

The 8th grade Social Studies syllabus will reflect the revisions made in the Diocesan Curriculum at the end of the 2011 school year. Much new material has been added, thus some activities from prior years have been discontinued. The students will move at a fast pace to ensure that the Graded Course of Study is followed.

The following syllabus describes the general theme and some possible activities 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 United States history from 1492 A.D., Exploration to 1877 A.D., Reconstruction. Students will examine the impact of trade and how the need for goods propelled exploration. In addition, new this year, students will understand personal finances and how to balance needs and wants with income.

In 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.

Unit 1 – Financial Literacy

Students will participate in a discussion of savings and checking accounts and credit. They will work with scenarios in which they must balance needs and wants with expenses. They will utilize economic decision-making skills, and generalize to both historic and present global economies. Finally they will play an online Trading Game in which they will discover how the nations of the world make trade decisions.

Unit 2 Colonization

Students will be introduced to a new method for writing note cards. Information will be expanded from merely a term and a definition, to also include cause/effect or historical significance where applicable.

Students will perform chapter investigations and trade activities for Chapter 2 in the Call to Freedom text to understand how the need for trade led to the new world exploration.

Unit 3 Differences among the Spanish, French, & British colonies.

This unit will encompass activities for both chapters 3 and 4. The chapter 3 study will be centered around a webquest and will culminate in a project and presentation. (Individual study) Students will also examine the different reasons for colonization and will create Venn diagrams comparing both the reasons for colony establishment and the colonies established. Students will write a summary comparing Spanish, French and British colonization of the Americas including how the countries treated the natives, geographic locations and resulting conflicts.

The chapter 4 study will involve a group project, “Colonial Challenge Game”. Expect assignments from the Guided Reading workbook as well as class activities, culminating in chapter tests.

Unit 4 Early Representative Governments

Students will summarize and chart early representative governments and written constitutions and identify democratic policies that emerged including town meetings and colonial assemblies.

Unit 5 Trade

Students will practice skills while learning about the causes and effects of trade, by interpreting the graphs, maps, and tables on text pages 148 – 153.

Unit 6 Revolutionary War Causes and Outcomes

Students will analyze all sources of conflict between the colonies and Britain. This unit encompasses both chapters 6 and 7 from the text. In addition they will evaluate the outcomes of the Revolution such as independence and new political and economic relationships with other countries. Students will develop a flow chart illustrating the British acts, colonial reactions and British responses. When studying chapter 7, students will create a PowerPoint presentation describing various aspects of the war.

Unit 7 Forming a Government

Chapter 8 explores the Articles of Confederation and the need for the Constitution. Students will compare and contrast the two documents and analyze the shortcoming of the Articles of Confederation. 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.

Unit 8 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 create a poster creatively depicting the steps to the White House, aka 'how to become president'. Students will view videos and reproduce the sequence on how a bill becomes a law.

Unit 9 Ch 10 Launching the Nation

Students will work in a small group 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 that 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.

Unit 10 Ch 11 The Expanding Nation

This chapter involves intensive study returning to the frequent quiz format and utilizing the online study guide. Students will participate in small group discussions exploring higher order thought questions to develop their analytical skills.

Unit 11 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.

Unit 12 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. The speech portion may be omitted due to time constraints.

*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 (again, time permitting).

Unit 13 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 that will also tap their memorization skills!

Unit 14 Ch 17 Manifest Destiny and War

Students will work alone to create a poster presentation of an assigned section in this chapter. 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.

Unit 15 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.

Unit 16 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.

Unit 17 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 addressed in order to rebuild the nation. They will then compare their plan with the actual and give opinions on the validity of either plan.

In Summary:

Throughout most 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.) There is a lot of material in this curriculum, making for a busy year! If it seems we are moving quickly through the material, we are. 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, Linda K. Call to Freedom. Austin: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2000.