

Unit 1: Becoming A Social Scientist
7th Grade Social Studies
18 Class Meetings

Revised January 2026

Essential Questions

- What influences our perspectives?
- Is everyone’s perception of the truth the same?
- Is social and technological progress always positive?

Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals

EU 1: Social scientists examine evidence in history, geography, economics, politics, and culture to better understand human society and take steps to improve it.

- Describe the five different subsets of social studies
- Explain the social and individual benefits of learning social studies

EU 2: Social scientists consider the source of evidence and seek out multiple perspectives to corroborate evidence to find the most likely conclusion, though the truth may remain elusive.

- Distinguish between primary and secondary sources
- Explain why and how to corroborate evidence
- Use evidence to support an argument about the earliest humans

EU 3: During the Paleolithic Era, humans were preoccupied with the need to hunt and gather food, resulting in a dramatically different lifestyle that was both superior and inferior to modern living.

- Describe the living conditions of Paleolithic people
- Evaluate the limitations of a nomadic, hunter-gatherer lifestyle
- Compare and contrast the benefits of modern civilized life with the Paleolithic life

Standards

CT Social Studies Frameworks Standards:

- **7.Inq.1.a.** Explain how compelling and supporting questions represent key ideas about geography or other social science disciplines in the study of a world region.
- **7.Inq.1.c.** Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of views represented in the sources.
- **7.Inq.3.a.** Gather relevant evidence from multiple sources using both print and digital resources and databases (e.g., origin, authority, structure, context, credibility).44
- **7.Inq.3.b.** Organize and prioritize relevant evidence from multiple sources to support claims.
- **7.Inq.4.a.** Construct arguments using evidence from multiple sources.
- **7.Inq.4.b.** Construct explanations using summary, sequence, examples, and data.

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- **7.Geo.7.b.** Describe how growth in communication technology has led to the diffusion of ideas and cultural practices (e.g., Hollywood, global news networks, television, telecommunication infrastructure, social media).
- **7.Geo.8.a.** Analyze how human-environment interactions influence movement and settlement (e.g., Floating City Of Ganvie, The Dry Corridor, Tenochtitlán, Silk Road, trans-Saharan caravans).

Common Core State Standards:

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.1A:** Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.1B:** Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.1E:** Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.5:** 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.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9:** Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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 Social Sciences

- Apply the five different ways social scientists study the world around them to their classroom
- Connect social studies to real-world, student-identified issues
- Determine class community values and norms using data analysis

2. Evaluating Evidence

- Distinguish between primary and secondary sources
- Analyze the impact of perspective on evidence
- Practice corroborating evidence

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- Write and revise an argumentative essay
- 3. The Paleolithic Era**
 - Create a timeline of technology available to Paleolithic people
 - Evaluate the social structure and day-to-day lives of Paleolithic people
 - Analyze arguments both supporting and decrying the life of a nomadic hunter-gatherer
 - Create arguments using evidence to participate in a debate of whether humans are better off today than they were during the Paleolithic era

Vocabulary:

- Social Studies, Geography, Culture, Government, Economics, Politics, History, Society, Values, Community, Perspective, Bias, Primary Source, Secondary Source, Corroboration, Argumentative Essay, Revision, Nomad, Hunter-Gatherer, Forage, Progress, Paleolithic

Interdisciplinary Connection:

- Language Arts – reading informational texts and writing persuasive, argumentative responses

Daily Learning Objectives with *TWPS*

Students will be able to...

- Apply the methods of different social scientists to study classmates
 - *Who are you? Write down the three most important facts about you as a person.*
- Analyze social science data to make conclusions about the role of communities in human history and civics
 - *Who are we? Look around the classroom. Write down three things you think you have in common with everyone else in the room. How do you know?*
- Construct an argument about the role of kindness in society using social science research
 - *If someone is mean to you, is it better to be mean back to them or to be kind to them? Why?*
- Practice using the three main aspects of accountable talk to better understand fellow students
 - *Think back to sixth grade. What is accountable talk, and why is it important to use accountable talk in class?*
- Analyze different historical perspectives to determine the impact of perspective on “truth” (Indigenous People’s Day)
 - *What do you think the following quote means? “There are two sides to every story, and then there is the truth.” Do you agree?*
- Evaluate different online sources of evidence for trustworthiness
 - *What websites do you trust, and how do you know you can trust them?*
- Use corroboration to solve a murder mystery and the mystery of early Paleolithic life
 - *[Image of different Paleolithic artifacts] These items are over 20,000 years old. What do they tell us about the people who lived 20,000 years ago?*
- Use close reading skills to evaluate the different types of technology available to humans during the Paleolithic era
 - *You are sent 20,000 years into the past. Are you happy about this? Give 3 reasons to*

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support your answer.

- Evaluate the strength of arguments claiming humans were both better and worse off during the Paleolithic era using corroboration, sourcing, and perspective
 - *What evidence do we have that life was better during the Paleolithic era? What evidence do we have that life was worse?*
- Use CER to create an argument.
 - *Using the best appropriate argument you can think of, convince me to give you an A for today's lesson*
- Evaluate student exemplars of argumentative responses and revise them.
 - *Why do we need to double-check our answers in math? Do we need to do the same in social studies? Why?*
- Analyze gaps in learning to create a study plan
 - *Critique and revise student exemplar of an argumentative response*
- Demonstrate an understanding of Unit 1 concepts on a summative test and essay
- Analyze and apply elements of accountable talk to be successful in a debate game
 - *What is the difference between “debating” and “arguing”?*
- Apply debate skills in a collaborative game
 - *What is some advice you can give your classmates to help them be successful during our accountable talk discussion today?*

Instructional Strategies/Differentiated Instruction

- Whole group instruction
- Guided notes
- Paragraph frames and sentence starters
- Student-led instruction
- Student choice
- Written feedback
- Cornell notes
- Accountable talk
- Homework
- Anchor charts
- Small group instruction
- Conferencing
- Text and video chunking with guiding questions
- Close reading with text-dependent questions

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Differentiated Instruction for English Learners

- Word walls with visuals
- TWPS (think, write, pair, share)
- Pre-reading strategies
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Explicit teacher modeling
- Key vocabulary
- Graphic organizers
- Strategic grouping
- Non-verbal assessments

Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Do Now
- Student discussions and responses
- Exit Slips
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Completed notes
- Completed graphic organizers
- Homework
- Unit Task – Argumentative Essay: “Was life better before civilization?” (EU 1, EU 2, and EU 3)
- Research: Evaluate Information and Sources FIAB

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Quiz #1: What is Social Science? (EU 1)
- Quiz #2: Social Science Skills Test (EU 2)
- Summative Unit 1 Test (EU 1, EU 2, and EU 3)
- Unit Task – Argumentative Essay: “Was life better before civilization?” (EU 1, EU 2, and EU 3)
- Research: Evaluate Information and Sources FIAB
- Listening FIAB

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Unit Task

Unit Task Name: Argumentative Essay: Was life better before civilization?

Description: In this task, students will work in small groups to debate whether life was better for humans before the rise of civilizations (EU 3). Students will use the data they gathered about their classmates (EU 1), along with different sources about the lifestyles of humans before the rise of civilization. Students must evaluate the sources for bias, perspective, and authority (EU 2), and are free to use their own anecdotal evidence to rebut other claims. Students will write an argumentative essay to persuade their audience whether or not life was better before civilization.

Evaluation: Teacher scoring guide

Unit Resources

- Stanford History Educational Group <https://sheg.stanford.edu/>
- UNICEF's <https://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/>
- Affirming important values:
https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/affirming_important_values
- Culture & values:
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/which_values_make_you_happy_it_might_depend_on_where_you_live
- Other humans at home
- Laptops or notebooks to capture notes
- Graphic organizers
- Worksheets
- Readings