

America's Past - Fifth Grade Social Studies

Chapter 1: Geography of the United States

Students explore the difference between relative and absolute locations. In a Social Studies Skill Builder, students work in pairs to label features on maps and a diagram. They define geographic terms and apply them to the geography of the United States. They also determine absolute location with lines of latitude and longitude and identify physical features of the United States.

Chapter 2: American Indians and Their Land

Students learn why the first people migrated to North America and how they adapted to the different environments they encountered. In a Visual Discovery activity, students work in pairs, using maps and photographs to trace migration routes of the first Americans and to summarize how these groups adapted to different environments. Students take part in an act-it-out activity to focus on the adaptations made by the Inuit people in the Arctic.

Chapter 3: American Indian Cultural Regions

Students learn about seven American Indian cultural regions and the cultural adaptations made by the groups to the environments in each region. In a Response Group activity, students analyze historical artifacts from different American Indian groups and then compare and contrast life in different regions.

Chapter 4: How and Why Europeans Came to the New World

Students learn how and why explorers set out for the New World in the late 1400s and in the 1500s. In a Social Studies Skill Builder, pairs take on the role of underwater archaeologists to examine objects from an explorer's sunken ship. After reading about the objects, students categorize them as navigations tools, motives for exploration, or new products from the Americas.

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Chapter 5: Routes of Exploration to the New World

Students learn about European explorers who claimed land in North America from the late 1400s through the 1600s. In a Social Studies Skill Builder, students use an illustrated classroom matrix to organize information about each explorer. They then use this matrix to play a game in which they answer questions about the explorers.

Chapter 6: Early English Settlements

Students learn about three early English settlements in North America. In a Visual Discovery activity, students analyze images of Roanoke, Jamestown, and Plymouth to create act-it-outs that show why settlers came, the hardships they endured, and the reasons why each settlement succeeded or failed.

Chapter 7: Comparing the Colonies

Students learn about the similarities and differences among the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies. In a Problem Solving Groupwork activity, students create a billboard for one of six British colonies and then try to persuade other students to settle in their colony. Afterward, students read about the six colonies and evaluate the claims by each group.

Chapter 8: Facing Slavery

Students learn about the choices West Africans had to make to survive being enslaved and brought to the Americas. In a Response Group activity, student groups analyze and respond to three dilemmas faced by Africans during enslavement: trading slaves for guns in West Africa, surviving the Middle Passage, and living as a slave in the colonies.

Chapter 9: Life in Colonial Williamsburg

Students take a “walking tour” of Williamsburg to learn about daily life in the colonial Virginia capital. In a Writing for Understanding activity, students visit six stations representing sites in colonial Williamsburg to examine aspects of colonial life, such as government, social life, and religion.

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Students then write a letter describing life in Williamsburg and comparing it with life in their community.

Chapter 10: Tensions Grow Between the Colonies and Great Britain

Students compare the tense relationship between the colonies and Great Britain before the American Revolution to a strained relationship between a parent and child. In an Experiential Exercise, students plan a class party and then experience frustration when the PTA places restrictions on the party. Students relate their feelings to those of the colonists and then match metaphors of parent-child conflicts with key historical events.

Chapter 11: To Declare Independence or Not

Students learn about six prominent colonists, who are either Loyalists or Patriots, and record these leaders' viewpoints about American independence. In a Problem Solving Groupwork activity, student groups represent the six historical figures in a panel debate between Loyalists and Patriots.

Chapter 12: The Declaration of Independence

Students examine objects on Thomas Jefferson's desk, such as a letter and an invitation, to learn about the events and ideas that led to Jefferson's drafting of the Declaration of Independence. In a Social Studies Skill Builder, students record notes by completing missing parts of several objects. Then they paraphrase key excerpts from the Declaration of Independence in simple language. For each excerpt, groups create short skits that capture the key idea in that excerpt.

Chapter 13: The American Revolution

Students analyze how the American colonies defeated Great Britain in the American Revolution. In an Experiential Exercise, students engage in a tug-of-war that demonstrates factors that helped the American colonies win the American Revolution. Then, students take notes on such issues as the

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challenge Great Britain faced in fighting so far from home and the support the colonies received from European allies.

Chapter 14: The Constitution

Students compare the government set up by the Constitution to a three legged stool to learn how the government is strong and balanced. In a Social Studies Skill Builder, students play a game in which they are presented with a series of situations that the government might face and determine which branch or branches of government would resolve each situation.

Chapter 15: The Bill of Rights

Students learn about the Bill of Rights and several of its key amendments. In an Experiential Exercise, students work in small groups to create tableaux vivants, or living scenes, to represent key amendments in the Bill of Rights. Groups present their scenes to classmates who try to determine which amendment is being depicted.

Chapter 16: Manifest Destiny and Settling of the West

Students learn about the U.S. expansion into the West in the 1800s and how this affected those peoples who had already made their homes there. In an Experiential Exercise, students act as 19th-century settlers and migrate into the western territories of an outline of the United States. Students read about key lands acquired by the United States in the 1800s, and then create an annotated map showing how each territory became part of the U.S.

Chapter 17: The Diverse Peoples of the West

Students learn about the lives of six groups of people who lived in or moved to the West in the 1800s and how these groups were helped or harmed by the westward expansion of the U.S. In a Problem Solving Groupwork activity, students create interactive dramatizations about the experiences of westerners.

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Chapter 18: The Causes of the Civil War

Students learn about key events that led to the Civil War. In a Social Studies Skill Builder, students use a metaphor to compare prewar events with a story about a brother and a sister who disagree. Then students complete an illustrated storybook to reflect the growing tensions between the North and South.

Chapter 19: The Civil War

Students learn about the experiences of Union and Confederate soldiers during the Civil War. In a Writing for Understanding activity, students take a “walking tour” to visit five sites at the battlefield at Gettysburg in July 1863. At each station, pairs examine and take notes on written and visual information about aspects of the Civil War, such as military tactics and technology and combat conditions. Students then write a eulogy honoring those who fought and died during the Civil War.

Chapter 20: Industrialization and the Modern United States

Students learn about seven key historical periods since the Civil War that have changed life in the U.S. In a Social Studies Skill Builder, students work in pairs to create an illustrated timeline of modern American history. Then they play a card game to better understand the importance of these eras in today's United States.