

Unit 1: Global History

Aim: How are we connected?

Look at the Labels : An important economic concept is global interdependence. Students examine labels in their clothes to discover where items were manufactured. For homework, they can examine major appliances in their homes.

Product	Country of Origin
Shoes/Sneakers	
Shirts/Jackets	
Bags	
Cars	

Aim: Why does the world change?

Students list what they believe people need to survive. The entire class "brainstorms" a list on the board and evaluates ideas. In a follow-up lesson, students discuss how these items are made (produced) and acquired (distributed) in our society.

Aim: What questions do we want to study?

- * Divide students into teams of 4 or 5. Each team has a facilitator, recorder, and 2 reporters. Each team receives two or three old newspapers.
- * Teams find five articles that they believe are important for understanding events in the world today. They clip articles and write a brief explanation of why they selected each article. Reporter 1 writes headlines on the board.
- * Reporter 2 explains to the class why team selected each article.
- * Class sorts headlines into issues.
- * Class decides which "big" questions about world history and society and human behavior are being addressed by these headlines.
- * Questions are placed on poster paper and hung around the room.

Sample Essential Questions for Global History

Why focus on globalism or global history?

Does the world economy help or hurt the United States?

If the United States doesn't control other countries, won't another major power?

Are we studying underdevelopment or misdevelopment?

Isn't the west (US and Western Europe) the dominant force in the world?

Haven't imperialism and colonialism spread civilization, religion and technology?

How is culture created? How is it transformed?

Is there such a thing as "human nature"?

Is human behavior biologically determined or learned?

Should we respect all diversity? How do we deal with prejudice?

Are all societies created equal? Are some cultures superior to others?

Is there a relationship between geography, history, and culture?

Are geographic disasters acts of nature or caused by the behavior of people?

Does Western Civilization have an underlying direction?

Do "historical facts" depend on your perspective? Can we have objective history?

What (Who) is a terrorist? Do winners write history?

Can all conflicts be resolved?

What are our attitudes towards struggles for change?

How are societies transformed?

On the balance, do revolutions create more "good" or "bad"?

Is technology a blessing or an evil?

What is a multicultural approach to social studies? global history?

How should teachers address controversy in history? in the classroom?

Aim: Why do historians study history? Which quotes is closest to your idea about history?

Benjamin Franklin, 1758: "For the want of a nail the shoe was lost, for want of a shoe the horse was lost, For the want of a horse the rider was lost, For the want of a rider the battle was lost, For the want of a battle the kingdom was lost -- And all for want of a horseshoe-nail."

Lord Acton (Sir J.E.E. Dalberg), 1896: "It (The Cambridge Modern History) is a unique opportunity of recording . . . the fullness of the knowledge which the nineteenth century is about to bequeath. . . . Ultimate history we cannot have in this generation; but . . . all information is within reach, and every problem has become capable of solution."

Sir George Clark, 1957 (Introduction to The New Cambridge Modern History): "Historians. . . expect their work to be superseded again and again. They consider that knowledge of the past has come down through one or more human minds, has been 'processed' by them. . . . The exploration seems to be endless, and some impatient scholars take refuge in skepticism, or at least in the doctrine that, since all historical judgments involve persons and points of view, one is as good as another and there is no 'objective' historical truth."

E. H. Carr, 1961: "Scientists, social scientists, and historians are all engaged in different branches of the same study: the study of man (sic) and his environment, of the effects of man on his environment and of his environment on man. The object of the study is the same: to increase man's understanding of, and mastery over, his environment."

Lawrence "Yogi" Berra (Hall of Fame catcher and former manager of the New York Yankees and Mets), during the 1973 National League pennant race: "It ain't over 'til it's over."

"A Worker Reads History" by Bertolt Brecht

Who built the seven towers of Thebes?

The books are filled with names of kings.

Was it kings who hauled the craggy blocks of stone?

And Babylon, so many times destroyed,

Who built the city up each time? In which of Lima's houses,

That city glimmering with gold, lived those who built it?

In the evening when the Chinese wall was finished

Where did the masons go? Imperial Rome

Is full of arcs of triumph. Who reared them up? Over whom

Did the Caesars triumph? Byzantium lives in song,

Were all her dwellings palaces? And even in Atlantis of the legend

The night the sea rushed in,

The drowning men still bellowed for their slaves.

Young Alexander plundered India.

He alone?

Caesar beat the Gauls.

Was there not even a cook in his army?

Philip of Spain wept as his fleet

Was sunk and destroyed. Were there no other tears?

Frederick the Great triumphed in the Seven Years War. Who

Triumphed with him?

Each page a victory,
At whose expense the victory ball?
Every ten years a great man,
Who paid the piper?
So many particulars.
So many questions.

Aim: What are the criteria for accepting evidence?

- * How do you know what you know? (Evidence)
- * From what viewpoint is this being presented? (Perspective)
- * How is this event or work connected to others? (Connections)
- * What if things were different? (Suppositions)
- * Why is this important? (Relevance)

For centuries, philosophers have been puzzled over the question, "How do we know what we know?" Plato's "Euthyphro" is the story of a young man who charges his father with manslaughter because he caused the death of a servant. In the dialogue, Socrates questions Euthyphro about the certainty of his knowledge of right and wrong:

Socrates: "Do you really believe that you understand the ruling of the divine law, . . . so accurately that in the circumstances that you describe you have no misgivings? Aren't you afraid that . . . you may turn out to be committing an act of impiety yourself?"

Euthyphro: "No Socrates; I shouldn't be worth much, . . . if I didn't have accurate knowledge about all that sort of thing."

Socrates continues the dialogue with a series of questions that press Euthyphro to clearly define piety. Euthyphro tries to distinguish between pious and impious actions, but each definition he offers proves to be unsatisfactory because it includes categories of behavior or ways of knowing, which Euthyphro cannot accept as pious. Eventually, Euthyphro tells Socrates that he has another engagement, but promises to continue the discussion the next time they meet.

- Is Euthyphro's problem his lack of knowledge about the meaning of piety, the unfair nature of Socrates' questions, or some other factor(s)? Explain the reasons for your answer.

Aim: Map or Globe: Which Is More Accurate?

Compare the island of Greenland and the continent of Africa on a globe and on a standard Mercator projection map. On the map, they are roughly the same size. On the globe, Africa is considerably larger. Which is a more accurate representation of the relative sizes of Greenland and Africa? Why? If students can't resolve the issue through discussion, try the following demonstration.

- a. With a magic marker, draw a line representing the "equator" on a grapefruit and mark the "poles."
- b. Slicing through the "poles" with a knife, cut the grapefruit into six sections.
- c. Have student volunteers eat the grapefruit and return the peel (be sure to provide napkins).
- d. Flatten the peels and lay them out so the lines of the "equator" are touching. What happened when we tried to reproduce a three-dimensional sphere, the earth (the grapefruit), as a two-dimensional map? Why is Greenland larger on the map? Which is a more accurate representation of the Earth, the map or the globe? Why?

How Do We Define a Region?

Many geographic subdivisions (e.g., some national boundaries, or lines of longitude and latitude) are arbitrary. Others have a historical or cultural logic that is not apparent at first glance. For example, what is the Middle East? Allowing students to look at a map, let the class brainstorm the names of countries they believe should be included in the region. List all the countries on the board. When the list is complete, examine the suggestions, discuss their similarities and differences, decide on criteria for including countries in the region, and define the "Middle East."

Aim: What does the physical world look like?

Ecological Disasters: Acts of Nature or Acts of People?

The world is a changing place. The Sahara Desert is expanding into the Sahel region of Africa. Flooding threatens human life and property along the Mississippi River in the United States and the Ganges River in Bangladesh. Forests have disappeared in Northern India and Haiti. Are these changes caused by acts of nature or acts of people? The simple activity that follows illustrates the importance of preserving marsh lands to minimize the devastation caused by flooding.

- a. Place a dry sponge in an open plastic container. This represents the marshlands along the banks of a river. Slowly pour in a measured amount of water. This represents spring floods caused by snow melting in the Mississippi River's watershed area. The sponge expands and absorbs the water.
- b. Ring out the sponge and pour the water back into a measuring container.
- c. Replace the sponge with something the same size and shape that is nonporous (e.g., a plastic container filled with sand, a block of wood sealed with paint and weighted down so it doesn't float). This represents economic development (e.g., the construction of shopping centers that pave over the marshlands).
- d. Slowly pour the same measured amount of water into the plastic container. A devastating flood sweeps across the landscape.

Where Would You Build the City? Draw a map showing mountains, two branches of a river meeting, a coastline, and other natural features. Have students discuss where they would build a city and why. Compare their decisions to selected cities around the world.

Aim : How do we learn about ancient societies? (Archeology/ figuring out the past)

The premise of this project is that you learn to be a social scientist by being a social scientist. Begin the project by giving each student team a mystery bag containing artifacts from a "lost society." Bags can contain dried bones and seeds, shaped rocks, plant fibers, plastic and metal items, coins, children's toys, cans, written items, and so on. Teams examine the artifacts, reconstruct the society, and report to the class about their findings. During the reports, fellow archeologists ask questions about interpretations and possible inconsistencies.