

HISTORY

GRADE 7

Several integrated and interrelated units comprise the study of Latin America during the seventh grade year. The goals of the program are to examine the elements which make up social science and history, and to develop relevant study skills while using Latin America as the focus. This course begins our two-year study of the Western Hemisphere.

Overview of Topics:

What is Latin America?
Geography of Latin America
Indigenous Civilizations
European Colonization
Contemporary Latin America
Country Project(s)

Skills:

Time management/organizing/sequencing
Summarizing and reporting current events
Basic 5 paragraph essay form
Memorization techniques
Subject Identifications
Library/Internet skills and research
Formatted note-taking techniques
Debate and other discussion techniques
Crafting a website in January and other country project work throughout the year.

Topical Details:

What is Latin America? After an introduction to Latin America we discuss The Circuit, issues of immigration, and current events.

Students learn the physical geography of Latin America.

Indigenous Cultures and Civilizations: This unit encompasses the history of the Americas before European contact. We focus on the Maya and Aztec civilizations as well as the Olmec, Inca and Taino/Arawak.

European Contact: Students explore the effects of contact and settlement by Europeans to what is now Latin America: Columbus and the Tainos, Cortes and the Aztecs, Pizarro and the Incas. We look at the themes of Colonial History, Viceregal Rule and the Catholic Church, including the perspectives of the less advantaged, particularly women and Native Americans. The unit ends with the study of independence movements: L'Ouverture in Haiti, Bolivar and San Martin in the Spanish colonies, and Dom Pedro in Brazil. An in-depth study of Mexico follows, from Hidalgo through the modern day.

Country Project: students choose countries and begin research to present their countries in different ways over the course of the year. Projects include, creating maps and flags, gathering and comparing social and economic data, writing essays, and website construction.

Contemporary Latin America: In this unit we review modern Latin America. Students learn about current issues, urban vs. rural lifestyles, and Latin American relations with the United States. We read *Among the Volcanoes*, a book which illustrates the struggle of traditional society against a changing world.

Texts and Other Resource Materials

The Circuit, Francisco Jiminez

Among the Volcanoes, Omar Castaneda

Department generated reader (over 200 pages of faculty developed text)

Internet/print news reading

GRADE 8

Eighth graders examine perspective and the relationships between events in history. The goal is to create hypotheses in both the written and spoken word, and to be able to support and communicate ideas persuasively. The study of the United States completes the students' two year study of political and physical geography of the Western Hemisphere.

Overview of Topics:

Early human settlement in North America

Indigenous Nations and acknowledging land rights

What happened when European colonists arrived

Colonial America case studies of power, race, wealth and religion

Formation of United States Government

U.S. Government and Current Events

Expanding our view beyond the United States with a Model UN simulation to end the year

Skill Development:

Recognizing bias and perspective

Supporting ideas with evidence

Relating events over time and space

Debating viewpoints in class

Increasing note taking speed, accuracy and utility

Presenting research to the class

Writing thesis statements and supporting them with evidence

Wrestling with current events and world issues

Topical Details:

- Current Events: Though much of our curricular work focuses on people, places and events from long ago, we consistently keep our finger on the pulse of current events in the United States and beyond. Students maintain digital journals which explore their personal reactions to recent events.
- Early Americans: Students examine evidence which explains how the first settlers arrived. We learn North American geography and see how climate and geography affected the cultures of early Native American groups. We explore Nation building and conduct Land Acknowledgements.
- European Arrival: Students then learn of conditions in Tudor England which culminated in early English settlement to North America and created divergent paths within that migration. We consider the places of Native Americans, African Americans, women and indentured servants in the 1600's and early English colonial society. Throughout this unit, we re-read much of their summer reading book *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds.
- United States Government: Students explore the evolution of United States Government, from the break with England to contemporary politics and issues. We play a simulation game ("Disunia") which uses the Articles of Confederation as rules for a working congress. Students experience the need for "new rules", i.e. The Constitution. We examine the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches, write congressional bills, and explore the reasons for the 27 Amendments. Students choose and present Supreme Court Landmark Cases.
- Model UN: We end the year by learning how other governments around the world work and the challenges and hopes that come with global cooperation. Students will learn about a chosen country and then work together as an entire eighth grade to solve a significant global problem via a Model UN simulation.

Texts and Other Materials:

Department generated reader

Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You by Jason Reynolds.

The Constitution, Scott Foresman Co.