

**The Department's Educational Philosophy and Guiding Principles**

The goal of the Social Studies Department is to provide students with the information and skills necessary to act as responsible global citizens. We believe that:

- Students learn best in a safe and comfortable learning environment that fosters mutual support, respect of differences, and active participation in the educational process.
- Students and teachers should be partners in the learning process.
- Students should be provided learning experiences that involve higher-level critical thinking and multiple learning styles.
- Students should be provided opportunities to connect the curriculum to something relevant in their own lives.
- Students should have opportunities to construct their own meaningful, relevant learning experiences.
- Students who have opportunities to better understand and reflect upon their own experiences are better equipped to more deeply understand the experiences of others.
- Students will be better prepared for the larger community and become active and thoughtful citizens when they believe that they have an important voice.

## **WE THE PEOPLE: GRADE 7**

Course Frequency: This course meets every day for the entire school year.

Credits Offered: N/A

Prerequisites: N/A

### **Background to the Curriculum**

Seventh grade is a challenging crossroads between childhood and adulthood. Students undergo tremendous changes. Here in Acton-Boxborough, seventh grade is especially challenging because students are making the transition from small familiar elementary schools to a larger, more complex and more diverse junior high school. The experience of coming from six different elementary schools to the junior high can be anxiety provoking for many students who are worried about their perceived differences and about “fitting in.” Increasingly, RJ Grey students come to the junior high school from many different backgrounds and experiences. Perhaps more so than in any other time in their lives, these young adolescents are struggling with issues of identity and acceptance.

Adolescence is a time when many students are preoccupied with who they are and how they fit into their school, community, and world – the ideal time to explore a curriculum focused on identity and the experiences of individuals and groups in American society.

The social studies curriculum was carefully created to help students through the complicated transition to adolescence and our junior high school. It has been revised many times and continues to be revised to meet the changing needs of our increasingly diverse school and society. The course is purposefully designed to create an environment in which all young people feel valued and respected.

Lessons encourage students to think critically and to be respectful of differences, individuality and varied points of view. By studying the experiences of individuals and groups during different periods in American history, students are able to draw connections between their own lives and those of others.

### **Core Topics/Questions/Concepts/Skills**

#### **Essential Questions**

1. How does one’s identity shape or affect one’s experiences?
2. How do stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination affect us and our nation?
3. Why is it important to be a critical thinker?
4. To what extent has our nation lived up to the values on which it was founded?
5. How as the “We” in “We the People” changed over time?

### **Critical Thinking Skills**

1. Identify and consider various perspectives and points of view
2. Identifying cause and effect relationships
3. Identifying, evaluating, and using supporting evidence (facts, quotes, statistics and observations) to back up answers, opinions, and conclusions, and to make predictions
4. Making inferences
5. Summarizing information to draw conclusions

### **Study/Organizational Skills**

1. Keeping an organized social studies binder
2. Using a plan book
3. Identifying study strategies for quiz/test preparation
4. Developing and using strategies to follow directions carefully

### **Writing Skills**

1. Writing a clear and complete sentence
2. Using proper capitalization rules
3. Using and properly writing supporting evidence
4. Writing an extended paragraph
5. Summarizing and writing a concluding sentence

## Unit I: Understanding Ourselves

### Objectives for Unit I: Understanding Ourselves (September – January)

#### I. Individual Identity

- A. Differentiate fact from opinion
- B. Define identity as one’s sense of self and who one is.
- C. Conclude that there are many factors that shape identity, including: name, religion, age, gender, family, ethnicity, personal experience, interests, abilities, etc., and that each of our identities is different (Resource: *Me Box*)
- D. Define perspective as the way we see and view things, often influenced by our life experiences (*In Zimbabwe We Don’t Cry for Lions*).
- E. Infer that the way others see us can affect the way we see ourselves (Resource: *The Bear That Wasn’t*)
- F. Define stereotype, prejudice and discrimination, and the cause and effect relationship between them
  - 1. stereotype: a frozen **idea** of a group or person which labels all of its members with the same characteristics
  - 2. prejudice: a strong **feeling** or attitude against a person or group, not based on facts or knowledge, often based on stereotypes
  - 3. discrimination: treating one person or group differently from the way you treat another; usually unfair treatment. Discrimination is the **action** one takes based on feelings of prejudice
- H. Define majority and minority
- I. Conclude that stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination can affect the experiences of an individual with a particular identity. (Suggested Resource: “Lunch Date” [video](#))
- J. Identify current day examples of the danger of stereotypes ([60 Minutes: Bum Hunting](#)) and the role they play in establishing and maintaining a social hierarchy
  - 1. if “Bum Hunting” is used, follow up by dispelling misconceptions about the homeless.
- K. Conclude that there is no such thing as a “positive stereotype.” (Model Minority)

## II: America's Roots

- A. Identify each of the 13 Colonies, the Appalachian Mountains, and Atlantic Ocean on a map.
- B. Infer from primary and secondary sources that women played an important role in Colonial America
  - 1. Students will differentiate strong from weak supporting evidence through the use of multiple sources
- C. Infer from primary and secondary sources that the status of women was subordinate to that of men.
  - 1. Identify “Coverture” as the legal status of women in Colonial America
- D. Define and distinguish between primary and secondary sources.
- E. Locate and label Africa, Europe, Great Britain, North America, and the Atlantic Ocean on a world map.
- F. Infer that African slaves coming to America soon after the founding of Jamestown had a status even lower than that of colonial women (primary sources: raffle picture, diagram of slave ship, account of Olaudah Equiano).
  - 1. Identify the Middle Passage as the journey for enslaved individuals from Africa to North America
- G. Define dehumanization as the process of depriving someone, usually through the way they are treated, of human qualities, personality or spirit; to make a person feel more like an animal and not an equal human being.
- H. Infer that slavery was a dehumanizing experience and provide supporting evidence from primary sources (same sources as C).
- I. Identify the “Social Contract” as the origin of the natural rights on which the Declaration of Independence is based
- J. Identify different perspectives on taxation: the debt incurred by King George III to pay for the defense of the colonists in the French and Indian War led to increased taxes in the Colonies and that colonists’ opposition was to their lack of voice in the process
- K. Identify actions of King George III and British Parliament that American colonists labeled as Tyranny (Sugar, Stamp Act, Tea Act, Townshend Acts aka Intolerable Acts)
- L. Identify the various perspectives of different players in the Boston Tea Party (colonists, merchants, ship owner)
- M. Recognize that the *Declaration of Independence* is a primary source document and the
- N. Define value as a core, motivating belief that guides your thoughts and actions.grievances the American colonists had against the King and Parliament.
- O. Identify the values of the promise of the Declaration of Independence as liberty, justice, equality, and opportunity
- P. Use the letters between John and Abigail Adams to infer that women were not included in the “We” in the Constitution’s “We the People”

- Q .Identify a democratic republic as the form of government chosen by the Founding Fathers when they created the government of the United States.
- R. Identify the *U.S. Constitution* as the foundation/structure of the government of the United States.
- S. Identify the shared pieces of identity of those who wrote the Constitution and those who were considered the “We” in “We the People”(Resource: *1790 Census*)
- T. Identify the three branches of government, their roles and responsibilities, and our system of checks and balances.
- U, Identify the Three-Fifths Compromise as the way in which enslaved men and women were counted, reflecting their position in the social and political hierarchy.
- V. Identify the first Ten Amendments to the *Constitution* as the *Bill of Rights* and the liberties they guarantee.
- W. Identify contemporary, school-based examples of the *Bill of Rights*. (Resource: *Supreme Court Cases Every Student Should Know*)
- X. From the short story “Harrison Bergeron,” infer that Vonnegut’s authoritarian society of the future was created by the slow, methodical, step-by-step increase in government power and reduction of personal liberties.
1. Identify Nazi Germany as a government in the 1930s and 1940s as one that used similar tactics, instituting gradual anti-Semitic and racial laws that eventually led to their ultimate goal of genocide.
  2. Identify the American Constitutional protections against an authoritarian government (checks and balances, free press, free speech, etc.)

## Unit II: A Nation of Change

### Objectives for Unit II: (January - June)

#### **I: Early America and Americans**

- A. On a world map, locate and label the United States, the continents, and oceans.
- B. Identify the 50 states on a map of the United States.
- C. Identify Native Americans as the first Americans who populated the Americas for thousands of years prior to 1600. (source: 1492 map showing location of tribes)
- D. Identify how the arrival of European settlers to the East Coast of modern day America led to the forced resettlement of Native Americans. (source: 1840 map that details Native American settlements)
  - 1. Identify the legend and individual symbols on the map that allow one to make that inference
- E. Infer that by the early 1800s, Native Americans were relocated from the Northeast, Southeast, and Midwest to territories in the West, eventually west of the Mississippi River. (source: 1840 map that details Native American settlements)
- F. Infer that the territory of the Native Americans was greatly reduced in the 1800s. (Resources: Historical maps)
- G. Identify the discovery of gold in Northwest Georgia as an impetus for the removal of Cherokee Indians from their homeland.
- H. identify the Indian Removal Act of 1830 as the legislation that allowed the U.S. government to remove Native Americans from their homelands.
- I. Identify how treaties, often broken by the U.S. government, were used to reduce the Native people's agency and sovereignty
- J. Identify current challenges faced by Native Americans in the United States, including unemployment, alcoholism, death of native language/culture, stereotypes and efforts to reclaim native heritage.(Resource: [30 Days](#))

#### **II. King Cotton and the Expansion of Slavery**

- A. Identify the cotton gin and the power loom as two inventions that enabled the mass production of cotton cloth.
- B. Infer that these inventions, in combination with land vacated by the Indians and slave labor, allowed cotton production to soar.
- C. Infer why American settlers and the U.S. government desired Native Americans' land in the Southeast, and why the number of slaves increased dramatically between 1800 and 1840 (even larger cotton plantations; cotton production on the rise).

- D. Infer that the life of slave on a cotton plantation became more brutal, demanding and dehumanizing.
- E. Identify Negro Spirituals as a way enslaved individuals maintained their humanity
- F. Infer that, though the status of slaves was lower than any other group, their role in the U.S. cotton-based economy of the South was very important.
- G. Identify leaders and strategies of abolitionist efforts and the role of allies in reform movements (William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Lucretia Mott, John Brown, Nat Turner, etc.).
- H. Identify how the abolitionist movement, and the exclusion of female abolitionist leaders, led to a more organized suffrage movement and planning of the Seneca Falls Conference

### **III: Introduction to Immigration and the Building of America**

- A. Define the following terms as they apply to immigration:
  - 1. Migrate: to move from one place to another
  - 2. Immigrate: to move to, or enter a country for the purpose of living there permanently
  - 3. Pushes: reasons for leaving one's country of origin
  - 4. Pulls: reasons that attract one to a specific country
    - a. (Infer that the American Dream was a pull for many immigrants and define it as rooted in the "Opportunity" value from the Declaration of Independence)
  - 5. Assimilation: the process of changing parts of your identity and behavior to adapt to and fit in more with the dominant culture.
  - 6. "Open Door" and "Closed Door" as they relate to Immigration policy.
  - 7. Nativism: the belief that white, Protestant, native-born Americans were superior to the incoming immigrants and were the "true" Americans.
- B. On a world map, locate and label:
  - 1. the four hemispheres
  - 2. the seven continents
  - 3. the five oceans
  - 4. the Equator and Prime Meridian
  - 5. the two poles



- C. Identify the Industrial Revolution of the 1800's as a time of tremendous change as the United States changed from an agricultural nation to an industrial nation.
- D. Infer the important **effects** that the Industrial Revolution and immigration had on one another – that each **caused** the other to grow; the American economy was able to grow to the largest in the world because of immigrant labor (Resource: Immigration/ Industrialization Flow Chart Manipulative)
  - 1. Immigration provided cheap labor for America to industrialize.
  - 2. Jobs in factories provided opportunities for new immigrants.
  - 3. By 1900, the U.S. had become the largest producer of goods in the world; this meant even more jobs for immigrants.
  - 4. Infer that people's willingness to work for lower and lower wages led to poor living conditions and inhumane working conditions for immigrants (long hours/weeks, no environmental protections, etc.).
  - 5. The lack of labor laws and regulation led to exploitation of workers, including children.
- E. Identify the unacknowledged roles that enslaved individuals have had in building the economy of the South and immigrants have had in building the economy of the North.
- F. From statistics, draw the conclusion that most immigrants came from Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- G. Identify Ellis Island as the port of entry for European immigrants during the latter 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (later to be compared to and contrasted with Angel Island) .

#### **IV: Immigration: 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

- A. Identify the Irish as a major immigrant group during the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century (East Coast)
  - 1. Identify the Potato Famine as the major push of millions of Irish emigrants to the East Coast of the U.S. in the mid 1840s.
  - 2. Identify stereotypes, discrimination, nativist and government reactions to the Irish: “*No Irish Need Apply*” *Know Nothings*, paddy wagons, violence, poor paying and dangerous jobs, etc. (nativist cartoons).
  - 3. Identify that being Catholic was the piece of the Irish immigrant's identity that led to nativist Protestant Americans' prejudice towards them and fear that they would be more loyal to the Pope than the United States
  - 4. Identify ways Irish assimilated and won respect: politics and participation in the Civil War on the Union, which won them greater respect from many who questioned their loyalty to the United States.

**V: The Roots of “Black Lives Matter”:**

*(Listed next to many objectives are modern-day connections with which you might choose to relate.)*

- A. Identify that slavery ends in 1865 with the end of Civil War and the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution.
- B. Identify issues of importance in the Black Lives matter movement and to modern-day African Americans (police brutality, voting barriers, income disparity, discrimination, sentencing disparities, prison pipeline).
- C. Identify that at the end of the Civil War there were nearly 4 million former slaves suddenly “free”, but without land, jobs, education; unable to read or write; little or no opportunity to relocate.
- D. Identify sharecropping as economic slavery that trapped many newly-freed slaves to the land on which they used to work.
- E. Identify the Jim Crow segregation laws of the South as an example of discrimination toward African Americans and an attempt to keep their status lower than White Americans.
  - 1. Define segregation as separating or isolating one group from a larger group; a form of discrimination
- F. Infer that Jim Crow laws led to a lack of equality in terms of public facilities and opportunities.
- G. Infer that Jim Crow laws were a purposeful attempt by racist white supremacists to create separate societies for Blacks and Whites in the South.
- H. Identify lynching as a physical and emotional threat, the role police and others in positions of power played, to African Americans and the role Ida B. Wells and Jessie Daniel Ames played in the anti-lynching movement.
  - 1. Connect the participation of police officers to police-related shootings of African Americans today
- I. Identify various voting barriers put in place to prevent African Americans from exercising their 13th Amendment Rights, such as the Poll Tax, Literacy Test, Grandfather Clause, threats of violence, etc. (Resource: *1965 Louisiana Literacy Test*)
  - 1. Connection to modern day voting barriers, including overturning the Voting Rights Act, Voter ID laws
- J. Identify the 14th Amendment as granting black citizenship and enshrining the “Equal Protection” Clause
- K. Identify the 15th Amendment as preventing states from using race as a factor in preventing someone from voting.
- L. Infer that many African Americans’ experiences of discrimination affected their feelings and behaviors, such as: feeling inferior, feeling frustrated and behaving passively. (reinforces conclusion: how others see us affects how we see ourselves).
- M. Infer from the poem “*We Wear the Mask*”, that the role of the “mask” in responding to acts of discrimination was to make Black Americans feel safer and less noticed to the white power structure.
- N. Identify some groups that currently wear a mask today, such as: Muslim-Americans, special education students, and gays and lesbians.

## **VI: “Universal” Suffrage**

- A. Identify that the Declaration of Sentiments was purposefully based on the language of the Declaration of Independence
  - 1. Identify which of the grievances listed in the Declaration of Sentiments are still relevant today and their connection to the #MeToo and gender equality movements
- B. Identify that prior to the passage of the 19th Amendment, women in different states had different voting rights
- C. Identify the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment as the Constitutional change that granted universal voting rights.

## **VII: 19th and 20th Century Immigration**

- A. Identify the Chinese as a major immigrant group during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (West Coast)
  - 1. Identify the West Coast of the U.S. as the region of entry for thousands of Chinese immigrants.
  - 2. Identify the Gold Rush as the first major pull of Chinese men to the United States
  - 3. Identify that Chinese immigrant labor built the Transatlantic Railroad and contributed to agriculture of the U.S.
  - 4. Identify stereotypes, discrimination, nativist and government reactions to the Chinese: Chinese Exclusion Act, boycotts, etc.
  - 5. Identify Angel Island as a processing and detention center where as many as 175,000 Chinese immigrants, plus thousands of immigrants from other countries, were detained and interrogated between 1910 and 1940.
  - 6. Infer from the poetry on the walls of Angel Island feelings/frustrations/resilience of many Chinese immigrants.
  - 7. Use Angel Island as an entry point to discuss those elements of our past we choose to preserve versus hide and forget (video on “rediscovery” of Angel Island in the 1970s - [“Discovering Angel Island”](#))
- B. Identify the Holocaust as a genocide during World War II when Nazi Germany systematically exterminated 10 million people, among them 6 million Jews, political opponents, gay men, the disabled, Catholics and Jehovah’s Witnesses and acts of resistance by those who were persecuted

## **VIII: 20th Century Migration**

- A. Define the Great Migration as the time period beginning in 1914 (WWI) when approximately 2 million African-Americans left the rural South for the cities of the industrial North.
- B. Identify three reasons the Great Migration occurred:
  - 1. The economic, political and social conditions in the South.
  - 2. Job opportunities created by WWI.

3. Stories and letters of the successes (real or imagined) from those who had headed north before them.
  4. The codification of "Separate but Equal" in the Plessy v. Ferguson decision
- C. Identify the Harlem Renaissance as the time period in the early 1900s that saw a blossoming of African American culture in the North.
- D. Infer from the music, literature and art of this period that the rebirth of African-American culture and an affirmation of African-American identity can be seen through the music, literature, and art of this period. (*Assessment Resource: Harlem Renaissance Project*)

### **IX: Justice at War - Japanese Internment Experience**

- A. Identify Japanese-Americans as a relatively small immigrant group of the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century when approximately 400,000 came to the U.S. between 1880 and 1920.
1. Identify Hawaii and the Pacific Coast of the U.S. as the two most popular destinations for Japanese immigrants.
- B. Identify the Japanese bombing of the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, as the event that precipitated the United States' entry into WWII, President Roosevelt's signing of Executive Order 9066 and the eventual internment of Japanese-Americans and Japanese immigrants.
- C. Define habeas corpus; identify amendments of the *Bill of Rights*, and specific sections of these amendments that one could argue were violated by the internment of people living in the U.S.
- D. Compare the establishment of Japanese Internment Camps to national security issues such as the Patriot Act and the detention of "enemy combatants" at Guantanamo Bay.
- E. Based on the Japanese internment experience and current events, weigh the balance between individual freedom and national security.
- F. Question the role of racism in the establishment of the Japanese Internment Camps: Italians and Germans were put in internment camps at a MUCH lower number, and no Italian-Americans or German-Americans were interned.
1. Recognize that no Japanese American was ever convicted of sabotage or espionage against the U.S. during World War II.
- G. Identify that the U.S. government eventually recognized that "racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership" is what led to Japanese internment.
- H. Identify that the U.S. government issued a formal apology for Japanese internment and provided reparation to survivors and their descendants. *Possible connection: Debate whether reparations should be paid today to members of the African American*

## **X. Civil Rights Movement**

- A. Define the Civil Rights Movement as the efforts by legal, educational, political, and religious groups to reclaim the rights guaranteed African Americans in the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments.
- B. Identify some strategies used for Black gains in the area of civil rights: political leadership, media exposure, organized group formation, economic power (sit-ins, boycotts), lawsuits.
  - 1. Students should select a current-day issue or movement that's important to them and identify which strategies of the Civil Rights Movement could be used today to bring about the change they desire. (An activity will be designed to allow students to engage in active citizenship based on an issue of importance to them.)
- C. Draw the conclusion that many Whites joined with Blacks to advance the goals of the Civil Rights Movements.
- D. Identify the important roles played by Martin Luther King, Jr. and his philosophy of nonviolent resistance, and Malcolm X and his philosophy of Black Power in the Civil Rights Movement.
- E. Identify national civil rights laws that were passed as a result of the Civil Rights Movement (Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act).
- F. Draw the conclusion that the Civil Rights Movement led to an increased awareness and growing activism of other groups not fully experiencing the promise of the Declaration of Independence, including women, Native Americans, the disabled, the economically disadvantaged, and the LGBTQ+ community.

## **XI. Immigration: Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century to Today**

*Note: Objectives A-D mandatory; E-J Teacher's Choice*

- A. Identify the Immigration Act of 1965.
- B. Form the conclusion that most immigrants since 1965 have been Latino, Asian, and African.
- C. Identify Latin America as the region from which the greatest number of immigrants have come to the United States during the second half of the twentieth century. Immigrants have left various countries in the region during these years. Of the top ten "sender" countries in first decade of the 21st century, four are Latin American and Caribbean: Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Jamaica; in the next ten are Haiti, El Salvador, Colombia and Peru.
- D. Identify Mexicans as the largest group of non-native born people living in the United States today.
- E. Debate/discuss current immigration issues which could include: who and how many immigrants to admit, illegal immigration, and the connection to national security.
- F. Identify the contributions that immigrants make to our country.

## Assessment

Assessment is used to analyze student performance over time and should include a variety of methods so that students with different learning styles have opportunities to demonstrate their understanding. Assessment should inform instruction and guide teachers to develop strategies that lead to improved student performance. Students should be actively involved in the assessment process through self-evaluation and reflection. They should be given expectations, goals, and criteria for assessment before any major assignment or project.

Our philosophy of learning, teaching and assessment has implications for the type of work we expect students to do. At a time when young adolescents are consciously beginning to think more abstractly and sharpen their analytical skills, students are expected to apply complex critical thinking skills. These include making inferences, drawing conclusions, and using supporting evidence. Students learn that history is a collection of primary and secondary sources expressing many different points of view. Primary sources, both visual and verbal, allow students to learn through the use of real-world resources, which make the learning process discovery-based. Though the process is more difficult, it is also more rewarding, as students learn to construct knowledge for themselves out of the primary sources. Students are expected to generate responses and complete projects, applying their complex thinking skills and knowledge. They are learning to work more responsibly and independently, as they learn to set benchmarks for longer-term assignments and projects.

## Materials and Resources

Materials and resources are constantly being added and updated. For each unit, students are provided with a wide variety of both primary and secondary source materials, which they are required to keep in an organized social studies binder.