

Scope and Sequence

U.S. History: American Stories Beginnings to 1877

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Course Overview

This full-year middle school U.S. History: American Stories Beginnings to 1877 course builds geographic literacy and global awareness. Students study the physical and human characteristics of regions, the cultural patterns that shape societies, and the ways people interact with environments, economies, governments, and one another. The course emphasizes map skills, inquiry, evidence-based writing, data interpretation, and respectful comparison of world cultures.

Yearlong Essential Questions and Themes

Essential Questions	Recurring Themes
How did geography and resources shape the development of the United States?	Location, place, region, movement, and human-environment interaction
How did democratic ideals influence political and social change?	Cultural diffusion, diversity, tradition, innovation, and continuity
How did conflict and cooperation shape the growth of the nation?	Trade, scarcity, interdependence, development, and sustainability
How did different groups contribute to and experience American history?	Civic participation, conflict, cooperation, migration, and globalization

Quarter 1 - Foundations and Colonial America

Unit 1: Early Peoples and Exploration (Weeks 1-3)

Key Topics	- Indigenous cultures before European contact - Geography of North America - European exploration and motivations - Columbian Exchange - Spanish, French, and English exploration - Early interactions between Europeans and Native Americans - Colonial beginnings and settlement patterns
Geographic and Literacy Skills	- Interpret physical, political, thematic, and population maps - Use scale, compass rose, coordinates, and map legends - Explain patterns using geographic vocabulary - Analyze human-environment interaction - Compare places and regions using evidence
Suggested Assessments	- Map skills quiz - Geographic inquiry mini-project - Climate and vegetation analysis - Vocabulary and concept check
Instructional Focus	Use inquiry questions, maps, visuals, short readings, discussion, vocabulary development, and evidence-based writing to connect regional content to larger course themes.

Unit 2: Colonial America (Weeks 4-6)

Key Topics	• Settlement of the thirteen colonies • Regional economies and colonial life • Representative government and self-rule • Religious freedom and diversity • Slavery and triangular trade • French and Indian War • Colonial unity and conflict
Geographic and Literacy Skills	• Analyze regional economic patterns • Compare cultural influences across North America • Evaluate environmental issues connected to resources • Read and interpret population and resource maps • Use evidence to explain migration and settlement
Suggested Assessments	• Regional map assessment • Trade and interdependence activity • Cultural comparison writing task • Environmental issue case study
Instructional Focus	• Use inquiry questions, maps, visuals, short readings, discussion, vocabulary development, and evidence-based writing to connect regional content to larger course themes.

Unit 3: Road to Independence (Weeks 7-9)

Key Topics	• British taxation and colonial protest • Boston Massacre and Boston Tea Party • Intolerable Acts • First and Second Continental Congress • Declaration of Independence • American Revolution • Patriot and Loyalist perspectives
Geographic and Literacy Skills	• Analyze cause-and-effect relationships • Interpret demographic and economic data • Explain sustainability challenges • Compare cultural regions within South America • Develop claims using geographic evidence
Suggested Assessments	• Rainforest debate or position statement • Population data analysis • Country or region presentation • Quarter 1 cumulative map check
Instructional Focus	• Use inquiry questions, maps, visuals, short readings, discussion, vocabulary development, and evidence-based writing to connect regional content to larger course themes.

Quarter 2 - Building a New Nation

Unit 4: Constitution and Government (Weeks 10-14)

Key Topics	• Physical geography of Europe • Peninsulas, rivers, plains, and climate zones • Historical influences on modern Europe
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	• Language, religion, and cultural regions • European Union and economic cooperation • Industry, trade, tourism, and technology • Modern challenges such as migration, energy, and aging populations
Geographic and Literacy Skills	• Compare political and economic systems • Analyze regional cooperation and interdependence • Interpret historical influences on culture • Use maps to explain movement and trade • Evaluate multiple perspectives on current issues
Suggested Assessments	• Europe map assessment • European Union simulation • Comparative government or economy activity • Current issue analysis
Instructional Focus	• Use inquiry questions, maps, visuals, short readings, discussion, vocabulary development, and evidence-based writing to connect regional content to larger course themes.

Unit 5: Expansion and Reform (Weeks 15-18)

Key Topics	• Russia's size, location, and climate regions • Siberia, tundra, taiga, steppe, and resource regions • Historical legacy of the Soviet Union • Ethnic diversity and cultural regions • Natural resources, pipelines, and trade • Economic transition and development • Environmental concerns and geographic isolation
Geographic and Literacy Skills	• Analyze geographic isolation and distance • Evaluate resource distribution and economic impact • Interpret climate and vegetation maps • Connect historical change to present-day geography • Summarize regional patterns using evidence
Suggested Assessments	• Resource mapping activity • Historical-geographic timeline • Short research project • Quarter 2 synthesis writing task
Instructional Focus	• Use inquiry questions, maps, visuals, short readings, discussion, vocabulary development, and evidence-based writing to connect regional content to larger course themes.

Quarter 3 - Sectionalism and Civil War

Unit 6: Growing Sectionalism (Weeks 19-23)

Key Topics	• Major physical regions of Africa • Sahara, Sahel, savanna, rainforest, and highlands • Ancient trade routes and cultural exchange • Colonialism and independence • Cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity • Population growth, cities, and migration
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	- Economic development, natural resources, and infrastructure - Environmental concerns including desertification and water access
Geographic and Literacy Skills	- Interpret development indicators - Analyze migration and population trends - Explain effects of colonial borders and history - Evaluate human-environment challenges - Use maps, charts, and text evidence together
Suggested Assessments	- Country or regional profile project - Desertification case study - Development indicators analysis - Africa map assessment
Instructional Focus	Use inquiry questions, maps, visuals, short readings, discussion, vocabulary development, and evidence-based writing to connect regional content to larger course themes.

Unit 7: Civil War (Weeks 24-27)

Key Topics	- Physical geography of Southwest Asia and North Africa - Deserts, rivers, seas, and strategic waterways - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - Oil, natural gas, and global trade - Water scarcity and resource management - Conflict, cooperation, and geopolitics - Cultural traditions, cities, and daily life
Geographic and Literacy Skills	- Analyze resource distribution and geopolitical importance - Compare religious and cultural influences - Interpret maps of oil, water, and population - Evaluate cooperation and conflict around resources - Connect current events to geographic patterns
Suggested Assessments	- Religion and culture comparison chart - Water resources simulation - Current events analysis - Evidence-based paragraph or DBQ-style response
Instructional Focus	Use inquiry questions, maps, visuals, short readings, discussion, vocabulary development, and evidence-based writing to connect regional content to larger course themes.

Quarter 4 - Reconstruction and Historical Thinking

Unit 8: Reconstruction (Weeks 28-32)

Key Topics	- South Asia: Himalayas, rivers, monsoons, and population - India: culture, economy, and urbanization - China: population, history, government, and economic change - Japan: islands, limited resources, and technology - Koreas and regional connections
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	- Religions and philosophies including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shinto - Global manufacturing, trade, and modernization
Geographic and Literacy Skills	- Analyze population density and growth trends - Compare economic systems and development paths - Evaluate effects of modernization and globalization - Interpret climate, population, and trade data - Make regional comparisons using evidence
Suggested Assessments	- Population data project - Economic systems comparison - Cultural research presentation - Asia map assessment
Instructional Focus	Use inquiry questions, maps, visuals, short readings, discussion, vocabulary development, and evidence-based writing to connect regional content to larger course themes.

Unit 9: Historical Inquiry and Civic Connections (Weeks 33-36)

Key Topics	- Island and archipelago geography - Monsoons, volcanoes, earthquakes, and natural hazards - Trade routes and cultural diffusion - Southeast Asian cultures and economies - Australia and New Zealand - Indigenous peoples and cultural preservation - Tourism, globalization, and environmental protection - Oceans, coral reefs, and sustainability
Geographic and Literacy Skills	- Interpret trade and movement patterns - Analyze effects of globalization and tourism - Evaluate environmental policy choices - Compare island and continental regions - Synthesize course themes in a final project
Suggested Assessments	- Tourism impact study - Environmental policy proposal - Regional map test - Final global issues or country profile project
Instructional Focus	Use inquiry questions, maps, visuals, short readings, discussion, vocabulary development, and evidence-based writing to connect regional content to larger course themes.

Course Skills Progression

Geographic Skills	Literacy and Inquiry Skills	Data and Visual Analysis	Civic and Global Thinking
Map interpretation	Informational text analysis	Graphs and charts	Compare cultural perspectives
Spatial reasoning	Evidence-based writing	Population pyramids and demographic data	Evaluate global issues
Climate and landform analysis	Vocabulary development	Economic and resource maps	Analyze cooperation and conflict
Regional comparison	Research and presentation	Photographs and primary visuals	Human rights and sustainability

Suggested Pacing Guide

Quarter	Units	Primary Regional Focus	Estimated Weeks
Q1	Units 1-3	Foundations, North America, South America	9 weeks
Q2	Units 4-5	Europe, Russia, Central Asia	9 weeks
Q3	Units 6-7	Africa, Southwest Asia, North Africa	9 weeks
Q4	Units 8-9	South Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, Oceania	9 weeks

Suggested Major Projects

- Colonial America Museum Exhibit
- Constitution Debate Simulation
- Civil War Newspaper Project
- Historical Biography Presentation
- Primary Source Portfolio
- Reconstruction Policy Analysis
- Regional Museum Walk or Gallery Presentation

Suggested Cross-Curricular Connections

ELA	Science	Math and Data Literacy
Informational reading, argument writing, research projects, academic vocabulary, discussion protocols	Climate, ecosystems, natural resources, environmental sustainability, hazards, water systems	Population statistics, graph interpretation, economic indicators, scale, distance, percentages, comparisons

Differentiation and Instructional Supports

- Interactive maps, atlases, visuals, and short video clips
- Collaborative group projects with defined roles
- Vocabulary previews, word walls, and Frayer models
- Guided notes and chunked readings
- Choice-based assessments and presentation formats
- Sentence frames for claims, evidence, and reasoning
- Small-group reteaching for map skills and data interpretation
- Extension tasks using current events and independent research

End-of-Course Outcomes

- Explain how geography influences culture, history, economy, and settlement
- Analyze global economic, political, and cultural systems
- Compare world regions using physical and human characteristics
- Interpret maps, charts, photographs, and demographic data
- Evaluate contemporary global issues using geographic reasoning
- Use evidence to write and speak about regional similarities and differences
- Demonstrate respect for cultural diversity and global interdependence