a combination of the two).
3. Students distinguish between the significant and trivial detail in relation to a particular historical development or account.

## **HISTORICAL THINKING: SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS - SIXTH GRADE**

### **Chronological and Spatial Thinking**

- Draw three political maps reflecting three distinct eras in Roman history.
- Participate in a chronological quiz game based on events in Egyptian history.
- Make a class time line that includes major events from all the different periods covered in the sixth grade (for example, Early Humankind, Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, China, Hebrews, Ancient Greece and Rome).
- Make a map of the different civilizations taught in sixth grade, including major rivers in order to understand the relationship between rivers and the development of civilization.

### **Examining Evidence**

- Examine TCI (Teacher's Curriculum Institute) placards on Roman culture and fill in the graphic organizer that compares Roman life with life in the United States today.
- Read excerpts of the United States Constitution and in conjunction with a lecture, identify political constructs and concepts that might be connected to Roman ideas of government; create a wall chart.
- Look at a picture of the Rosetta Stone and speculate about why it was so important.
- Look at pictures of art in Mesopotamia and Egypt and make inferences about daily life in the ancient world.
- Read Greek mythology and make inferences on what life was like for people living in ancient Greece.

### **Diversity / Multiple Perspectives**

- Participate in a simulation activity about the fall of Rome and the fragility of military expansion (TCI).
- With a partner, write and dramatize a fictional meeting between a sixthgrader of today and a tenyear old from ancient India, emphasizing what would amaze and/or dismay the other person.
- Read TCI and other materials to compare daily life of different social classes in Rome.

- Debate Confucian beliefs about a child's obligations to parents. Debrief all the different opinions in the class.
- Act out a play on the trial of Socrates and reach a verdict.
- Make a wall chart comparing the values and beliefs of Hindus and Greeks in ancient times.
- Read two myths from two different cultures to compare similarities and differences.

### **Interpretation**

- Write a short piece of historical fiction based on a particular character, from a distinct social class; include details about food, clothing, housing, daily routine, and social relationships.
- Read *Boy of the Painted Cave* and chart which information is known about early humankind and which information is speculation by the author.
- Write a report on a day in the life of a child in ancient China.
- Read two different accounts of how human life developed and spread to compare different interpretations.

### **Determining Historical / Geographical Significance**

- Analyze political cartoons about social problems (TCI) and write a speculative essay entitled, "Is Our Society About to Fall?"
- Write a eulogy to the Roman Empire emphasizing its achievements and legacy in the arts, architecture, religion and law; or to indict it for its legacy in connection to our social problems.
- Compare social stratification in China based on a Confucian system with social stratification in the United States today.
- Draw a mural of the six major achievements of ancient civilization along with a written justification for the choice of those particular achievements.
- Write an essay exploring the importance of rivers in the development of civilization.

**MODEL UNIT FOR SIXTH GRADE — EAST MEETS WEST: ANCIENT ROME AND THE FALL OF ROME**  
**Sample Question: Our Roman Legacy: Endowment or Baggage?**

Historical Thinking Standard	Assignments/Activities
<p><b>Chronological/Spatial Thinking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Location</li> <li>✓ Sequencing</li> </ul>	<p>To show evidence of standards, students might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Draw three political maps reflecting three distinct eras in Roman history.</li> <li>■ Participate in a chronological quiz game based on events in Roman history.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Examining Evidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Examining primary sources (such as photos, artifacts, and documents)</li> <li>✓ Relationship between primary sources and historical/geographical context</li> <li>✓ Author's intentions/perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Examine TCI (Teacher's Curriculum Institute) placards on Roman culture and fill in the graphic organizer that compares Roman life with life in the United States today.</li> <li>■ Read excerpts of the U.S. Constitution and in conjunction with a lecture, identify political constructs and concepts that might be connected to Roman ideas of government; create a wall chart (to be used for eulogy activity below) on these connections.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Diversity/Multiple Perspectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Influences (such as location, race, gender, class, age, sexual orientation)</li> <li>✓ Empathy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Act out scenes in front of appropriate slides (TCI).</li> <li>■ Participate in a simulation activity about the fall of Rome and the fragility of military expansion.</li> <li>■ With a partner, write and dramatize a fictional meeting between a sixth-grader of today and a ten-year-old from ancient Rome, emphasizing what would amaze and/or dismay the other person.</li> <li>■ Read TCI and other materials to compare daily life of different social classes in Rome.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Interpretation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Constructing historical accounts</li> <li>✓ Comparing historical accounts</li> <li>✓ Moral judgment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Write a short piece of historical fiction based on a particular character from a distinct social class; include details about food, clothing, housing, daily routine, and social relationships.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Determining Historical/Geographical Significance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Connecting past and present</li> <li>✓ Causation</li> <li>✓ Evaluation</li> <li>✓ Location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Analyze political cartoons about social problems (TCI), and write a speculative essay entitled, "Is Our Society About to Fall?"</li> <li>■ After reading, discussing, and taking notes on relevant text, work in pairs to select the five most important people and events in the development and fall of the Roman Empire.</li> <li>■ Write a eulogy to the Roman Empire, emphasizing its achievements and legacy in arts, architecture, religion and law; or indict for its legacy in connection to our social problems.</li> </ul>

*California History-Social Science Framework*

**GRADE SIX-WORLD HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY: ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS**

In the sixth-grade curriculum, students learn about those people and events that ushered in the dawn of major Western and non-Western civilizations. Included are the early societies of the Near East and Africa, the ancient Hebrew civilization, Greece, Rome, and the classical civilizations of India and of China.

In studying the ancient world, students should come to appreciate the special significance of geographic place in the development of the human story. They should acquire a sense of the everyday life of the people; their problems and accomplishments; their relationships to the developing social, economic, and political structures of their society; the tools and technology they developed; the art they created; the architecture they lived with; the literature produced by their finest poets, narrators, and writers; their explanations for natural phenomena; and the ideas they developed that helped transform their world. In studying each ancient society, students should examine the role of women and the presence or absence of slavery. Among the major figures whom students should come to know are those who helped to establish these early societies and their codes of ethics, justice, and their rule of law, such as Hammurabi, Abraham, Moses, David, Pericles, and Asoka; those who extended these early empires and carried their influence into much of the ancient world, including Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Augustus Caesar; and those whose ideas and teachings became enduring influences in Western and non-Western thought, especially Socrates, Jesus, Buddha, and Confucius. For all these societies, emphasis should be placed on those major contributions, achievements, and belief systems that have endured across the centuries to the present day.

**Early Humankind and the Development of Human Societies**

This unit should develop the students' awareness of prehistoric people's chronological place on the historical time line. Attention should be given to paleontological discoveries in East Africa by Donald Johanson, Thomas Gray, and Mary Leakey, supporting the belief that ancestors of present-day humans lived in these regions between 2.5 and 3 million years ago. Studies of the Old Stone Age (Paleolithic), Middle Stone Age (Mesolithic), and New Stone Age (Neolithic) should provide students with an understanding of the interaction between the environment and the developing life-styles of prehistoric peoples as they moved from hunter-gatherers to food producers. These studies also should focus on early peoples' attempts to explain the universe through cave art and elemental forms of religion; the development of stone tools from simple to complex to metal; and the development of language as a medium for transmitting and accumulating knowledge.

## **The Beginnings of Civilization in the Near East and Africa: Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Kush**

In this unit students learn about the peoples of Mesopotamia, with an emphasis on the Sumerians, their early settlements in the fertile crescent between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and the major events marking their sojourn: the spread of their agricultural villages by 4000 B.C. to lower Mesopotamia; their technological and social accomplishments, including invention of the wheel, plow, and irrigation systems; their systems of cuneiform writing, of measurement, and of law; and the developing social, economic, and political systems that these accomplishments made possible.

Moving next to ancient Egypt, the teacher introduces students briefly to the early reign of Khufu and then moves to an emphasis on the New Kingdom in the reign of Queen Hatshepsut. The New Kingdom was a time when Egyptian art and architecture flourished, and trade extended Egyptian influence throughout the Middle East. Attention should be given to the daily lives of farmers, tradespeople, architects, artists, scribes, women, and children; and to the great trading expeditions and building activities of that time. Geographic learnings include the importance of the Nile to Egypt's development and of irrigation practices that are still in use.

This unit concludes with Africa's oldest interior empire, the Kingdom of Kush, which conquered Egypt in 751 B.C. and established the twentyfifth dynasty of pharaohs. Conquered in turn by the Assyrians, the kings of Kush reestablished their capital farther south. Students should be introduced to the culture that developed there, including the development of iron agricultural tools and weapons; an alphabet; and a profitable trade that extended to Arabia, India, sub-Saharan Africa, and possibly China.

## **The Foundation of Western Ideas: The Ancient Hebrews and Greeks**

The roots of Western civilization can be found in the enduring contributions of the ancient Hebrews to Western ethical and religious thought and literature, most notably by the Old Testament. To understand these traditions, students should read and discuss Biblical literature that is part of the literary heritage and ethical teachings of Western civilization; for example, stories about the Creation, Noah, the Tower of Babel, Abraham, the Exodus, the Ten Commandments, Ruth and Naomi, David, and Daniel and the Lion's Den; selections from the Psalms and Proverbs; and the Hebrew people's concepts of wisdom, righteousness, law, and justice.

In studying the civilization of the ancient Greeks, students learn of the early democratic forms of government; the dawn of rational thought expressed in Greek philosophy, mathematics, science, and history; and the enduring cultural contributions of Greek art, architecture, drama, and poetry.

In this unit, students will learn about the Greek polis (city-state); the rise of Athens; the transition from tyranny and oligarchy to an early form of democracy; the importance of the great fleet of Athens and its location at the crossroads of the ancient world; the rivalry

between Athens and Sparta, culminating in the Peloponnesian War; the Macedonian conquests under Alexander the Great, spreading Hellenistic culture throughout the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern worlds; and the fall of Greece to Rome. Attention should be paid to the daily life of women and children in Athens and Sparta, the games and sports of the Olympiad, the education of youth, and the trial of Socrates. Particular emphasis should be placed on reading and discussing the rich myths and Homeric literature that have deeply influenced Western art, drama, and literature.

### **West Meets East: The Early Civilizations of India and China**

Alexander the Great's conquest of Persia and its territories provides the bridge to a study of the great Eastern civilization of India. Students should understand that the culture Alexander encountered in 327 to 325 B.C. was not the first civilization of this region. Over a thousand years earlier, a great civilization had developed in the Indus River Valley, reached its zenith, and collapsed. Succeeding waves of Aryan nomads from the north spread their influence across the Punjab and Ganges plains and contributed to the rise of a civilization rich in its aesthetic culture (architecture, sculpture, painting, dance, and music) and in its intellectual traditions (Arabic numbers, the zero, medical tradition, and metallurgy).

Students should be introduced to one of the major religious traditions of India: Buddhism, a great civilizing force that emerged in the sixth century B.C. in the life and moral teachings of "The Buddha" or Siddhartha Gautama. Through the story of Buddha's life, his Hindu background, and his search for enlightenment, students can be introduced to Buddha's central beliefs and moral teachings: unselfishness (returning good for evil); compassion for the suffering of others; tolerance and nonviolence; and the prohibition of lying, stealing, killing, finding fault with others, and gossiping.

Students also should learn about Asoka, the great philosopher king who unified almost all of India, renounced violence as a national policy, and established Buddhism as the state religion.

The northward spread of Buddhism in the first century A.D. provides students with a bridge to a study of China during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to A.D. 220). Students should be helped to understand that the roots of this great civilization go far back into ancient times when Shang society (the "molders" of China) first emerged around 1500 B.C. in the Huang-Ho Valley and established the Chinese language and a highly developed technique of working with bronze. During succeeding centuries China grew by conquering the barbarians on its borders and absorbing the lands of these barbaric people as frontier states within Chinese society. By the sixth century B.C., the balance of power between the princes of these newer states and the old imperial centers of central China had broken down, plunging China into political chaos and war. It was during this time, when traditional values were neglected and government was in disarray, that Confucius lived and wrote. He tried to make sense of a troubled world and proposed ways in which individuals and society could achieve goodness. The good person in Confucius's teaching practiced moderation in conduct and emotion, kept one's promises, learned the traditional

ways, respected one's elders, improved oneself through education, and avoided people who were not good. The highest virtue for a gentleman, Confucius taught, was to govern. Attention should be paid to the role of women in Confucian society.

In 206 B.C. the Han Dynasty reunited China, made Confucian teachings official, and placed governmental administration in the hands of the educated Confucian civil service. Attention should be paid to the lives of ordinary people and the educated classes during this time of stability and prosperity. Confucian filial piety and family ties strengthened the social structure of Han society. Art, literature, and learning flourished. Agriculture, trade, and manufacturing thrived. Map study should help students analyze the growing trade and cultural interchange between China, India, and Rome at this time. The great caravan or "Silk Road" that linked China and the Middle East was in operation by the first century B.C. By the second century A.D., the various legs of the sea journey that linked China, Malaya, South India, and Egypt were completed, connecting the Far East with the Mediterranean world and Rome in one great commercial network.

### **East Meets West: Rome**

The land and sea routes of the China trade provide students with a bridge for a return to the Mediterranean world and the study of imperial Rome. Students should learn about everyday life in Roman society, including slavery, social conflict, and the rule of Roman law. They should learn about the emergence of the Roman Republic and the spread of the Roman Empire; and about Julius Caesar, his conquests, and his assassination in 44 B.C. They also should learn of the reign of Augustus, the "Pax Romana," and the eventual division of the Roman Empire: Rome in the West and the rising Byzantine Empire in the East.

Students should learn about the rise and spread of Christianity throughout the Mediterranean world and of its origins in the life and teachings of Jesus; Roman efforts to suppress Christianity; the consequences of Constantine's acceptance of Christianity (A.D. 313) and its subsequent establishment by Theodosius I as the official religion of the empire. Through selections from Biblical literature, such as the Sermon on the Mount and the parables of the Good Samaritan, the lost sheep, and the Prodigal Son, the students will learn about those teachings of Jesus that advocate compassion, justice, and love for others. To understand why the Romans thought Christianity posed a threat, students can read Paul's letter to Philemon, a letter whose moral teachings on slavery challenged by persuasion the social order and institutions of Rome.

Finally, students should compare Roman contributions in art, architecture engineering, political thought, religion, and philosophy with those of the earlier Greeks and consider the influence of both cultures on Western civilization and on our lives today.

Throughout these grade six studies, students should be engaged in higher levels of critical thinking. They should consider, for example, why these societies developed where they did (the critical geographic relationship between site, resources, and settlement exemplified in the river valley settlements of Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China);

why societies rose to dominance at particular times in the ancient world (the importance of "relative location" in the case of ancient Greece, for example); and why great civilizations fell, including the collapse of the Indus civilization of India, the decline of Egypt in the years of the later empire, and the fall of Greece to Rome.

Students should examine factors of continuity and change across time in the development of these civilizations, observing how major beliefs, social organization, and technological developments of an earlier era were carried through the centuries and have contributed to our own life.

Students should engage in comparative analyses across time and across cultures. They should compare, for example, the factors contributing to the evolution of ancient societies across the whole of the ancient world; the evolution of language and its written forms in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China; and the origins of major religions and ethical belief systems that unified cultures and defined the good and right way to live. To support their analyses, students should develop mathematically accurate time lines that place events in chronological order and support comparative analyses of events simultaneously occurring in different cultural areas of the world.

Students should be engaged in mapping activities that support their analyses of where these societies first developed, the course of their spatial development over time, and their spatial interactions illustrated in the geographic movement of ideas, religious beliefs, economic trade, and military expansion throughout the ancient world.

To make these studies relevant for today, students should develop appreciation of the continuity of human experience, the great debt we owe to those who came before us and established the foundations on which modern civilizations rest, and the responsibilities we owe to those who will come after us.

### **The Fall of Rome**

This unit completes the study of the rise and fall of Roman civilization. Students should develop a map of the Roman Empire at its height, review briefly the reign of Augustus, and consider the reasons for Rome's fall to invading Germanic tribes with attention to the role of Clovis, a Christian Frank.

To help students relate this remote historical period to the present, teachers should emphasize the lasting contributions of Roman civilization, especially in the areas of law, language, technology, and the transmission of the Christian religion to the West. By learning that the law codes of most Latin countries are still based on Roman law, students will appreciate the continuing importance of Roman law and justice.

Critical thinking skills can be developed by students as they compare citizen's civic duties as taught by Roman Stoic philosophers with citizen's civic responsibilities in America today. Such skills also can be developed by comparing modern-day public works, architecture, and technology with those of the Roman Empire.