

Unit 1: Becoming a Social Scientist

7th Grade Honors Social Studies

15 Class Meetings

Revised January 2026

Essential Questions

- What influences our perspectives?
- Is everyone's truth the same?

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: In some ways, social progress has both improved our lives and made them worse.

- Describe the characteristics of Paleolithic human societies
- Weigh the evidence showing the benefits and drawbacks of modern life compared to pre-civilization life
- Create and defend an argument that life for humans is either better or worse today compared to life during the Paleolithic era

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.
- **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).

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- **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
- Apply the Cornell notes method to keep track of research and evidence
- Practice corroborating evidence
- Write and revise an argumentative essay

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3. The Paleolithic Era

- Analyze the obstacles to human development in the nomadic, hunter-gatherer lifestyle of humans during the Paleolithic era
- Use close-reading skills to compare and contrast Paleolithic era humans to modern-day humans
- Analyze arguments from anthropology experts about the benefits and costs of modern human society

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, Civilization

Interdisciplinary Connection:

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

Daily Learning Objectives with TWPS

Students will be able to...

- Investigate their classmates through the different lenses of social science
 - *Suppose you wanted to study your classmates to understand them better. Write down three questions you think would best help you understand them.*
- Analyze data collected in the previous class to draw conclusions about the class as a community
 - *What surprised you the most during your investigation last class?*
- Evaluate our class culture for similarities and differences in order to distill our collective values
 - *“Values” are those things we think are most important in life. What do you “value”?*
- Analyze different perspectives to determine the impact of perspective on “truth”
 - *What do you see in these different optical illusions?*
- Investigate the lifestyle of Paleolithic humans through a role-playing game
 - *What are some of the ways your life would change if you had to hunt or gather (forage) your food?*
- Apply the “three close reads” method to gather evidence about life during the Paleolithic era
 - *What makes someone a “good reader”?*
- Apply corroboration skills to solve a mystery
 - *Take a look at these different artifacts. What do they tell you about the people who used to own them?*
- Evaluate different expert arguments using sourcing skills**
 - *While researching life during the Paleolithic era, what kind of sources would be the*

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most useful? Why?

- Apply the CER strategy to create responses to document-based questions.
 - *Arrange these sentences to create a CER paragraph. Be ready to defend your answer in an accountable talk discussion.*
- Revise an argument using the “exemplary” level of the literacy rubric and scoring guide
 - *Review your response from last class. What are you proud of? What do you think needs more work?*
- Analyze and apply elements of “exemplary” accountable talk
 - *What is the difference between “debating,” “arguing,” and “accountable talk*
- Apply debate skills in a collaborative game
 - *What does a successful accountable talk discussion look like?*

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

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

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Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Do Now
- Student discussions and responses
- Exit Slips
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Completed notes
- Completed graphic organizers
- Homework

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Quiz (EU 1)
- Writing and revising an argumentative essay about pre-civilization humans identifying the strengths and weaknesses of different sources (EU 2 and EU 3)
 - Teacher scoring guide
- Unit Assessment (EU 1, EU 2, and EU 3)
- Unit Task – Debate: Was life better before civilization? (EU 1, EU 2, and EU 3)
 - Teacher scoring guide

Unit Task

Unit Task Name: Debate: 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. 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 (EU 3). 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 be tasked with recording and reflecting on their classmate’s contributions before crafting their own academic responses. Students will be evaluated on their participation in the debate as well as their notes and graphic organizers created in preparation for the debate.

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:

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https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/which_values_make_you_happy_it_might_depend_on_where_you_live

- Other humans at home
- Chromebooks
- Graphic organizers
- Worksheets
- Newsela articles with higher Lexile Level