

Brookline Social Studies Learning Standards for Grade 7

I. Overview: Ancient Mediterranean Civilizations

Students in 7th grade will begin by exploring prehistoric human life and culture. They will then investigate early civilizations to examine the origins of systems and institutions that have shaped world history. Included in this study is the exploration of systems of belief, governments, economy, art, and philosophies of the civilizations in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Students will study ancient Israel, focusing on the development of monotheism. Appraisal of the history of the ancient Greeks will enable students to deepen their understanding of democratic citizenship and logical, empirical reasoning. Finally, by surveying Roman history, students will both review efforts to disseminate the rule of law, as well as draw conclusions about the resilience of republican institutions.

II. Overarching Big Ideas

Physical geography has a significant effect on the rise and fall of civilizations.

A civilization is a culture with a class system, an agricultural surplus, economic specialization, hierarchical political and religious institutions, writing, and monumental architecture.

Through trade, spread of religious beliefs and values, and transference of technology, civilizations in one area influence civilizations in other areas.

Religious and philosophical belief systems affect human behavior and social/political organization.

Social and political systems change over time because of environmental, military, and ideological influences.

Art forms reflect the values and belief systems of a people.

Early Mediterranean civilizations shaped world history profoundly through such ideas as specialization, alphabetical writing, monotheism, scientific reasoning, democracy, and the rule of law.

III. Overarching Essential Questions

How does the land affect human culture?

What does it mean to be civilized?

What impact do civilizations have on each other?

In what ways do ideas impact history?

Why do civilizations rise and fall?

How do early civilizations impact our world today?

IV. Content Learning Expectations by Topic

Prehistoric Human Life and Cultures

Students will:

- Explore the tools of archeology and consider the impact of new technologies on our understanding of the past.
- Describe the great climatic and environmental changes that shaped the earth and eventually permitted the growth of human life.

- Identify sites in Africa where archaeologists have found evidence of the origins of modern human beings and describe what the archaeologists found.
- Classify the characteristics of the hunter-gatherer societies of the Paleolithic Age (their use of tools and fire, basic hunting weapons, beads and other jewelry).
- Evaluate the importance of the invention of metallurgy and agriculture (the growing of crops and the domestication of animals).
- Interpret how the invention of agriculture related to settlement, population growth, and the emergence of civilization.

Mesopotamia: Roots of Civilization

Students will:

- On a historical map, locate the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and identify Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria as successive civilizations and empires in this region, and explain why the region is sometimes called “the Fertile Crescent.” On a modern map of western Asia, identify the modern countries in the region (Iraq, Iran, and Turkey).
- Identify the characteristics of civilizations, such as;
 - a) The presence of geographic boundaries and political institutions;
 - b) economy that produces food surpluses;
 - c) concentration of population in distinct areas or cities;
 - d) existence of social classes;
 - e) hierarchical political institutions; and
 - f) formal systems of religion, learning, art, and architecture.
- Identify polytheism (the belief that there are many gods) as the religious belief of the people in Mesopotamian civilizations.
- Describe how irrigation, metallurgy, slavery, the domestication of animals, and inventions such as the wheel, the sail, and the plow contributed to the growth of Mesopotamian civilizations.
- Describe the important achievements of Mesopotamian civilization.
 - a) Its system of writing (and its importance in record keeping and tax collection);
 - b) Monumental architecture (the ziggurat);
 - c) Art (large relief sculpture, mosaics, and cylinder seals).
- Describe who Hammurabi was and explain the basic principle of justice in Hammurabi’s Code.

Egypt, the Centralized State

Students will:

- On a historical map of the Mediterranean region, locate the Mediterranean and Red Seas, the Nile River and Delta, as well as the cataracts of the Nile, and the areas of ancient Nubia and Egypt. Identify the locations of ancient Upper and Lower Egypt and explain what the terms mean. On a modern map, identify the modern countries of Egypt and Sudan.
- Describe the kinds of evidence that have been used by archaeologists and historians to draw conclusions about the social and economic characteristics of Ancient Nubia (the Kingdom of Kush) and their relationship to the social and economic characteristics of Ancient Egypt.

- Describe the role of the pharaoh as god/king, the concept of dynasties, the importance of at least one Egyptian ruler, the relationship of pharaohs to peasants, and the role of slaves in ancient Egypt.
- Describe the polytheistic religion of ancient Egypt with respect to beliefs about death, the afterlife, mummification, and the roles of different deities.
- Summarize important achievements of Egyptian civilization, such as;
 - a) The agricultural system;
 - b) The invention of a calendar;
 - c) Monumental architecture and art such as the Pyramids and Sphinx at Giza;
 - d) Hieroglyphic writing;
 - e) The invention of papyrus.

Ancient Israel and Monotheism

Students will:

- On a historical map of the Mediterranean, locate Asia Minor, Greece and Mesopotamia, the kingdoms of the Hittites and ancient Israel, and Egypt. On a modern map, locate Egypt, Greece, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, the area governed by the Palestinian Authority, Syria, and Turkey.
- Identify the ancient Israelites, or Hebrews, and trace their migrations from Mesopotamia to the land called Canaan, and explain the role of Abraham and Moses in their history.
- Describe the monotheistic religion of the Israelites
 - a) The belief that there is one God;
 - b) The Ten Commandments;
 - c) The emphasis on individual worth and personal responsibility;
 - d) The belief that all people must adhere to the same moral obligations, whether ruler or ruled;
 - e) The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) as part of the history of early Israel.
- Describe the unification of the tribes of Israel under Kings Saul, David, and Solomon, including David's founding of Jerusalem as his capital city in 1000 BC/BCE and the building of the first temple by Solomon.
- Explain the expulsion/dispersion of the Jews to other lands (referred to as the Diaspora) after the destruction of the second temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD/CE, and the renaming of the country by the Romans.
- Describe the origins of Christianity and its central features;
 - a) Monotheism;
 - b) The belief in Jesus as the Messiah;
 - c) The concept of salvation;
 - d) Belief in the Old and New Testament;
 - e) The lives and teachings of Jesus and Paul.

Greece: Citizenship and the City

Students will:

- On a map of the ancient Mediterranean world, locate Greece, Asia Minor, Crete, Phoenicia, the Aegean, and the Red Sea. On a modern map, locate Greece, Crete, Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria

- Identify the Phoenicians as the successors to the Minoans in dominating maritime trade in the Mediterranean from c. 1000-300 BC/BCE. Describe how the Phoenician writing system was the first alphabet (with 22 symbols for consonants) and the precursor of the first complete alphabet developed by the ancient Greeks (with symbols representing both consonants and vowels).
- On a historical map of the Mediterranean area, locate Greece and trace the extent of its influence to 300 BC/BCE. On a modern map of the Mediterranean area, Europe, England, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent, locate England, France, Greece, Italy, Spain, and other countries in the Balkan Peninsula, Crete, Egypt, India, the Middle East, Pakistan, and Turkey.
- Trace the development of early Grecian culture from the Minoans and Myceneans with a focus on the Trojan War and the “dark ages: of the early 1st millennium.
- Explain how the geographical location of ancient Athens and other city-states contributed to their role in maritime trade, their colonies in the Mediterranean, and the expansion of their cultural influence.
- Describe the pantheon of gods and goddesses and explore specific Greek myths.
- Explain why the government of ancient Athens is considered the beginning of democracy and explain the democratic political concepts developed in ancient Greece, for example;
 - a) The “polis” or city-state
 - b) Civic participation and voting rights
 - c) Legislative bodies
 - d) Constitution writing
 - e) Rule of law
- Compare and contrast life in Athens and Sparta. Describe the status of women and the functions of slaves in ancient Athens.
- Analyze the causes, course, and consequences of the Persian Wars, including the origins of marathons.
- Analyze the causes, course, and consequences of the Peloponnesian Wars between Athens and Sparta.
- Describe the rise of Alexander the Great and the spread of Greek culture.
- Describe the myths and stories of classical Greece; give examples of Greek gods and goddesses, heroes, and events, and where and how we see their names used today.
- Explain why the city-states of Greece instituted a tradition of athletic competitions and describe the kinds of sports they featured.
- Describe the accomplishments of the ancient Greeks in the areas of science, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, art, and architecture, for example;
 - a) Thales (science)
 - b) Pythagoras and Euclid (mathematics)
 - c) Hippocrates (medicine)
 - d) Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (philosophy)
 - e) Herodotus, Thucydides, Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, and Euripides (history, poetry, and drama)
 - f) The Parthenon, the Acropolis, and the Temple of Apollo (architecture)
 - g) The development of the first complete alphabet with symbols for consonants and vowels
 - h) Visual arts

Rome, Republic to Empire

Students will:

- On a historical map, identify ancient Rome and trace the extent of the Roman Empire to 500 AD/CE.
- Explain how the geographical location of ancient Rome contributed to the shaping of Roman society and the expansion of its political power in the Mediterranean region and beyond.
- Explain the rise of the Roman Republic and the role of mythical and historical figures in Roman history, such as:
 - a) Romulus and Remus;
 - b) The founding of the Roman Republic;
 - c) Roman religion, society, and values;
 - d) Hannibal and the Carthaginian Wars;
 - e) The Gracchii and destabilization of the Old Order;
 - f) Julius Caesar and Augustus.
- Describe the government of the Roman Republic and its contribution to the development of democratic principles, including separation of powers, rule of law, representative government, and the notion of civic duty.
- Describe the influence of Julius Caesar and Augustus in Rome's transition from a republic to an empire and explain the reasons for the growth and long life of the Roman Empire, like;
 - a) Military organization, tactics, and conquests; and decentralized administration;
 - b) The purpose and functions of taxes;
 - c) The promotion of economic growth through the use of a standard currency, road construction, and the protection of trade routes;
 - d) The benefits of a Pax Romana.
- Describe the characteristics of slavery under the Romans.
- Explain how inner forces (including the rise of autonomous military powers, political corruption, and economic and political instability) and external forces (shrinking trade, attacks, and invasions) led to the disintegration of the Roman Empire.
- Describe the contribution of Roman civilization to law, literature, poetry, architecture, engineering, and technology (e.g., roads, bridges, arenas, baths, aqueducts, central heating, plumbing, and sanitation).
- Explain the spread and influence of the Roman alphabet and the Latin language, the use of Latin as the language of education for more than 1,000 years, and the role of Latin and Greek in scientific and academic vocabulary.

Optional; Ancient India or Ancient China:

Ancient India

Students will:

- Analyze how geography was so important in the development of Indian culture and in the trade between the Indus Valley and Mesopotamia.
- Summarize the Aryan contributions to the developing Indian traditions.
- Explain the origins of the caste system.

- Distinguish the characteristic features of Hinduism.
- Tell the story summarizing the life of the Buddha and explain the basic beliefs of Buddhism.

Ancient China

Students will:

- On a map of Asia, locate China, the Huang He (Yellow) River and Chang Jiang (Yangtze) Rivers, and the Himalayan Mountains.
- Understand that China is the oldest continuing civilization.
- Recognize that the isolation caused by China's natural boundaries of deserts, mountains and rivers led to a unique civilization.
- Understand that the Chinese were first to invent many of the things seen as signs of an advanced society.
- Compare the three most important philosophical/belief systems which influenced the Chinese: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism.
- Recognize that throughout its history, other cultures, such as Japan were profoundly influenced by Chinese culture.
- Describe the ideographic writing system used by the Chinese (characters, which are symbols for concepts/ideas) and how it differs from an alphabetic writing system.
- Describe important technologies of China such as bronze casting, silk manufacture, and gunpowder.
- Identify who Confucius was and describe his writings on good government, codes of proper conduct, and relationships between parent and child, friend and friend, husband and wife, and subject and ruler.
- Describe how the First Emperor unified China by subduing warring factions, seizing land, centralizing government, imposing strict rules, and creating with the use of slave labor large state building projects for irrigation, transportation, and defense (e.g., the Great Wall).

V. Skill Learning Expectations by Domain

A. Study Skills by Category

Investigation Skills

Students will:

- Examine primary source documents and artifacts for information about the culture of ancient peoples
- Use instructional technologies to develop research skills, including developing main ideas/thesis statements, research questions, note taking, summarizing, and organizing research information

Organization Skills

Students will:

- Fashion a timeline showing important people and events.
- Draw a map showing important information.

Comprehension Skills

Students will:

- Make inferences from primary source text.
- Employ reading strategies, such as pre-reading, summarizing, questioning text, and making text-self, text-text, and text-world connections

Presentation Skills

Students will:

- Develop capacities for oral and visual presentation, communicating important ideas to and audience, effective methods for public speaking, and focus on teaching through presentation.
- Write an essay with an introduction with a thesis statement, a body with evidence, and a conclusion.

B. Thinking Skills by Category

Historical Thinking Skills

Students will:

- Play the role of historical actors, imagining the world from their point of view.
- Make moral judgments concerning the lessons that ancient civilizations offer.

Analytical Thinking Skills

Students will:

- Identify characteristics of ancient civilizations.
- Classify artifacts from the culture of ancient peoples

Organizational Thinking Skills

Students will:

- Develop hypotheses about the relationship between physical and cultural factors.
- Form generalizations based on data from related situations and events.

Critical Thinking Skills

Students will:

- Predict likely events in the future, based on historical patterns.
- Determine cause and effect in investigating the rise and fall of ancient civilizations