Investigating History

Grade 6, Unit 4
Central America, the Caribbean Islands, and South America

How did natural resources and geography influence daily life in the region?
How did the spaces and places built by people mirror what they cared about and believed?
Were the ways people lived around the ancient world more alike or different?

UNIT THROUGHLINES

Enduring Understandings

EU 1. The long north-to-south span of Latin America is characterized by its striking biodiversity; high mountains, dense tropical rainforests and dry coastal deserts provided resources but also posed challenges for the continent's inhabitants.

EU 2. Isolated from other continents, peoples of the ancient Americas developed ways of life that differed from those in Africa and Eurasia. The region's first civilizations (Olmec & Norte Chico), among the earth's oldest, influenced many that came after them.

EU 3. The later complex societies did not develop in isolation from one another; instead they interacted and influenced each other through trade, migration, diplomacy, conflict, and cultural emulation and exchange.

EU 4. The spaces and communities of the ancient Americas mirrored the beliefs and values of their indigenous populations. Planned cities – a notable feature of the region – often reflected their makers' sense of the cosmic order and natural world.

LEARNING PROGRESSION

Human Geography and Regional Graphical Systems of the Americas | 4 Lessons

What challenges and opportunities does geography pose in different regions of the Americas?

- L 1. Examine the people and places of Latin America through close reading of a video and text, describing the ways it is diverse.
- L 2. Explain how geography and natural resources created challenges and opportunities for people in different regions of Latin America by collaboratively annotating a map.
- L 3. Explain how geography and natural resources created challenges and opportunities for people in different regions of Latin America by collaboratively annotating a map.

How are Latin American people today developing sustainable and inclusive cities?

- L 4. Evaluate ways in which Latin American people are striving to develop more sustainable and inclusive cities, and debate which megacity has done so most successfully.
- L 5. Evaluate ways in which Latin American people are striving to develop more sustainable and inclusive cities, and debate which megacity has done so most successfully.

The America's Earliest Complex Societies | 3 Lessons

How did the earliest known American civilizations innovate with natural resources in ways that were alike or different from other complex societies?

- L 6. Describe the ways in which the earliest complex society of the Americas (South America) used natural resources to innovate and compare it with ancient societies of Africa and the Middle East.
- L 7. Informed by a research process, explain the way the Olmec used natural resources to innovate.
- L 8. Informed by a research process, explain the way the Olmec used natural resources to innovate.

Mesoamerican Societies: Teotihuacan and the Maya | 12 Lessons

How did the spaces and places built by Mesoamericans mirror what they cared about and believed?

How did Mesoamerican societies interact with and influence one another?

- L 9. Using a virtual tour, research how the features of the ancient city of Teotihuacan reveal its peoples' values and beliefs.

EU 5. The Mesoamerican region was unified by certain shared cultural elements, including religion, architecture, art, astronomy, writing, ball games, food, and widespread networks of trade for ritual and elite items.

EU 6. Although European invaders tried to uproot the people and their ways of life, elements of their ancient cultures were preserved as Indigenous communities carried their legacies forward.

*See Unit Overview for full text.

Practice Standards

PS 3. Organize information from multiple primary and secondary sources.
PS 5. Evaluate the relevance of sources for addressing a research question.
PS 7. Investigate a problem of civic relevance by conducting research and determining next steps.

Literacy Standards

W7. Conduct research to answer a question, drawing on several sources.
W8. When conducting research, gather information from multiple print & digital sources.
SL5. Integrate multimedia components and visual displays into presentations.

*See Unit Overview for full text.

L 10. Using a virtual tour, research how the features of the ancient city of Teotihuacan reveal its peoples' values and beliefs.
L 11. Identify evidence of relevance to a question (SQ1) by analyzing features of a city as shown in a video.
L 12. Identify relevant information about long-distance trade in the Americas and preserve it in the form of concise notes on an article.
L 13. Identify major features of Maya civilization, past and present, in order to engage in inquiry about Maya beliefs and values.
L 14. Identify major features of Maya civilization, past and present, in order to engage in inquiry about Maya beliefs and values.
L 15. Analyze a creation myth to identify the connection between sacred places and beliefs in the Maya world.
L 16. Analyze the value of astronomy and the measurement of time to the ancient Maya, and explain their achievements in these fields.
L 17. Describe the methods and meaning of the Maya ball game by gathering information from multiple sources and competing for mastery in teams.
L 18. Describe the methods and meaning of the Maya ball game by gathering information from multiple sources and competing for mastery in teams.
L 19. Analyze the Bonampak murals to define the roles of Maya rulers and compare them to other rulers of the ancient world.
L 20. Describe the basics of how Maya writing worked, and give examples of how the language and its uses compared to cuneiform, another writing system of the ancient world.
L 21. Explain how trade led to interaction and influence between different Maya regions and Mesoamerica broadly.

Taino Culture and the Ancient Caribbean | 2 Lessons

How did geography and a history of migration lead ancient peoples of the Caribbean to create a unique culture? How is that culture still influential today?

L 22. Identify and analyze examples of interaction with the natural environment and migration in a packet of primary and secondary sources depicting Taíno history, beliefs and ways of life.
L 23. Describe the ways in which Taíno cultural legacies are important to Caribbean and Caribbean-American people today.

Summative Assessment | 6 Days

In this multi-day in-class project (Lessons 24-29), students choose an individual city of the ancient Americas to research, then present their findings in the form of an illustrated codex during an "Amazing Cities of the Americas" celebration and learning session. These Unit 6.4 essential questions will drive their research:

- *How did this city's buildings or design mirror what its people believed and valued?*
- *How did this city use natural resources & physical features to its people's advantage in daily life?*

The project reinforces many of the key themes and objectives of Unit 6.4 while also going to the heart of what civics means. Students conduct research, engage in reflection, and speak about an issue relevant to the place they live, demonstrating their developing skills, knowledge, and dispositions as emerging citizens.