

SOCIAL STUDIES 8

Exploring the Foundations of Civilization
7th century - 1750

Ms. Villella | Room B216 | 2025-2026

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In Social Studies 8, we explore the fascinating history of the world between the 7th and 18th centuries, a time of powerful empires, transformative ideas, and encounters between cultures. From the rise and fall of Rome to the spread of world religions, from the Crusades to the Enlightenment, this course examines how people's beliefs, institutions, and choices shaped the world we live in today.

Throughout the year, we will return to three big themes: **Exchange, Authority, and Transformation**. These themes will help us connect different places and times, showing how trade, ideas, power, and innovation shaped societies across the globe.

Rather than simply memorizing names and dates, this course emphasizes **inquiry and interpretation**. You will learn to think like a historian by practicing the **Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts**: significance, evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, perspective, and ethical judgment. These tools will allow you to ask meaningful questions, analyze sources, and understand history as a complex story with many voices.

By the end of the year, you will not only know key events and developments of the medieval and early modern world but also be able to connect them to today's issues and reflect on how worldviews, past and present, shape our lives.



THEMES

Throughout this course, we will explore history through three recurring themes:

EXCHANGE	How the movement of people, goods, and ideas connected societies and spread new cultures, technologies, and beliefs.
AUTHORITY	How power was structured, challenged, and justified in different times and places, from emperors and kings to religious leaders and revolutionary thinkers.
TRANSFORMATION	How societies changed over time through conflict, innovation, and cultural encounters, and how these shifts shaped the modern world.



By revisiting these themes in every unit, we will see how seemingly separate events are connected and how history is part of a larger story of human interaction and change.

ASSESSMENT & ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN

Your learning in Social Studies 8 will be assessed using the **BC Proficiency Scale** (Emerging, Developing, Proficient, Extending). All assignments are designed to help you build and demonstrate your understanding of the **Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts**.

We use two types of assessment:

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT (Practice)	Low-stakes tasks that let you practice skills, receive feedback, and prepare for larger projects. These do not weigh as heavily but are essential for learning.
SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT (Final Demonstration)	Larger tasks that show what you have learned and how you can apply historical thinking. These weigh more heavily in your overall grade

Assignments are divided into two categories:

MINOR 40%	Smaller tasks that support skill-building and ongoing practice. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Source analysis and evidence charts• Timelines, maps, and graphic organizers• Reflections, journals, and short written responses• Quizzes and reading checks• Classwork and group discussions
MAJOR 60%	Bigger projects that combine your learning and demonstrate deeper understanding. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inquiry projects (comparisons, debates, or research presentations)• Creative simulations (mock trials, role-plays, debates)• Scrapbooks or portfolios• Extended written assignments or essays

Note: You must provide enough evidence in both categories to demonstrate their learning. Missing work may result in **Insufficient Evidence (IE)** until completed.

UNITS OVERVIEW

<p>UNIT 1: Historical Thinking</p>	<p>Before diving into historical content, you will learn the Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts: significance, evidence and interpretation, continuity and change, cause and consequence, perspective, and ethical judgment. This unit introduces these tools through activities and examples, helping you understand how historians analyze the past. You will also reflect on your own worldviews and practice applying these concepts to historical questions you will encounter throughout the course.</p>
<p>UNIT 2: Rome & its legacy</p>	<p>The Roman Empire shaped much of the world that followed, influencing law, politics, art, architecture, and religion. In this unit, you will explore the Empire’s rise, expansion, and eventual fall, while considering the forces that build empires and the reasons they collapse. You will also investigate Rome’s lasting legacy – how its ideas in government, religion, and culture continued to shape medieval Europe and still echo in modern society today.</p> <p>BIG Q’s:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Why did Rome rise and fall? → What aspects of Rome’s legacy continue to shape society today?
<p>UNIT 3: Early Medieval Europe: Franks, Vikings, & Christendom</p>	<p>After the fall of Rome, Europe entered a period of transformation. The Franks built powerful kingdoms, Christianity spread across the continent, and the Vikings both disrupted and connected societies through raids, trade, and exploration. In this unit, you will examine how migration, conflict, and belief systems reshaped Europe, laying the foundations for the feudal order that followed.</p> <p>BIG Q’s:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How did Europe change after Rome? → How did the Vikings contribute to both conflict and connection? → What role did Christianity play in shaping society?
<p>UNIT 4: Feudalism in Europe & Japan</p>	<p>Across the world, very different societies developed remarkably similar systems of hierarchy and loyalty. In this unit, you will investigate the structure of feudal societies in both Europe and Japan, exploring how power, land, and duty shaped daily life. By comparing knights and samurai, lords and shoguns, and the lives of peasants under each system, you will reflect on themes of power, order, loyalty, and justice – asking whether feudalism created stability, fairness, or simply reinforced inequality.</p> <p>BIG Q’s:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → What was life like under feudalism? → How were European and Japanese feudal systems similar and different? → Was feudalism fair or effective?

<p>UNIT 5: Major World Religions</p>	<p>Religion shaped civilizations, identities, and conflicts across the medieval world. In this unit, you will explore the origins, core beliefs, and cultural impact of five major religions: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. By examining how these faiths influenced art, laws, values, and daily life, you will see how religion shaped worldviews and connected societies across regions.</p> <p>BIG Q's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How do religions shape worldview? → What similarities and differences exist among the world's major faiths?
<p>UNIT 6: The Crusades</p>	<p>The Crusades brought Christians, Muslims, and Jews into both violent conflict and unexpected cultural exchange. In this unit, you will investigate the religious and political motivations behind the Crusades, examine events from multiple perspectives, and consider their lasting consequences. From trade and knowledge exchange to enduring tensions between Europe and the Middle East, students will uncover how the Crusades shaped both conflict and connection across civilizations.</p> <p>BIG Q's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Why were the Crusades fought? → How did people on different sides view the Crusades? → What long-term impacts did they have?
<p>UNIT 7: The Renaissance & Reformation</p>	<p>Between the 14th and 16th centuries, Europe underwent dramatic change. The Renaissance revived interest in art, science, and human potential, sparking creativity and innovation across society. At the same time, the Protestant Reformation challenged the authority of the Catholic Church and reshaped Christianity, politics, and culture. In this unit, you will explore how new ideas and influential individuals transformed Europe and shifted how people understood themselves and their world.</p> <p>BIG Q's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How did Renaissance ideas transform art, science, and human thought? → How did the Reformation challenge religious authority?
<p>UNIT 8: The Enlightenment & Age of Reason</p>	<p>The Enlightenment introduced bold new ways of thinking about government, science, and human rights. Philosophers and scientists challenged traditional authority and promoted revolutionary ideas about freedom, equality, and progress. In this unit, you will explore how these ideas reshaped old worldviews, inspired revolutions, and laid the foundations for modern democracy and social change.</p> <p>BIG Q's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How did Enlightenment thinkers challenge authority? → What ideas shaped democracy and modern society?

