8th Grade Social Studies
Program of Studies Description

This course provides a comprehensive survey of United States history, spanning the pivotal period from the nation's founding principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence to the ultimate crisis of the Civil War and the start of Reconstruction. An Assessment of Civics Knowledge will be administered as a part of this 8th grade Social Studies 1 course. This course incorporates technology into the classroom setting.

May 2026

8th Grade Social Studies
Syllabus

Course Description: This course provides a comprehensive survey of United States history, spanning the pivotal period from the nation's founding principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence to the ultimate crisis of the Civil War and the start of Reconstruction.

REQUIRED TOPICS OF STUDY	SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONAL TIME	STANDARDS/ ELIGIBLE CONTENT	COMMON ASSESSMENT
Confederation to Constitution	3-4 weeks	8.3.8.A, 8.3.8.B, 8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D 5.1.8.A, 5.1.8.B, 5.1.8.C, 5.1.8.D 7.4.8.D, 7.3.8.B	Chapter Tests
Growing Pains in the New Republic	3-4 weeks	8.3.8.A, 8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D 5.1.8.C, 5.2.8.A, 5.3.8.A, 5.3.8.A 6.3.8.A 7.4.8.B	Chapter Tests
The Jefferson Years	3-4 weeks	8.3.8.A, 8.3.8.B, 8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D 5.3.8.A 7.3.8.B, 7.4.8.B	Chapter Tests
Expansion and Growth	3-4 weeks	8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D, 8.3.3.A, 8.3.8.B	Chapter Tests
The Age of Jackson	3-4 weeks	8.3.8.A, 8.3.8.B, 8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D	Chapter Tests
Manifest Destiny	3-4 weeks	8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D, 8.3.8.A, 8.3.8.B 7.4.8	Chapter Tests
The Changing American Identity	3-4 weeks	8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D, 8.3.8.A, 8.3.8.B	Chapter Tests

May, 2026

8th Grade Social Studies
Syllabus

A Broken Nation	3-4 weeks	8.3.8.D, 8.3.8.C	Chapter Tests
Beginnings of the Civil War	3-4 weeks	8.3.8.D, 8.3.8.C	Chapter Tests
Turning Points of the Civil War	3-4 weeks	8.3.8.B, 8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D	Chapter Tests

Resources:

- National Geographic U.S. History American Stories (Beginnings to 1877)
- Lincoln: A Photobiography Novel by Russell Freedman
- Lincoln: A Photobiography Audio by Russell Freedman
- Flag Code

May, 2026

Review	**Chapter #5/6** **Road to the Revolution & Declaration of Independence**
Big Idea	**Driven by a rejection of British taxation without representation and fueled by Enlightenment ideals of natural rights, American colonists transitioned from civil protest to formal revolution by issuing the Declaration of Independence to replace monarchical rule with self-governance.**
Unit Essential Questions:	**How does a society determine when the violation of its natural rights outweighs the benefits of government protection, justifying the transition from legal protest to total revolution?**

Weeks	PA Standards/ Eligible Content	Vocabulary	Instructional Materials	Common Assessments	Link to Profile of a Zephyr
3-4 weeks	8.3.8.A, 8.3.8.B, 8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D 5.1.8.A, 5.1.8.B, 5.1.8.C, 5.1.8.D 7.4.8.D, 7.3.8.B	Boycott, Currency Act, duty, grievance, militia, Proclamation of 1763, Quartering Act, repeal, revenue, Sons of Liberty, Stamp Act, Sugar Act, tyranny, Boston Massacre, Boston Tea Party, Tea Act, committee of correspondence, Townshend Acts, writ of assistance, First	Textbook American Stories: Beginnings to 1877 Primary Source Analysis Readings Research Discussions Debate Presentations Videos	Chapter Tests	Problem-Solver Responsible Leader Empathetic Critical-Thinker Creative Confident Communitative Collaborative Adaptable

		Continental Congress, Intolerable Acts, Loyalists, minutemen, Patriot, artillery, Continental Army, Declaration of Independence, drumlin, Hessian, Second Continental Congress, terrain, unalienable right			

8th Grade Social Studies
Curriculum Map

Unit 1	**Chapter #7** **From Confederation to Constitution**
Big Idea	**The American political experiment was a struggle to transform revolutionary ideals of liberty into a workable government by navigating the inherent tension between a desire for limited self-rule and the need for a strong, unified central authority to ensure long-term stability and success.**
Unit Essential Questions:	**What challenges did the new American republic face, and how did the new Constitution reflect those challenges?**

Weeks	PA Standards/ Eligible Content	Vocabulary	Instructional Materials	Common Assessments	Link to Profile of a Zephyr
3-4 weeks	8.3.8.A, 8.3.8.B, 8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D 5.1.8.A, 5.1.8.B, 5.1.8.C, 5.1.8.D 7.4.8.D, 7.3.8.B	Constitution, constitutionalism, credit, federal, Northwest Ordinance of 1787, ordinance, Ordinance of 1785, ratify, Shay's Rebellion, sovereign, checks and balances, commerce clause, common market, delegate, dual sovereignty,	Textbook American Stories: Beginnings to 1877 Primary Source Analysis Readings Research Discussions Debate Presentations Videos	Chapter Tests Civics Exam	Problem-Solver Responsible Leader Empathetic Critical-Thinker Creative Confident Communitative Collaborative Adaptable

8th Grade Social Studies
Curriculum Map

		electoral college, executive branch, federalism, Framers, fugitive slave clause, judicial branch, legislative branch, separation of powers, slave importation clause, Supreme Court, Three-Fifths Compromise, amendment, antifederalist, Bill of Rights, federalist, statute			

8th Grade Social Studies
Curriculum Map

Unit 2	**Chapter #8** **Growing Pains in the New Republic**
Big Idea	**The success of the American Revolution depended not only on winning the war, but on the delicate, highly controversial task of setting irreversible precedents that established the legitimacy and function of the new federal government, often by balancing competing visions for America's future.**
Unit Essential Questions:	**What challenges did Americans in the new republic confront?**

Weeks	PA Standards/ Eligible Content	Vocabulary	Instructional Materials	Common Assessments	Link to Profile of a Zephyr
3-4 Weeks	8.3.8.A, 8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D 5.1.8.C, 5.2.8.A, 5.3.8.A, 5.3.8.A 6.3.8.A 7.4.8.B	Attorney general, national debt, Cabinet, precedent, Chief Justice, tariff, Inauguration, Alien and Sedition Acts, cede, envoy, French Revolution, loose interpretation, power base, radical, sedition, states' rights, strict interpretation	Textbook American Stories: Beginnings to 1877 Primary Source Analysis Readings Research Discussions Debate Presentations Videos	Chapter Tests	Problem-Solver Responsible Leader Empathetic Critical-Thinker Creative Confident Communitative Collaborative Adaptable

8th Grade Social Studies
Curriculum Map

		, Treaty of Greenville, Whiskey Rebellion, XYZ Affair			

8th Grade Social Studies
Curriculum Map

Unit 3	**Chapter #9** **The Jefferson Years**
Big Idea	**The presidency of Thomas Jefferson forced a revolution in the federal government.**
Unit Essential Questions:	**In what ways did Thomas Jefferson's policies change the country?**

Weeks	PA Standards/ Eligible Content	Vocabulary	Instructional Materials	Common Assessments	Link to Profile of a Zephyr
3-4 Weeks	8.3.8.A, 8.3.8.B, 8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D 5.3.8.A 7.3.8.B, 7.4.8.B	Incumbent, judicial review, Judiciary Act of 1801, unconstitutional, writ, Louisiana Purchase, yellow fever, customs, embargo, Embargo Act of 1807, impressment, prophet, War Hawks, War of 1812	Textbook American Stories: Beginnings to 1877 Primary Source Analysis Readings Research Discussions Debate Presentations Videos	Chapter Tests	Problem-Solver Responsible Leader Empathetic Critical-Thinker Creative Confident Communitative Collaborative Adaptable

8th Grade Social Studies
Curriculum Map

Unit 4	**Chapter #10** **Expansion & Growth**
Big Idea	**The Industrialization of the United States fundamentally reshaped the country's population distribution through massive urbanization and fueled its geographic expansion by revolutionizing transportation, connecting markets, and spurring Westward development.**
Unit Essential Questions:	**How did new industries and inventions transform the United States economically, socially, and geographically?**

Weeks	PA Standards/ Eligible Content	Vocabulary	Instructional Materials	Common Assessments	Link to Profile of a Zephyr
3-4 weeks	8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D, 8.3.3.A, 8.3.8.B	Factory system, Industrial Revolution, interchangeable parts, market revolution, reaper, steamboat, strike, telegraph, textile, antebellum, cotton gin, interstate slave trade, passive resistance, spirituals, abolition,	Textbook American Stories: Beginnings to 1877 Primary Source Analysis Readings Research Discussions Debate Presentations Videos	Chapter Tests	Problem-Solver Responsible Leader Empathetic Critical-Thinker Creative Confident Communitative Collaborative Adaptable

8th Grade Social Studies
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		American System, implied power, Missouri Compromise, monopoly, Monroe Doctrine, nationalism, republican motherhood, sectionalism, subsidy, unorganized territory			

8th Grade Social Studies
Curriculum Map

Unit 5	**Chapter #11** **Age of Jackson**
Big Idea	**The Age of Jackson led to the expansion and redefinition of American democracy for the common man, which created significant inequalities for marginalized groups and dramatically increased the power of the presidency.**
Unit Essential Questions:	**How did Andrew Jackson's policies impact different groups of people in America?**

Weeks	PA Standards/ Eligible Content	Vocabulary	Instructional Materials	Common Assessments	Link to Profile of a Zephyr
3-4 Weeks	8.3.8.A, 8.3.8.B, 8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D	agrarian, doctrine of nullification, Jacksonian democracy, secession, slogan, spoils system, Tariff of Abominations, treason, voting rights, assimilate, Indian Removal Act, Indian Territory, Trail of Tears, truce, depression, inflation, Panic of 1837,	Textbook American Stories: Beginnings to 1877 Primary Source Analysis Readings Research Discussions Debate Presentations Videos	Chapter Tests	Problem-Solver Responsible Leader Empathetic Critical-Thinker Creative Confident Communitative Collaborative Adaptable

8th Grade Social Studies
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		veto, Whig Party			

8th Grade Social Studies
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Unit 6	**Chapter #12** **Manifest Destiny**
Big Idea	**The 19th-century ideology, Manifest Destiny, was used to justify the United States' westward expansion across North America, fueled by beliefs in American cultural and racial superiority, economic opportunity, and a divine mission to spread democratic institutions.**
Unit Essential Questions:	**Why were Americans inspired to move west?**

Weeks	PA Standards/ Eligible Content	Vocabulary	Instructional Materials	Common Assessments	Link to Profile of a Zephyr
3-4 Weeks	8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D, 8.3.8.A, 8.3.8.B 7.4.8	annex, Continental Divide, exodus, individualism, manifest destiny, mountain men, pioneer, rendezvous, wagon train, margin, presidio, siege, contiguous, Gadsden Purchase, parallel, diplomat, insurrection, proviso,	Textbook American Stories: Beginnings to 1877 Primary Source Analysis Readings Research Discussions Debate Presentations Videos	Chapter Tests	Problem-Solver Responsible Leader Empathetic Critical-Thinker Creative Confident Communitative Collaborative Adaptable

8th Grade Social Studies
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		boomtown, forty-niner, rancho, Californio, prospector			

8th Grade Social Studies
Curriculum Map

Unit 7	**Chapter #13** **The Changing American Identity**
Big Idea	**As Americans worked to reform society during the 1800s, movements like abolition, women's rights, and the Underground Railroad reshaped the nation's values and expanded ideas of freedom, equality, and justice.**
Unit Essential Questions:	**How did immigration and reform influence American Identity?**

Weeks	PA Standards/ Eligible Content	Vocabulary	Instructional Materials	Common Assessments	Link to Profile of a Zephyr
3-4 Weeks	8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D, 8.3.8.A, 8.3.8.B	assimilate, blight, domestic service, emigrate, famine, immigrate, Know-Nothing Party, nativist, prejudice, push-pull factor, steerage, asylum, common school movement, craft union, evangelize, labor union, revival meeting,	Textbook American Stories: Beginnings to 1877 Primary Source Analysis Readings Research Discussions Debate Presentations Videos	Chapter Tests	Problem-Solver Responsible Leader Empathetic Critical-Thinker Creative Confident Communitative Collaborative Adaptable

8th Grade Social Studies
Curriculum Map

		Second Great Awakening, temperance movement, transcendentalism, abolitionist, emancipation, Seneca Falls Convention, suffrage, Underground Railroad			

8th Grade Social Studies
Curriculum Map

Unit 8	**Chapter #14** **A Broken Nation**
Big Idea	**Deep divisions over slavery, states' rights, and political power tore the nation apart, as growing tensions between the North and South ultimately led to Lincoln's election and the secession of Southern states.**
Unit Essential Questions:	**How did slavery divide the country?**

Weeks	PA Standards/ Eligible Content	Vocabulary	Instructional Materials	Common Assessments	Link to Profile of a Zephyr
3-4 Weeks	8.3.8.D, 8.3.8.C	Federal marshal, racism, segregation, Dred Scott decision, popular sovereignty, Republican Party, Confederacy, garrison, Unionist, Crittenden Plan, secede	Textbook American Stories: Beginnings to 1877 Primary Source Analysis Readings Research Discussions Debate Presentations Videos	Chapter Tests	Problem-Solver Responsible Leader Empathetic Critical-Thinker Creative Confident Communitative Collaborative Adaptable

8th Grade Social Studies
Curriculum Map

Unit 9	**Chapter #15** **Beginnings of War**
Big Idea	**The Civil War was a conflict brought on by decades of uncompromising differences between the North and South, primarily centered on the institution of slavery and its expansion, which ultimately led to the Southern states' decision to secede and the subsequent outbreak of war.**
Unit Essential Questions:	**How did the early years of the Civil War affect people on both sides of the conflict?**

Weeks	PA Standards/ Eligible Content	Vocabulary	Instructional Materials	Common Assessments	Link to Profile of a Zephyr
3-4 Weeks	8.3.8.D, 8.3.8.C	Border state, evacuate, mobilize, cavalry, infantry, civilian, mortality, trench warfare, ironclad ship, philanthropist, Anaconda Plan, gunboat, pontoon	Textbook American Stories: Beginnings to 1877 Primary Source Analysis Readings Research Discussions Debate Presentations Videos	Chapter Tests	Problem-Solver Responsible Leader Empathetic Critical-Thinker Creative Confident Communitative Collaborative Adaptable

8th Grade Social Studies
Curriculum Map

Unit 10	**Chapter #16** **Turning Points of the Civil War**
Big Idea	**Key events such as the Emancipation Proclamation, major battles, and influential leaders like Lincoln and Frederick Douglass transformed the Civil War from a fight to preserve the Union into a struggle for freedom, ultimately shaping the nation's path toward reunification.**
Unit Essential Questions:	**How did the United States transform during the Civil War?**

Weeks	PA Standards/ Eligible Content	Vocabulary	Instructional Materials	Common Assessments	Link to Profile of a Zephyr
3-4 Weeks	8.3.8.B, 8.3.8.C, 8.3.8.D	Emancipation Proclamation, enlist, stalemate, bond, habeas corpus, ration, Conscription Act, Legal Tender Act, scapegoat, draft, quarantine, scurvy, exemption, bluff, Gettysburg Address, total war, flotilla, morphine, veteran, assassinate, Homestead Act, Reconstruction, casualty, jurisdiction, servitude	Textbook American Stories: Beginnings to 1877 Primary Source Analysis Readings Research Discussions Debate Presentations Videos	Chapter Tests	Problem-Solver Responsible Leader Empathetic Critical-Thinker Creative Confident Communitative Collaborative Adaptable