

An Introduction to Sixth Grade Social Studies: Ancient Civilizations **Cecil County Public Schools**

Sixth grade students will analyze how civilizations are created and why they change over time.

Utilizing Maryland State Curriculum Standards, sixth grade students will focus on developing understandings of four macro-concepts throughout the year: Structures, Contributions, Patterns and Perspectives. These four macro concepts are to be **integrated** with the standards. The concepts are the catalyst for teaching the standards in depth. Sixth grade students will build upon their understandings of the macro-concepts and will be able to **transfer** their understandings of the concepts across all disciplines. Given any content, students should be able to apply the skills and processes embedded in the macro-concepts.

Sixth grade teachers will have access to a Course Organizer providing an overview for Sixth grade instruction for the year. Each macro concept is included in the title of the unit. Each unit should take approximately one marking period to complete. Sixth grade teachers will also have access to unit planners and unit organizers for each unit. Each unit organizer reflects Maryland State Curriculum Standard that have been grouped under categories that are to be explicitly taught within that unit and then supported throughout the entire year. The four units were designed in chronological order in keeping with the story of Ancient Civilizations. The Civilizations were paired under each of the four macro-concepts – Unit 1 Structures (Prehistory-Mesopotamia), Unit 2 Contributions (Egypt, India and China), Unit 3 Patterns (Greece-Roman Republic), and Unit 4 Perspectives (Roman Empire-Middle Ages).

Curriculum writers discussed ideas outlined below that *can* be used as entry points when exploring the four macro-concepts that will be used to teach the standards with sixth graders. The macro-concepts are provided as the lens used to focus instruction; each macro concept will carry over into all of the four units. For example, while *structure* is the focus of Unit 1 a teacher can still relate *structures* when teaching about social hierarchy in Egypt. As the year progresses, sixth grade students will make connections among macro-concepts and ultimately understand how the four macro-concepts are interconnected within the story of Ancient Civilizations.

Unit 1:

Unit 1 begins with the hunter-gatherer groups of the Paleolithic Age. The students must gain a clear understanding of how people met their basic needs. As the Paleolithic Age became the Neolithic Age, the structures of **intellectual** achievements (agriculture), **politics** (government), and **religion** began to completely change the way groups of people met their basic needs. As permanent settlements were established, the structures of **economics**, **social hierarchy**, and **art** all became essential elements of community living. When the earliest towns appeared in Mesopotamia, communities began to exhibit all six elements of civilization. While examining the city-states of Mesopotamia, students will become familiar with the acronym P.E.R.S.I.A. (**politics, economics, religion, social structure, intellectual achievement, art**) These STRUCTURES will be a recurring themes, which serve to link content throughout the year.

Unit 2:

Unit 2 focuses on the CONTRIBUTIONS of the ancient River Valley Civilizations. The pattern of river valley settlements continues throughout the unit. Students will examine the elements of P.E.R.S.I.A. as they apply to Ancient Egypt, the Indus River Valley Civilization, and Ancient China.

Ancient Egypt's geography made the Nile River Valley the only option for a permanent settlement. The students will learn how the Ancient Egyptians relied on the Nile for most of their basic needs. The CONTRIBUTIONS of Ancient Egypt to modern cultures are examined through the study of their complex religious, economic, political, and social systems.

The Indus River Valley Civilization will offer students an opportunity to learn about the origins of modern religious belief systems. Students will also investigate the decline of the Indus River Valley Civilization and draw parallels between the depletion of their natural resources and some of the environmental issues, which impact our society.

Unit 2 ends with Ancient China. As a river valley civilization, Ancient China fits the settlement pattern of the other civilizations in the unit, however focus of the lessons will concentrate on the many CONTRIBUTIONS and innovations created by the Ancient Chinese, which are still in use today.

Unit 3:

In Unit 3, students will investigate the Greek city-states and the Roman Republic. The many contributions of the Ancient Greeks and Romans will help students to identify a PATTERN through which ideas generated in the Mediterranean Civilizations evolved into the basis for our current government and social structures.

Unit 3 concentrates on the governmental, economic, and cultural PATTERNS established by the Ancient Greeks and Romans and how those PATTERNS influence modern societies. The regional geography and the PATTERN of expansion are used to explain the reasons for many of the policies and innovations created by the Greeks and Romans.

Unit 4:

Unit 4 covers the Roman Empire and Medieval Europe. Teachers should focus on the different PERSPECTIVES of the nobles and the common people throughout the unit. The students will learn that the time period was filled with governmental and social changes. These changes often affected the PERSPECTIVES of the people and their leaders. The many conflicts during this age lead to: the decline of the Roman Empire, the Dark Ages, feudalism, and eventually the rise of nations ruled by kings and queens. This unit details the end of the ancient era and ushers in the modern age.