

Unit 1: U.S. Government - Past & Present
8th Grade Social Studies

16 Class Meetings

** Honors **

Revised May 2023

Essential Questions

- Why study the past?
- What are individual rights?
- How is our government organized and what roles do citizens play in representational government?
- How have the citizens of Connecticut affected the history of America?

Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals

EU 1: History gives us the tools to analyze and explain problems in the past.

- Distinguish between the how and why questions – that is, interpret key historical events to better understand how they unfolded and why they occurred.
- Evaluate historical perspectives to better understand and solve current problems.
- Examine uniquely American patterns that might otherwise be invisible in our modern society with a focus on the Native American experience.

EU 2: Individual rights are the rights needed by everyone to pursue their lives and goals without interference from other individuals or an unjust government.

- Describe how the idea of rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as stated in the United States Declaration of Independence were new and revolutionary.
- Connect how changing attitudes about human rights in the enlightenment were a foundation of our democratic ideals in the creation of the U.S. Constitution.

EU 3: The philosophy of the Founding Fathers was to create a republic rather than a direct democracy.

- Summarize how the Federal Government is composed of three distinct and equal branches: legislative, executive, and judicial, whose powers are vested by the U.S. Constitution in the Congress, the President, and the Federal courts, respectively.
- Critique the idea that an American Republic was created to avoid the common man from being directly involved in creating laws and passing decisions.

EU 4: Local Connecticut history is more complex, significant, and culturally relevant than most students are aware of.

- ISAAC honors students will participate in CT History Day and will compete with other 8th graders in Connecticut on a research project, presentation and regional competition that highlights the annual theme.

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Standard

CT Social Studies Frameworks Standards:

- INQ 6–8.15 Draw on multiple disciplinary lenses to analyze how a specific problem can manifest itself at local, regional, and global levels over time, identifying its characteristics and causes, and the challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address the problem.
- INQ 6.8.11 Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequences, examples, and details with relevant information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanations.
- HIST 8.1 Analyze connections among events and developments in historical contexts.
- HIST 8.2 Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity.
- HIST 8.3 Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.
- HIST 8.4 Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed over time
- HIST 8.9 Explain multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past.

Common Core State Standards:

- RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- RH.6-8.3 Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).
- RH.6-8.5 Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).
- RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).
- W.8.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- W.8.5: With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
- WHST.6-8.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Common Core State Standards:

National History Day (NHD) is a year-long curriculum program for students in grades 6-12. Its methodology includes extensive primary and secondary research into a topic of choice related to an annual theme. Teachers guide students through a project-based learning experience, which pulls together Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, especially the appendix outlined as Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, in a meaningful and coherent fashion. National History Day is unique in the sense that it requires both informative and argumentative writing of students who conduct research based on their own questions and interests as they relate to the NHD theme. Annually, students may enter their research project into a national competition that begins at the regional or state level. Please follow the below link for associated standards and description.

<https://www.nhd.org/sites/default/files/NHD-and-Common-Core-Final.pdf>

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ISAAC Vision of the Graduate Competencies

Competency 1: Write effectively for a variety of purposes.

Competency 2: Speak to diverse audiences in an accountable manner.

Competency 3: Develop the behaviors needed to interact and contribute with others on a team.

Competency 4: Analyze and solve problems independently and collaboratively.

Competency 5: Be responsible, creative, and empathetic members of the community.

Unit Content Overview

1. Introduction to historiography and worth of the individual.

- Explore why history is a social science with rules and processes to correctly evaluate key events in the past.
- Evaluate the notion that “history is written by the victors” and how this may skew the reporting of key historical events, especially for Native Americans.
- Examine early American life, to include the pre-history of our country, and look to understand why social / political change in the colonies was inevitable.

2. How the idea of individual freedom rights guided the Founding of the United States.

- Describe how the idea of rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as stated in the United States Declaration of Independence were new and revolutionary.
- Connect how changing attitudes about human rights in the enlightenment were a foundation of our democratic ideals in the creation of the U.S. Constitution.

3. The United States is a representational republic, rather than a direct democracy.

- Summarize how the three branches of the federal government are designed to work, encourage compromise, and limit power.
- Critique our system of government, specifically – who were not considered eligible to participate in it.

4. *Frontiers in History:* People, places, and ideas can all be frontiers. This year’s theme considers questions of time and place, cause and effect, change over time, and impact and significance.

- Students select topics in history where a frontier has been crossed. Once a frontier is crossed, history changes. In addition to geography, frontiers encompass topics in the history of science, art, technology, medicine, religion, politics, social change, or the military.
- They will be given one full class period every other week to work on this year-long project.

Vocabulary and Key Terms: Theory, Enlightenment, Human Rights, Bicameral, Legislation, Compromise, Federalism, Tyranny, Ratify, Legislative, Executive, Judicial, Bill of Rights, Veto, Constitution.

Interdisciplinary Connection:

1. Language Arts – reading informational texts

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Daily Learning Objectives with TWPS

Students will be able to ...

- Evaluate how historians use rules and processes to examine what happened in the past and gain a better understanding of human events. *
 - *What do you think we will talk about in social studies class this year? Please list three (3) examples.*
- Explore the term “history is written by the victors” and how this may give a single-story perspective. **
 - *How can the way we view old primary sources, like the Gettysburg Address, change over time?*
- Examine early American life, to include the pre-history of our country, and look to understand why social / political change in the colonies was inevitable. **
 - *Please list some words / phrases / ideas about the topic of European Colonialism? Or start with what is a colony?*
- Describe how the idea of rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as stated in the United States Declaration of Independence were new and revolutionary. **
 - *Which “right” that we have as Americans is most important to you?*
- Connect how changing attitudes about human rights in the enlightenment were a foundation of our democratic ideals in the creation of the U.S. Constitution. **
 - *Please describe, in your own words, what you are seeing in the following image. How does this relate to human rights?*
- Summarize how the Federal Government is composed of three distinct and equal branches: legislative, executive, and judicial, whose powers are vested by the U.S. Constitution in the Congress, the President, and the Federal courts, respectively. **
 - *Please describe, in your own words, what is the purpose of the U.S. Government?*
- Critique the idea that an American Republic was created to avoid the common man from being directly involved in creating laws and passing decisions. **
 - *Who should be in charge in government?*

Instructional Strategies/Differentiated Instruction

- Whole group instruction
- Guided notes
- Paragraph frames and sentence starters
- Student-led instruction
- Teacher modeling
- Written feedback
- Think-pair-share and small-group discussions
- Graphic organizers
- Cornell notes
- Accountable talk
- Homework
- Word walls with visuals
- Anchor charts

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- Small group instruction
- Conferencing
- Text and video chunking with guiding questions
- Close reading with text-dependent questions

Differentiated Instruction for English Learners

- Word walls
- TWPS (Think, write, pair, share)
- Pre-reading strategies
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Explicit modeling
- Key Vocabulary
- Graphic organizers
- Strategic grouping
- Non-verbal Assessments

Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Do Now – CNN10
- Question and response
- Exit Slips
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Completed notes
- Completed graphic organizers
- Revision worksheets
- Homework
- Performance Task
- ISAAC Rubrics
- Edulastic Quiz
- AIMS Web

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Edulastic Unit 1 Test – EU3
- Argumentative Essay: Please create a three (3) paragraph argumentative essay (opinion) answering the following question: The U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, was written in 1789 and has been amended over the years. Is the Constitution still relevant as our guiding law and model for government? Does the U.S. Constitution protect everyone, or protect some while hurting others? – EU 2
- Native American WebQuest w/ Presentation – EU1

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Unit Task

Unit Task Name: Native American WebQuest & Presentation – EU 1

Description: Students will examine and research Native American tribes to better understand their culture and the effects they suffered because of colonialism. These tribes will be from the New England region and represent significant cultural and local influences that is still relevant today. Each presentation is chosen at random from a list of ten (10) tribes and the students complete research based on a list of requirements. A Google slide presentation will be the vehicle used to organize and deliver the information that students find and synthesize.

Evaluation: Accountable Talk Rubric and Scoring Guide

Unit Resources

- Crash course U.S. Government
- Preamble to the Constitution
- Newsela text on the Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances
- I-Civics: Columbus to the Colonies
- Primary Source: Gettysburg Address
- *The Big Fat History Notebook*
- <https://www.nhd.org/>
- <https://www.historydayct.org/>
- NHD Workbook