

8th Social Studies Course Description

The following syllabus describes the chapters and the activities that can be expected for each chapter. Please note that the activities and/or the timing of the activities are subject to change.

The emphasis in the 8th grade is on presentation and public speaking skills. Students will participate in a variety of activities such as Power Point presentations, persuasive speeches and a debate. The challenge will be in the memorization and the ability to present research to the class without 'reading' it from the screen.

In further preparation for high school, we will move at a quicker pace through the chapters. Students will be expected to read and record vocabulary on their own, complete available study guides, and be prepared for quizzes and tests to occur more frequently than in the past. In other words, they are expected to utilize the study skills they have been taught throughout the years, independently, without the expectation of a letter grade, except for the wonderful grade they will have earned on the test! When they leave the 8th grade at St. Joan of Arc, they will have become independent learners who know what needs to be done in order to earn the grades they deserve.

Call to Freedom

You will notice some chapters are missing. This is not a misprint; the material was covered in earlier grades.

Ch 8 Forming a Government

Students will be introduced to the quicker pace. Expect lesson quizzes once or twice a week.

Students will be expected to print the online study guide at home and will be given the opportunity to research the answers with a small group.

Ch 9 Citizenship and the Constitution

This unit concentrates on both the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Students will learn specific amendments to the Constitution via artistic interpretation. Parade magazine's 'Ten Worst Dictators' article will be analyzed to understand what rights are currently being denied in various parts of the world and to fully appreciate our rights in America. Students will also read court cases where they will have to evaluate the court's decision

and write a persuasive article either agreeing or disagreeing with that decision.

Students will create a poster creatively depicting the steps to the White House, aka 'how to become president'.

- Ch 10 **Launching the Nation**
Students will work in a small to create a Power Point presenting an assigned section. Presentation skills will be introduced and students will be assessed on both the content and presentation. Each student in the group will be responsible for presenting his/her own slides which must be proportional to the number of people in the group. All students in the group are responsible for spelling and grammar on all slides even if they are generated by other group members.
- Ch 11 **The Expanding Nation**
Intensive study returning to the frequent quiz format and utilizing the online study guide. Students will participate in group discussions exploring higher order thought questions to develop their analytical skills.
- Ch 12 **A New National Identity**
This is an exciting chapter where students will explore Jackson's presidency and both his adherence to and deviation from the Constitution, in particular with his dealings with the Native Americans. Many essays will be assigned either as preparation for group discussion or to be evaluated for a grade.

Students will compare the expansionism and internal improvements and their desired outcomes that took place during this time with those improvements proposed by President Obama during his 2008 campaign.
- Ch 14 **Agricultural Changes in the South**
This chapter addresses both the innovation of the cotton gin and the rise of slavery. Students may choose one of two questions* to explore and answer in a persuasive essay. They must then memorize the essay and present it to the class in the form of a two - minute speech. They will be assessed on their memorization and public speaking skills.

*Did the cotton gin have a positive effect on society?

*What is the best method of slave resistance?

Once all of the speeches have been presented, the students will be divided into teams and participate in a formal debate (time permitting).

Ch 15 New Movements in America

Students will follow along as Americans return to their roots and basic values. As in a previous chapter, they will be asked to present a portion of this chapter in a Power Point presentation. Growth in presentation skills will be a key element in their evaluation.

An alternative assessment is that the students will be assigned to a small group. They will then present information about the key reformers in this chapter in a talk show format. This is a fun activity which will also tap their memorization skills!

Ch 17 Manifest Destiny and War

Students will work alone to create a trifold presentation of an assigned section in this chapter. Recycled trifold boards from the Science Fair will be available. Students will be assessed on both creativity and accuracy.

An alternative assessment will be a single or group activity in which students create a skit, song, or epic poem describing the interactions between settlers, Native Americans, and Mexicans during the westward expansion.

Ch 18 A Divided Nation

Students will once again be asked to cultivate their analytical skills by completing a Webquest for this chapter. They will be asked to evaluate four events, the Dred Scott Decision, the Caning of Charles Sumner, the Kansas - Nebraska Act, and John Brown's Raid, and to decide which event was the point of no return, after which war was inevitable. There is no 'right' answer to this question; the students will be evaluated on the strength of their argument.

Ch 19 The Civil War

Small groups will divide this era into a time line and observe how the advantage shifted to the North and the South at any given time. They will compare the Northern and Southern strategies and predict which strategy might lead to a successful outcome. Students will also form opinions on the use of cotton diplomacy and the brutality of some of the generals in the war.

Ch 20 Reconstruction

Prior to reading the chapter, teams will pretend they are in charge of the nation after the Civil War. Each team will be asked to prioritize which problem areas need to be address in order to rebuild the nation. They will then compare their plan with the actual and give opinions on the validity of either plan.

Throughout all chapters, students will be asked to complete workbook pages and quizzes. Most units culminate in a chapter test, some of which may be entirely in essay format. (Students will be able to choose from a variety of questions to demonstrate their knowledge of the unit.)

This will be a busy year! The goal is that when your son or daughter leaves St. Joan of Arc s/he will have the skills to succeed in the high school setting.

Stuckey, Sterling, Salvucci, Lind K. Call to Freedom. Austin: Holt, Rinehart
and
Winston, 2000.