

## Learning Opportunities

### Essential. Guiding and Reflection Questions

The essential question, "Can a civilization last forever?" is used as a pre- and post-test for the unit. It is used as a tool for measuring students' learning. The essential question also drives the unit, as it is referred to for reflective purposes frequently. I use guiding questions to open avenues of discussion among groups of students. The questions are open-ended enough to uncover multiple perspectives. The reflection questions are answered individually and I use them for students to think about their learning.

### Outline Use

To minimize the use of lectures, students are given three different outlining assignments in # which they have an opportunity to learn from the text, additional resources, and each other, while at the same time use the outline information to complete different tasks.

I introduce Ancient Rome's geography by asking guiding question "Was geography important to Rome's rise as a civilization?" We use wall maps to point out geographical features that made Rome an ideal place for civilization to flourish (central location in Mediterranean Sea, protected from invasion by mountains in north, fertile farmland along coast). I elicit these and other reasons from students so they can draw on knowledge from civilizations already studied. ~

I introduce outlining concepts of main topic, sub-topic, and details (see blank outline (Appendix #1) and outline checklist (Appendix #2). Using a sample topic, namely Geography of Rome (Appendix #3), I illustrate the completion of the outline process and review the information on the completed outline using a wall map to point out key features. I give a brief overview of the group outlining assignment (Appendix #4), and place students into groups of three or four so they will be ready to begin working immediately the next class. I give the homework assignment - map skills identifying Rome's geographical features.

### Group Outlining Assignment

Eight groups are assigned two or three pages each from the text to outline. Individual students are given the outline model along with topics and sub-topics of their group assignment, and each is responsible for their own outline. Group members read the assigned pages however they choose -silently, aloud, one person or taking turns-. We then engage in a discussion to decide on the important details of each sub-topic and on the best way to summarize them.

HW-Students create a color illustration of their topic by following the directions on the checklist and including a caption (Appendix #9).

### Small Group Discussions

Throughout the unit, small groups of students are given a guiding question that explores central unit concept or theme. I sit with each group and discuss the question, making sure it is viewed from different perspectives so that students realize issues are complex and can rarely be categorized as right or wrong, or black and white. The guiding questions for each of the sections are listed below.

*Geography: "Why was geography important in Rome's rise as a civilization?" Patricians and Plebians: "Does everyone deserve a voice in government?"*

*Rome's expansion: "Was it necessary to go to war with Carthage?" "Is war necessary?"*

*Julius Caesar: "Should Caesar have been assassinated?"*

*Pax Romana: "Was the Pax Romana Rome's Golden Age?"*

*Rome's Legacy and Roman Roads and Aqueducts: "What was Rome's greatest contribution?" The Latin Language: "Could we have English without Latin?"*

### Presentations

Groups swap their outlines with each other. In a twenty-five minute period, the groups use each other's outlines and conduct further research to assimilate new information. A student "lecture" on Rome is held on the next day with students speaking about the assigned topics in chronological order. Copies of each outline are distributed to the class along with a presentation checklist before each lecture begins. Audience members are encouraged to ask questions to the group presenting a given outline. An attempt is made to elicit at least one response from each member of the group. Each group has five minutes to give the lecture on their outline section.

### Song Writing Instruction

Students receive a new outline and information. They brainstorm a list of 10 to 20 songs that they know the words to. After distributing and reviewing the song writing rubric, they incorporate the words from their outline into the lyrics of one of the songs they have chosen. In some cases, groups experiment with several of the songs on the list before agreeing on one. They succeed when they are able to identify the main concept of the outline and match it with the song's chorus. While the teacher is helping groups that need assistance, other groups can revise their work, add information they find from the resource center, and practice on instrument supplementation. The class musicians assume responsibility for finding the sheet music to the song. This whole activity can be completed in a week without having to use entire periods each day. When the songs are completed, copies are made and distributed to the class, and groups are videotaped as they perform. Volunteers are encouraged to perform with other groups, and a class vote determines blue (best), red (2nd), and white (3rd) ribbon songs. The songs are displayed in a hall bulletin board along with the rubric (Appendix #6) and the ribbons. Students sing the songs again at the Romefest celebration at the conclusion of the unit to review.

## Debate Expectations

The unit debate topics provide opportunities for students to engage in five different debates. These debates address the following topics: *Senators deciding whether to assassinate Caesar; Senators deciding whether to attack Carthage; Roman citizens discussing whether the empire is in decline or not; U.S. citizens discussing whether America is in decline or not; U.S. citizens discussing whether the US should attack a current adversary.*

Debate teams consist of three students, one who delivers the opening, one who attempts to counter opposition's attack on their position, and one who delivers the closing. A debate checklist and organizer (Appendix #8) is discussed with the class prior to the first debate.

## Research and Discussion of Great Civilizations and their Decline.

Groups are assigned a civilization and readings to find out the reasons behind the decline of a great civilization. We have a discussion and generate a chart listing the civilization and reason for its decline. Common threads are identified that link the reasons for each civilization's decline.

## Individual Outline Work.

Students are assigned one of two new topics, either Christianity or the fall of Rome. Individually, they take a blank outline model and complete the Topic, sub-topics, and details using the assigned readings. A class discussion is held using the guiding questions: "*Could the citizens of Rome have prevented its fall?*" and "*Did Christianity hasten Rome's fall or contribute to its greatness?*"

## Writin2 a Business letter

Students use a business letter model (Appendix #10) to discuss parts of a letter and to write their own letter to a politician stating the student's opinion and reasoning on whether the United States is in decline or not. Prior to completing this assignment, students develop a checklist (Appendix #11) and scoring rubric (Appendix #12). When students are ready to turn in the letter in for evaluation, they complete the letter checklist and hand it in with the letter.

## Romefest

Romefest is the culminating activity of the unit. Students bring food dishes that originated in Italy to the school. We have a feast at lunch-time, then go outdoors and run Chariot races. After the races, we come back inside and perform the ribbon winning songs. Everyone sings along. We then watch videos of all the songs. Prior to the Romefest, committees are formed and put in charge of decorating the room with Roman scenes, coordinating food, and organizing the chariot races.

## New York State Standards Addressed

### Social Studies (SS)--Intermediate Level

*Standard 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.*

1. The study of world history requires an understanding of world cultures and civilizations, including an analysis of important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions. This study also examines the human condition and the connections and interactions of people across time and space and the ways different people view the same event or issue from a variety of perspectives.

#### Indicators

- a. Know the social and economic characteristics, such as customs, traditions, and beliefs that distinguish different cultures and civilizations.
  - b. Know some important historic events and developments of past civilizations.
  - c. Interpret and analyze documents related to significant developments and events in world history.
2. Establishing timeframes, exploring different periodizations, examining themes across time and within cultures, and focusing on important turning points in world history help organize the study of world cultures and civilizations. Indicators
    - a. Develop timelines by placing important events and developments in world history in their correct chronological order.
    - c. Investigate the causes and other factors that brought about change and the results of these changes.
  3. Study of major social, political, cultural and religious developments in world history involves learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups. Indicators
    - a. Investigate the roles and contributions of individuals and groups in relation to key political, cultural, and religious practices throughout world history.
  4. The skills of historical analysis include the ability to investigate differing and competing interpretations of the theories of history. Indicators
    - d. Investigate important events and developments in world history by posing analytical questions, selecting relevant data...hypothesizing cause and effect relationships, and forming conclusions.

#### Learning opportunities and assessments

1. Investigate how the Roman civilization developed and changed over time.
2. Outline important achievements and accomplishments of the Roman civilization.
3. Take part in a debate that examines an ancient controversial issue from multiple perspectives.
4. Construct timeline cards of important events in Roman history.
5. Give a presentation on one period of Roman history.
6. Hypothesize situations in debates utilizing cause-and-effect relationships to weigh options available and sway opinion.

*Standard 3: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the interdependent world in which we live -local, national, and global-including the distribution of people places and environments over the earth's surface.*

1. Geography can be used to analyze important historic, geographical, economic, and environmental questions and issues.
  - Indicators
  - a. Map information about people, places, and environments.
  - d. Describe the relationships between people and environments and the connections between people and places.
2. Geography requires the development and application of the skills of asking and answering geographic questions and analyzing theories of geography.
  - Indicators
  - a. Formulate geographic questions and define geographic issues and problems.
  - b. Interpret geographic information by synthesizing data and developing conclusions and generalizations about geographic issues and problems.

Learning opportunities and assessments

1. Use maps and outline models to identify the features that made Rome and ideal location for a great civilization.
2. Analyze geographical information to develop generalizations on issues and problems Romans face in acquiring food, defending their empire, trading, and communicating.

*Standard 5: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the government system of the United States and other nations; the U. S. Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.*

3. Central to civics and citizenship is an understanding of the roles of the citizen within American constitutional democracy and the scope of a citizen's rights and responsibilities.
  - Indicators
  - a. Discuss the role of an informed citizen in today's changing world.
4. The study of civics and citizenship requires the ability to probe ideas and assumptions, ask and answer analytical questions, take a skeptical attitude toward questionable arguments, evaluate evidence, formulate rational conclusions, and develop and refine participatory skills.
  - Indicators
  - a. Respect the rights of others in discussions and classroom debates regardless of whether or not one agrees with their viewpoint.
  - b. Explain the role that civility plays in promoting effective citizenship in reserving democracy.

Learning opportunities and assessments

1. Reflection question, "How does group work help you learn?"
2. Debate research, debate preparation, and classroom debates based on topics regarding citizens of the United States.
3. Reflection question, "What are the similarities between the United States and Rome?"
4. Discussion of the guiding question, "What is the role of citizens in keeping a civilization strong?", and "Does everyone deserve a voice in government?"

English Language Arts Standards-Intermediate Level

*Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.*

1. Listening and reading to acquire information and understanding involves collecting data, facts, and ideas; discovering relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and using knowledge from oral, written, and electronic sources.

Indicators

- a. Interpret and analyze information from textbooks and nonfiction books for young adults.
- b. Compare and synthesize information from different sources.
- c. Use a wide variety of strategies for selecting, organizing and categorizing information.
- d. Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information and between fact and opinion.

## **STUDENT SAMPLES**

### **I. Rome Songs**

#### **This Land is Roman Land** (Tune of "This Land is Your Land")

This land is Roman land  
This land is Italian land  
from the boot shaped peninsula  
to the Coliseum,  
from the Apennine Mountains,  
to the Northern Alps,  
This land was made for early Romans.

As I was walking that Roman road,  
I saw above me,  
That endless Aqueduct,  
I saw below me,  
That crowded forum,  
This land was made for early Romans.  
As the sun came shining,  
The Romans were working,  
On the fertile farmland,  
And the clouds came rolling,  
As the fog came lifting,  
A voice was chanting,  
This land was made for early Romans.

By Jon Ciappetta, Sean Brown, Caroline  
Burghardt, Jessica Surozenski,  
Kristen Karpoich, and Greg Simmons.

#### **Hey, Hey We're the Romans** (Tune of "Hey, Hey We're the Monkeys")

Hey, Hey we're the Patricians  
and we rule all the land.  
We've got all the power  
and we think we're really grand.

Hey, Hey we're the Plebians,  
We farmers do all the work.  
We wanna join the Senate  
but Patricians are being jerks.

Hey, Hey we're Patricians,  
and we're not going to let you in.  
We've done this for a long time,  
And this time we're gonna win.

Hey, Hey we're the Plebians,  
and we should be treated the same.  
We wanna join the Senate  
Although you think we're really lame.

Hey, Hey we're the Patricians,  
We guess we're gonna let you in.  
People should be treated fairly  
So Rome's a better place to live in.

Hey, Hey we're the Tribunes  
We are elected each year.  
We represent the Plebians,  
And we plan to stay here.

Hey, Hey there's twelve tables,  
They're the new set of laws.  
We all think they're pretty fair,  
Now we're fighting for a good cause.

Hey, Hey we're all Romans,  
We all get treated the same  
Now we all work together,  
And we've made our fame.

By Dan Polhamer, Emily Macdonald, Carly  
Papish, and Tim Disimone.

## II. Letter to politician (U.S in decline)

4725 New Suffolk Avenue Mattituck, NY 11952 March 17, 1999

Vice President Gore Old Executive Office  
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. Vice President,

My name is Kelly Goeller and I am a sixth grade student at Mattituck-Cutchogue Elementary School. I strongly believe that our country is in decline. A major problem of ours is the unnecessary amount of crime and corruption taking place in our communities. People are tricked and cheated out of their money all of the time and there are robberies and theft every day. With the steady increase in these problems, the United States is slowly but steadily declining.

Crime is just one of the many problems that our country has. There are gangs on the streets and theft stories come up every day on the news. Even in our schools, there are crimes being committed. One classroom had to get special lockers because valuable items were being stolen right out of student's desks! If we can't stop this type of crime in our schools, how will we stop it in our streets and homes? Just look at Julius Caesar in ancient Rome, he was assassinated by his fellow Senators. Major crimes like this caused Rome to fall, and that is where we will be headed if we don't clean up our act.

Car salesmen charging top dollars for junk cars, workers getting lazy and doing poorly on their projects. What does it all add up to? Corruption. This sleazy way of taking the way out is even used by kids. Students will neglect their work when *they* get home from school, using the time to play games or watch TV. Then, the next morning when they are faced with the undone homework, they'll ask another student to do it for them in exchange for candy or gum. This may not be a major act of corruption, but if kids are doing this now, who knows what they'll do when they get older? They could be building a bridge and because they're used to taking the easy way out, they could do as poor of a job as ancient Romans did on their roads and buildings. If problems such as these started Rome down the road to declination, imagine what it could do to us!

A usual course for our country's many problems is the use of drugs. Depressant drugs such as alcohol can make workers lazy, thus causing corruption. When criminals are too busy doing drugs to make money by working, they steal it instead. Drugs are dangerous things that are I involved in most of our country's major issues.

This all sounds pretty horrible, but there are many ways to fix it if we try. A good way to put a stop to corruption is to be very careful when choosing workers and salesman for our businesses. The candidates could undergo tests to make sure that they are not using drugs, and that if they were hired, they'd be honest and dependable workers. Job sites could be more closely monitored to prevent workers from getting lazy and corrupt.

There are also ways we can stop the large amount of crime in our communities. After committing major crimes, criminals are sometimes let out of jail with out receiving their full punishment. If we are more harsh with our punishments for crime, the criminals are more likely to learn their lesson and less likely to commit crimes in the future. Rome may not have come up with on efficient way to solve their problems, but that doesn't mean it has to be the some for us.

In conclusion, I believe that our country is most definitely in decline. There are ways we can stop this from happening, but if we don't toke a stand soon, the United States will eventually fall.

Sincerely,

*Kelly Goeller*

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