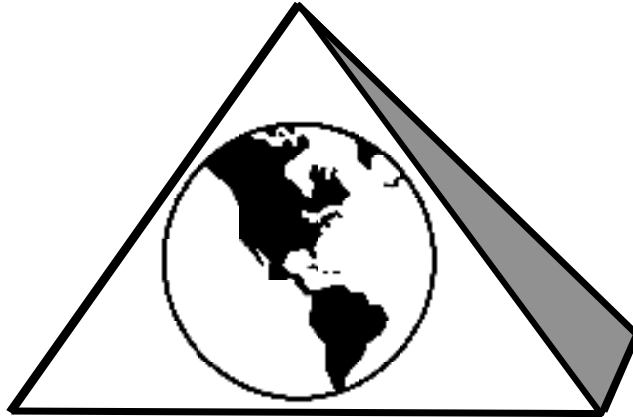


**STUDENT'S
FRIEND**

World History & Geography 1

Essentials of World History to 1500



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WHG1

The following pages describe significant people, places, events, and concepts in the story of humankind. This information forms the core of our study; it will be fleshed-out by classroom discussions, audio-visual materials, readings, writings, and other activities.

This knowledge will help you understand how the world works and how humans behave. It will help you understand many of the books, news reports, films, articles, and events you will encounter throughout the rest of your life.

World History & Geography 1

Essentials of world history to 1500

➡ History

What is history?

History is the story of human experience.

Why study history?

- History shows us how the world works and how humans behave.
- History helps us make judgments about current and future events.
- History affects our lives every day.
- History is a fascinating story of human treachery and achievement.

➡ Geography

What is geography?

Geography is the study of interaction between humans and the environment.

Why study geography?

- Geography is a major factor affecting human development.
- Humans are a major factor affecting our natural environment.
- Geography affects our lives every day.
- Geography helps us better understand the peoples of the world.

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Overview: waves of history

World history is the story of human experience. It is a story of how people, ideas, and goods spread across the earth creating our past and our present. To help us better understand this experience, we will divide history into four main eras: prehistory, ancient times, middle ages, and modern times. Our story begins during prehistory in east Africa where human life began. From Africa humans spread to Eurasia (Europe and Asia), to Australia, and finally to the Americas. Human migration was one of the great waves of history.

During most of history, most humans made their living by hunting and gathering. Then about 12,000 years ago, people in the Middle East learned how to cultivate a wild wheat plant, and agriculture was born -- another great wave of history. No longer were humans constantly on the move searching for food. People could settle in one place, build cities, and make inventions like the plow, wheel, and writing. The complex societies that resulted are what we call civilization, another wave of history and the start of ancient times. In terms of a human lifetime, waves of change moved slowly, and much stayed the same amid the changes.

Waves of history were channeled over the earth by geography. The first civilizations arose in river valleys where rivers provided fresh water for raising crops and transportation for moving crops to market. Beginning in Mesopotamia, civilization spread west to Egypt and east to India. These three civilizations formed an early international trading network that eventually extended across the connected lands of Eurasia and North Africa, a vast region that lies in a temperate climate zone where most of the world's people have lived since prehistoric times. More people meant more ideas, more inventions, and more diseases than in other parts of the world. Waves of change took longer to reach sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas because they were separated from Eurasia by physical barriers of desert and ocean.

As agriculture replaced hunting and gathering, human population increased. People in civilized societies divided themselves into unequal social classes with priests and kings at the top. Wealthy landowners collected rent payments from poor farmers, men came to dominate women, and slavery became common. In the grasslands of central Eurasia, nomadic people chose not to settle down and raise crops. They lived by herding animals from pasture to pasture with the seasons. They learned to ride horses, developed cavalry skills, and attacked settled communities. Sometimes these nomadic raiders conquered great civilizations.

During ancient times people in Eurasia invented many things that still define civilization today such as money, armies, iron, math, literature, democracy, and major world religions -- to name a few. Ancient times lasted for roughly 4,000 years, ending about 500 AD after nomadic raiders brought down great classical civilizations in India, China, and the Mediterranean. The middle ages followed and lasted a thousand years.

Change spread to new places mostly through trading contacts. Some people welcomed change, while others avoided change and tried to maintain traditional ways. In the late middle ages, China was a superpower with the greatest navy in the world until China's rulers chose to reduce contact with the outside world and dismantled the fleet. This choice opened the door for Europeans to make the great voyages of discovery that connected the world and began the modern era around the year 1500. Change was moving faster now.

Three centuries later, Europeans learned how to power machines by burning fuels, unleashing the Industrial Revolution -- another great wave of history. Change moved even faster. At first, Europeans used their machines to dominate other peoples of the world who lacked advanced technology. Then Europeans turned their machines on each other, launching two suicidal world wars that ended European world dominance.

The stream of time flows on. As always, we humans face challenges to our survival, but in our time the challenges are global. Modern technology is consuming the world's resources, threatening the earth's environment, and it has produced weapons that could end all human life. The world is tied together through communications and trade, but the world remains divided between the "haves" and the "have nots."

History created our past and our present, but the future is up to us. There is no instruction manual for the future, but we do have a guide that shows how the world works and how humans behave. That guide is history.

Some basic concepts of history and geography

1. primary and secondary sources

We learn about the past from historians. But, where do historians get their information? Usually, they study primary sources, which are sources created at about the same time as the event being studied, often by people involved in the event. Examples of primary sources include artifacts uncovered by archeologists, art works, government records, diaries, letters, speeches, and newspaper articles.

Historians also study secondary sources. These are sources created after the event by people not involved in the event. Examples of secondary sources include history books, textbooks, encyclopedias, and the *Student's Friend*.

After historians examine their sources, they write histories based on their understanding of the truth. But, what they write may be influenced by their own opinions or by lack of information. It is not possible for historians to know everything about a past event, so they must rely on the evidence left behind in the form of primary and secondary sources. If new evidence is found, interpretations of history can change.

2. BC and AD

People in different parts of the world have adopted many ways to mark the passage of time. The Chinese calendar counts years from the reign of the mythical Yellow Emperor in 2698 BC. The Islamic calendar numbers years from 622 AD when Muhammad fled from Mecca. Both calendars are based on lunar cycles. The year 2000 in our calendar is 4697 in the Chinese calendar and 1421 in the Islamic calendar.

Our solar calendar comes from ancient Egypt. It was modified during the middle ages in Europe, and it has been adopted by most of the world for official purposes. Years are numbered from the birth of Christ: years before year 1 are designated BC for "Before Christ;" years after year 1 are designated AD, an abbreviation for the Latin term Anno Domini, which means "in the year of the lord." AD years are counted forward from year 1; BC years are counted backward from year 1. Thus, 500 BC was earlier than 200 BC.

In recent years, people who wish to avoid the reference to Christ have begun using the term **BCE** (Before the Common Era) to replace BC and **CE** (Common Era) to replace AD. The terms BCE and CE are found in some history books. The *Student's Friend* uses the traditional terms BC and AD because they are more widely known in our culture, because there was no Common Era in history, and because non-Christians may object to the suggestion that the Christian era is the "common era" of humankind.

3. hemispheres

A hemisphere is any half of earth's surface; the term comes from the Greek word for half a sphere. The **equator** (zero degrees latitude) divides the earth into the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere. The dividing line between the Eastern and Western Hemispheres is not so well defined, but it is usually placed at the **Prime Meridian** (zero degrees longitude) or at 20 degrees west longitude.

North and South America and surrounding waters are considered to be in the Western Hemisphere, while the continents of Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia are considered to be in the Eastern Hemisphere.

4. climate zones

The earth has three main climate zones: the tropics, the temperate zones, and the arctic and antarctic regions. Although local climates can vary considerably within zones, the tropics are generally the warmest areas of the earth because they are near the equator where the sun's rays are most direct. The **Tropic of Cancer** is an imaginary line that circles the earth at 23-1/2 degrees north latitude, the northernmost point reached by the sun during our summer (on the summer solstice). The **Tropic of Capricorn** lies at 23-1/2 degrees south latitude, the farthest point south reached by the sun during our winter (on the winter solstice).

The arctic and antarctic regions are located near the earth poles where the sun's rays are least direct and weakest: thus these are the coldest areas of the earth. The **Arctic Circle** is an imaginary line that circles the earth at 66-1/2 degrees north latitude; the **Antarctic Circle** lies at 66-1/2 degrees south latitude.

Those areas of the earth that lie between the tropics and the arctic/antarctic regions are called the **temperate zones**, meaning areas where temperature and climate tend to be more moderate. Most of Asia, Europe, and North America lie within the northern temperate zone, which is a good place to grow crops. This is where most of the world's human population has been concentrated since prehistoric times.

Unit 1 - Prehistory: Origins of the Earth and Humans

LOCATIONS: Europe, Asia, Africa, Antarctica, Australia, North America, South America, Ural Mountains, Pacific Ocean, Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean, Arctic Ocean, Great Rift Valley, Bering Strait, the tropics, arctic and antarctic regions, temperate zones

5. Big Bang theory

Most astronomers agree the universe probably began with an event similar to an explosion, a big bang. The universe is a term for all of outer space including the planets, stars, and galaxies. Galaxies are clusters of hundreds of millions of stars, and there are hundreds of millions of galaxies in the universe. Our world, Earth, is located in the Milky Way galaxy, named after the milky-looking band of stars stretching across the night sky that is an edge-on view of our galaxy.

The Big Bang theory is supported by scientific observations that indicate galaxies in space are moving away from Earth. Astronomers use the speed of this movement to estimate the age of the universe at about 15 billion years. Many scientists accept a figure of about 5 billion years as the age of Earth.

6. continents

Geographers divide most of the land surface of the earth into seven large landmasses called continents. The continents are **Europe, Asia, Africa, Antarctica, Australia, North America, and South America**. Antarctica is the only continent not settled by humans. The **Ural Mountains** of Russia are considered the dividing line between Europe and Asia. Europe and Asia form a single large landmass called **Eurasia**.

The continents, however, cover less than a third of the earth's surface. Earth is mostly a water planet, and 97% of that water is found in the earth's four oceans, the **Pacific**, the **Atlantic**, the **Indian** and the **Arctic**. Because ocean water is salty, it cannot be used for drinking, farming, or manufacturing. Far less than 1% of the earth's water is **fresh water**, water that is not salty and can be used to grow crops.

7. plate tectonics

According to the theory of plate tectonics, the earth's surface is composed of about a dozen plates of solid material that slowly move as they float on a bed of magma, or molten rock. In other words, the surface of the earth resembles a cracked eggshell, and the pieces of the shell are moving. These plates include both the ocean floor and the continents. The continents are simply high areas on the plates above sea level, so both the continents and the sea floor move with their plates.

Earthquakes and volcanoes often occur at boundaries between plates as the plates push together, spread apart, or slide against one another. For example, the Pacific Plate is slowly grinding past the North American Plate in California creating enormous pressures along the San Andreas Fault that are expected to produce a major earthquake sometime within the next few decades. Plate tectonics continues to shape the earth's surface, as does **erosion** caused by wind and water. Scientists believe all of the present continents might have been together in a single large landmass long ago before they broke apart and drifted to their present locations on the earth. This super continent of the past is called **Pangaea**.

8. Great Rift Valley

This is a valley in eastern Africa where two of the earth's plates are spreading apart exposing the fossil remains of early humans. **Fossils** are the remains of living organisms that have been left behind after the living tissue has slowly been replaced by stone-like material that preserves the form of the original organism. Scientists believe the Great Rift Valley might be where human life began and spread to other areas of the earth, making humans the most widespread animal species in the world. If so, we are all Africans.

The **Olduvai Gorge** area of the Great Rift Valley has been the site of famous discoveries by the husband and wife team of Louis and Mary Leakey and other **paleontologists**. (Paleontologists are scientists who study the fossils of plants and animals.) Until the 1960s, it was thought human life began in Asia until the Leakeys found older human fossils in Africa. The Leakey's son, Richard, has written: "Humans are unique because they have the capacity to choose what they do... The most obvious product of our hands and brains is **technology**. No other animal manipulates the world in the extensive and arbitrary way that humans do." (Technology is a term for inventions and tools that help us do things better or more easily.)

9. Australopithecus

Australopithecus was an extinct member of the hominid family, the family tree that includes modern humans. Australopithecus lived in Africa from about 4 to 1 million years ago. The first discovery of an early Australopithecus was made in the Great Rift Valley, the skeletal remains of a female now called **Lucy**.

Because Australopithecus walked on two feet and had a relatively large brain, it might be considered an early human, although most scientists consider it prehuman. Walking upright was a big advantage; it gave Australopithecus a better view of the surrounding countryside, and it left both hands free to carry burdens and to use primitive tools and weapons. Australopithecus is Latin for “southern ape.” (Many scientific terms in use today are derived from Latin, the language of the ancient Roman Empire.)

10. Culture

Culture is a term for the knowledge and achievements passed on from one generation to another to form the way of life shared by a group of people. Most people living in Europe and North America share a common culture known as Western Civilization, also called Western culture or simply the **West**. The **East** refers to Asia, Asian culture, or Eastern Civilization. (This use does not correspond to the hemispheres.)

Human culture may have begun with **Homo erectus**, another extinct member of the hominid family, who lived from about two million to a half-million years ago. Homo erectus is Latin for “upright human.” Homo erectus was the first hominid to hunt large animals and the first to leave Africa, migrating first to Asia and then to Europe. Homo erectus adapted to warm tropical climates and to freezing cold temperatures.

Evidence from **archeology** indicates that Homo erectus developed a culture that included the construction of shelters and the use of hand axes and fire and maybe spoken language. (Archeology is the scientific study of the remains of past human life and human activities.) Fire was powerful; it meant that humans could keep predators away, eat better by cooking their food, and extend their habitat into colder climates. If the definition of human is the ability to create new inventions, Homo erectus probably qualifies.

Perhaps the most important invention ever created by humans was spoken language. Language is a set of sounds that gives humans the capacity to communicate, cooperate, organize, and plan for the future.

11. Homo sapiens

This is the biological classification for modern humans. The earliest Homo sapiens were **Neanderthals** (Homo sapiens neanderthalensis) who developed about 150,000 years ago and went extinct shortly after encountering a human species with more advanced technology. The species that replaced Neanderthals was us, Homo sapiens sapiens. The term Homo sapiens is Latin for wise human.

From Africa, Homo sapiens spread over Eurasia and later reached Australia and America during **Ice Ages** when water locked in ice sheets lowered the level of oceans. Land exposed at the **Bering Strait** formed a “land bridge” where Asian peoples likely crossed to America while following wild game herds some 20,000 years ago. Others might have migrated to America from Europe along the edge of ice sheets.

These travelers became the Native Americans of North and South America, the last continents to be occupied by humans. The arrival of these skilled hunters was followed by a die-off of large animals including horses and camels. A **strait** is a narrow body of water connecting two larger bodies of water. The Bering Strait, 50 miles wide, connects the Pacific Ocean to the Arctic Ocean between Russia and Alaska.

12. Stone Age

History has been divided into three eras based on the kinds of tools, or technology, that people used during these periods: the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age. By far the longest stretch of human history took place before and during the Stone Age, a period called **prehistoric** times, when people did not yet know how to read or write. The Stone Age began about 250,000 BC and ended about 4,000 BC when the Bronze Age began in the Middle East. (These ages began at different times in different places.) During the Stone Age, people learned to use fire and make stone tools and weapons; they also developed spoken language and farming. The earliest discoveries of human art are also from the Stone Age.

Paleolithic is a scientific term applied to the early Stone Age when humans made their living mostly by hunting, scavenging, or gathering wild food such as nuts and berries. **Neolithic** means the late Stone Age when agriculture began, and copper tools were developed. (Neo means new; lithic means stone. Both terms come from Greek, another ancient language that contributed to the modern language we use today.)

Unit 2 - Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt: Civilization is Born

LOCATIONS: the Middle East, Mesopotamia, Tigris and Euphrates rivers, Israel, Palestine, Mediterranean Sea, Sahara Desert, sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, Egypt, Nile river, Cairo

13. agriculture

Before the Neolithic period, most humans made their living by hunting and gathering, which meant that humans were constantly on the move following wild game herds. This began to change about 12,000 years ago when people in the Middle East discovered they could plant and harvest a wheat plant they found growing wild. At about the same time, people began to **domesticate** wild animals, raising them for food and as a source of power that could pull wagons and plows. (Agriculture means farming and raising livestock.)

People no longer had to follow the wandering animal herds; they could settle in one place, grow crops, and eventually build towns and cities. With permanent homes, people could collect more possessions, which encouraged the invention of new technologies such as pottery making and looms for weaving. Because agriculture could support more people per square mile than hunting and gathering, human population jumped from about two million people during the early Stone Age to about 60 million during the late Stone Age.

Farmers learned to grow more food than they needed for their own use, resulting in a **surplus**. Agricultural surpluses made it possible to accumulate wealth, and they led to **job specialization** because not everyone had to raise food to make a living. Some people could specialize in non-agricultural work -- like making pottery, or becoming priests or government officials -- and be supported by others from the agricultural surplus. Agriculture became the main source of wealth in most societies until the industrial age.

14. Jericho (JAIR-uh-koe)

Agriculture and irrigation began in an area of the Middle East called the **Fertile Crescent**. Villages grew near farmlands, and the world's first known city developed at Jericho in **Palestine** around 8,000 BC. Walls were built around Jericho to protect its agricultural surplus from **nomadic raiders**. Warfare, too, might have begun at Jericho. Agriculture later developed independently in China and in the Americas.

Hunting and gathering declined as agriculture became the way most humans made their living. Agriculture and other technologies spread fastest in Eurasia for several reasons: much of the Eurasia lies in a temperate zone suitable for agriculture; Eurasia had more plants and animals that could be raised by humans, and it had more people. Diseases, which often come from contact with animals, spread fastest in Eurasia too.

15. civilization

Agriculture made civilization possible because it permitted humans to settle permanently in one place, build cities, and develop complex societies. Large groups of people living together encouraged job specialization, the development of government, and written language, all of which are important features of civilization. **Writing** probably began as a way to record business dealings, especially the exchange of agricultural products. Cities and writing are often considered the primary indicators of civilization. When people started to write, prehistoric times ended, and historic times began.

Not everything about civilization was positive. Complex societies usually meant greater separation of people into classes based on social position or wealth. Often a wealthy class of **aristocrats** controlled the land and collected rents from poor farmers. Society became divided between the "haves" and the "have nots." Civilized societies also tended to be more warlike and more **patriarchal** (male dominated) than hunter-gatherer bands in which everyone helped to supply food that ensured the group's survival.

16. the Middle East

The Middle East is a popular term for a region that includes southwest Asia and northeast Africa, extending from Libya in the west to Afghanistan in the east. The terms **Near East** or **Southwest Asia** are sometimes used to identify parts of this region. We can trace Western culture back to the beginnings of civilization in the Middle East. It was also the birthplace of three major world religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Today the Middle East is important as the major oil-producing region of the world and as a hot spot of international tension including the Arab-Israeli conflict and two recent wars fought by the United States against Iraq.

17. Mesopotamia

Located in the modern country of Iraq, Mesopotamia is known as the “cradle of civilization” because it is here that civilization first began around 3500 BC, a date considered the beginning of **ancient times**. Mesopotamia is a **region**, not a country, within the larger region of the Middle East. Regions are the basic units of geography. A region is an area of the earth with consistent cultural or physical characteristics. Regions may be large like the Middle East, or they may be smaller like Mesopotamia.

Mesopotamia lies between the **Tigris and Euphrates** rivers; the name Mesopotamia means “between the waters” in Greek. Here farmers learned to build irrigation systems that turned the dry valley into a prosperous center of agriculture supporting many people. This is an early example of how humans can change the natural environment. As settlements in southern Mesopotamia grew into busy cities, this area called **Sumer** became the world’s first civilization. The Sumerians built walled cities and developed the earliest-known writing called **cuneiform**, in which **scribes** (record-keepers) carved symbols onto wet clay tablets that were later dried. The Sumerians are credited with writing the world’s oldest story, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, about the life of a Sumerian king. The Sumerian number system was based on 12, which explains why we have 60-minute hours, 24-hour days, 12-month years, and 360-degree circles.

18. religion

We can find the beginnings of religion in Neanderthal burials that included food and tools, presumably for use in the afterlife. Religion may have begun as a way to cope with misfortune and with the human awareness of death. Early religions usually worshiped several gods, a practice called **polytheism**.

Religion was extremely important in Sumer where priests were originally the most powerful people in society. Later, warrior kings would take control. Priests supervised the worship of seven great gods: earth, sky, sun, moon, salt water, fresh water, and storm. Sumerians believed their gods lived in statues housed in temples including large pyramid-like structures called **ziggurats**. Priests fed the god statues daily.

19. Code of Hammurabi

Because the fertile valley of Mesopotamia had no natural barriers for protection, its wealth attracted many raiders and conquerors over the centuries. Civilizations came and went amid much warfare. One of the most powerful civilizations to arise in Mesopotamia was **Babylon** (1900 to 500 BC).

Hammurabi was an early king of Babylon who created an **empire** by bringing much of Mesopotamia under his control. (An empire is a collection of states [countries] controlled by one government.) Hammurabi helped unite the Babylonian empire by publishing a set of laws known as the Code of Hammurabi, history’s first known written laws. He had the 300 laws of the code carved onto stone pillars for all to see, which meant that nobody was above the law; it applied to everyone. The goals of Hammurabi’s Code included, “stable government and good rule...that the strong may not oppress the weak.”

Babylon later became known for its hanging gardens, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and for the **decadent** life-style of its people; “a Babylon” now means a place of corruption and sin. The Bible mentions the **Tower of Babel**, probably a ziggurat, that the builders hoped would reach to heaven. In response to their arrogance, God confused the builders’ language so they could no longer understand one another’s speech. The Bible says this is how the people of the world came to babble in different languages.

20. Hebrews

The Hebrews were an ancient people of the Middle East who established the kingdom of **Israel** at the eastern end of the **Mediterranean Sea** about 1000 BC. There they founded the religion of **Judaism**. Judaism was unusual because it worshipped only one God (**monotheism**). It was also a universal religion that could be worshipped anywhere; it was not tied to a particular place like the gods of Sumer.

The Israelites were conquered by the Babylonians in the 500s BC and taken to Babylon in chains. During the exile in Babylon, Jewish scribes began to write the Bible in an effort to preserve Hebrew culture and religion. Laws contained in the Bible such as “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” have a basis in the Code of Hammurabi. (The Jewish Bible is what Christians call the Old Testament.) Over the centuries since then, Jews have settled in many parts of the world, but they have maintained their identity as a people.

In an effort to regain their Ancient homeland in the Middle East, Jews took over Arab lands in Palestine following World War II, which resulted in years of conflict between Jews and Arabs that still continues.

21. Bronze Age

The Stone Age was followed by the Bronze Age when people learned to make bronze tools, ornaments, and weapons. Bronze is made by combining copper with tin, which produces a harder metal than copper alone, and it holds an edge much longer. The Bronze Age was a time of great invention; the wheel, plow, writing, money, cities, armies and chariots all came into use during the Bronze Age in Mesopotamia.

The Bronze Age is important in history as the period when civilization and writing began, marking the end of prehistoric times and the beginning of ancient times. In Mesopotamia, the Bronze Age lasted from roughly 4000 BC to the beginning of the Iron Age around 1000 BC.

22. Egypt

Not long after the world's first civilization arose between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Mesopotamia, civilization spread west to the **Nile River** valley of Egypt. Egyptians probably learned about irrigation, the plow, writing, and other technologies from Mesopotamia. Egypt is said to be a "gift of the Nile" because the river provided irrigation water, fertile soils due to annual floods, and easy transportation by boat. Boats on the Nile were pulled north by the Nile's current, and they sailed south with the prevailing winds. Egyptians considered the river sacred; it separated the "land of the living" on the east bank (where the sun rises) from the "land of the dead" on the west bank (where the sun sets).

Egypt's two main geographic features are the Nile and the Sahara Desert. Ancient Egypt was a long, narrow oasis along the river in the desert. It has been said, "geography is destiny," and perhaps this was true in Egypt where the Nile was the lifeblood of the country, and the desert provided natural barriers to enemies permitting ancient Egyptian civilization to last for 3,000 years, the longest in history (3100 BC to 30 BC).

Ancient Egyptians had a polytheistic religion; their important gods included Ra, god of the sun and creator of life, and Osiris, god of rebirth. The struggle between Osiris and his evil brother Set represented the eternal struggle between good and evil. Many works of art, literature, and architecture survive from ancient Egypt including huge tombs of the pharaohs, the Sphinx, and the great pyramids near Cairo, which is Egypt's modern day capital city. The ancient Egyptians also developed a 365-day calendar based on the solar year. Their calendar was adopted by the Roman Empire and became the calendar we use today.

23. pharaohs

Pharaohs were the kings of ancient Egypt who were worshipped as gods. Their wealth came from the bountiful agriculture made possible by the Nile. Egypt's Pharaohs controlled strong central governments that built massive public works such as the irrigation systems that tamed the Nile's floods allowing agriculture to flourish in the desert. The pharaohs also built impressive temples and monuments that still stand today. Notable among Egypt's pharaohs were Ramses II (Ramses the Great) who was a warrior as well as a builder of great temples and statues, and Queen Hatshepsut, the first important woman ruler in history. Cleopatra was the last queen of the thirty-one **dynasties**, or ruling families, of Egypt.

The best-known pharaoh is **Tutankhamen**, or King Tut, who died at the age of eighteen. Although his reign was not very important, he became famous in our time for the discovery of his unlooted tomb in the 1920s, the only tomb of a pharaoh found intact. Grave robbers looted the other tombs centuries ago. Although Tutankhamen was a minor king, his tomb contained fantastic riches: over 5,000 objects in four rooms including a spectacular life-like mask of solid gold that covered the head and shoulders of his mummy (his preserved body). King Tut's tomb is one of the most impressive archeological discoveries of all time.

24. government

As societies grew larger, government became necessary to provide an orderly way to make decisions, to maintain public order through police and courts, and to supply services that were not provided by merchants. In the hot Egyptian desert, for example, lack of water could mean starvation and death. Only government could ensure that all farmers received their fair share of water and that all farmers maintained their ditches so irrigation systems did not break down.

Today, governments still maintain public water systems, and they perform other functions not provided by business such as national defense and education. Major types of governments in history have included **monarchies** (kings & queens) based on rule by a royal family or dynasty, **democracies** based on rule by the people, and **dictatorships** in which one person takes control of a nation, usually with help from the military.

25. pyramids

Ancient Egyptians were preoccupied with religion and the afterlife. The status of priests in Egyptian society was just below that of pharaohs. For a person to enter the next life, the body had to be preserved through mummification and religious rituals performed by priests. Skilled embalmers prepared the body by removing the vital organs, then drying and wrapping the body in strips of linen. Eventually, ordinary Egyptians were mummified, and archeologists have even discovered an ancient Egyptian cemetery filled with mummified cats. All Egyptians, including pharaohs, had an incentive for doing good during their lives; the Egyptian religion held that good works were necessary to enter the afterlife.

The most famous burial tombs of ancient Egypt are the great pyramids at Giza near Cairo. These and other tombs were built to house the bodies of pharaohs for the afterlife. The pyramids are the oldest and the only remaining examples of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Without iron tools or wheeled vehicles, workers cut, moved, and lifted millions of limestone blocks weighing an average of 2.5 tons each. Archeologists believe the workers who built the pyramids were not slaves, but valued members of society who lived in a nearby community with their families. Standing guard over the pyramids at Giza is the **Sphinx**, a great rock sculpture with the head of a pharaoh and the body of a lion. The age of pyramid building in Egypt lasted from about 2700 BC to 1000 BC.

26. hieroglyphics

This was the ancient Egyptian system of writing that used pictures to represent words or syllables. Hieroglyphics preserved records of ancient Egyptian culture for thousands of years. Egyptians carved hieroglyphics into stone, and they wrote on **papyrus** made from a reed plant that was pressed and dried to make a paper-like material. Paper gets its name from papyrus. Papyrus was rolled onto scrolls, which made written records lightweight, compact, and portable.

Modern people did not understand Egyptian hieroglyphics until the **Rosetta Stone** was discovered in Egypt by Napoleon's armies in the late 1700s. Carved into the Rosetta Stone was a message written in hieroglyphics along with a translation in Greek. Modern scholars understood Greek and used it to break the code of hieroglyphics. Now we can read about details of life in ancient Egypt ranging from love poems to surgical procedures. A "Rosetta Stone" has come to mean the key to understanding a difficult problem.

27. Africa

Egypt is located in the northeast corner of Africa, which is the second-largest continent after Asia. Africa's major geographic features include the Sahara Desert in the north, the Kalahari Desert in the south, and tropical rain forests centered on the Congo River basin in south-central Africa. In eastern Africa are the Great Rift Valley, the Nile river, and Africa's highest mountain, Mt. Kilimanjaro. The **savanna** is a large land area in central and southeast Africa with grasslands and scattered trees. The savanna is home to many of the famed large wild animals of Africa including lions, giraffes, and elephants.

The **Nile** is the longest river in the world. It originates in the highlands of central Africa and flows north for more than 4,000 miles to the Mediterranean Sea where it forms a wide triangle-shaped **delta** in northern Egypt. Deltas are flat areas of land that sometimes form at the mouths of rivers where the rivers deposit sediment as they flow into the sea. Because of their abundant wildlife and plant life, deltas have always attracted humans. Egypt's two largest cities, Cairo and Alexandria, are located on the Nile River delta.

28. Sahara Desert

The Sahara Desert is about the size of the United States, which makes it the largest dry desert in the world. It extends from the Atlantic Ocean on the west to the Red Sea on the east, and it is still expanding to the south. The Sahara separates **North Africa** from sub-Saharan Africa. North Africa borders the Mediterranean Sea and includes the Sahara and lands lying to the north of the desert including the Atlas Mountains and the modern countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the land that lies south of the desert. It has sometimes been called "black Africa" because people living there have darker skins than North Africans. Dark skin appears to be an adaptation to climate. People living in the tropics need more skin pigment to protect them from intense rays of the sun, while people living closer to the earth's poles have paler skins to absorb more sunlight. People with black skins also live near the equator in India and Australia. It's been estimated that it took roughly 20,000 years for skin color to change from black to white as humans spread north out of Africa.

Unit 3 - Ancient India and China: Civilization Spreads East

LOCATIONS: India, China, Japan, Asia Minor (Turkey), East Asia, Indus River, Yellow River, the steppes, Silk Road, southern ocean trade route, Himalayas.

29. Asia

Asia is the world's largest continent, sharing the landmass of Eurasia with Europe. The **Ural Mountains** of Russia are considered the dividing line between Asia and Europe. Asia was the site of three of the world's earliest civilizations in Mesopotamia, India and China. Today Asia has three-fifths of the world's population and the two most populous countries in the world, China and India. Because Asia is so huge, geographers have divided Asia into several regions. On the western side of Asia is the Middle East, which includes Asia Minor (present day Turkey). Farther east is central Asia. To the south lies the Indian subcontinent. On the eastern side of Asia are East Asia (sometimes called the Far East) and Southeast Asia.

30. India

Most of the country of India is a triangular-shaped **peninsula** that juts into the Indian Ocean. Due to its central location on the Indian Ocean between China and the Middle East, India became the ancient world's largest trading center. India also gave the world important new ideas including the numbering system we use today and the religions of Hinduism and Buddhism. Today India is the second most populous country in the world after China, and India is the world's largest democracy. The capital of India is New Delhi. India and nearby countries form a region known as the **Indian subcontinent** or **Southern Asia**.

After civilization first emerged in Mesopotamia and Egypt, it spread east to India. The earliest civilization in India grew along the Indus River valley of western India (now Pakistan) around 2500 BC. The **Indus Valley Civilization** had a written language and large cities with sophisticated plumbing systems. These were the first people to grow cotton. Ships and overland trade **caravans** connected India to Mesopotamia and Egypt in an early international trading network. The Indus Valley Civilization lasted for about a thousand years; it was replaced by a new culture ruled by nomadic raiders arriving from central Asia.

31. the caste system

The chariot warriors from the north who took control of India are called **Aryans**. Because India's early cities collapsed, and the Aryans were illiterate (could not read and write), civilization was lost in India for several centuries. Nonetheless, the light-skinned Aryan invaders from the north made themselves the ruling class in the caste system, a social system that still has influence in India today. Under India's caste system, people were born into permanent classes for life, and they could marry only within their own caste.

There are four main castes with complicated rules of behavior: 1) the priests, 2) the warriors, 3) the merchants, and 4) the common people, mostly peasants and laborers. Most people of ancient India were members of the commoner class, which had limited rights. A fifth group, the Untouchables, was outside the caste system. Considered not human, Untouchables performed the worst jobs such as cleaning toilets and burying the dead. While the caste system may seem unfair to us today, it provided a means for different kinds of people to live together peacefully while avoiding the slavery common to many ancient cultures.

32. Hinduism

Hinduism is the oldest major religion in the world today; it survived so long by changing and adjusting to new circumstances. To Hindus all religions are acceptable, and the practices of other religions may be included as part of Hindu worship. Hindus believe in an eternal and infinite spiritual principle called Brahman that is the ultimate reality and foundation of all existence. Brahman can take the form of many gods including Brahma the creator of the universe, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer.

For Hindus, a proper life is unconcerned with worldly riches; the goal is to seek union with Brahman, a quest that may take many lifetimes. Hindus believe in **reincarnation**, meaning the soul never dies and may be reborn again in a different body. **Karma**, all of the actions of a person's life, will determine if a person returns in the next life at a higher level on the ladder of incarnation and closer to union with Brahman.

Hinduism is the largest religion of India and a defining feature of Indian culture. Hinduism and the caste system served to maintain order among India's many ethnic groups because each person knew his or her place in society, and people who followed the rules could hope to move to a higher caste in the next life.

33. Buddhism

Not everyone in India was satisfied with Hinduism. In the 500s BC, a young Hindu prince raised in luxury became troubled by the suffering he saw in the world. He left his wife and infant son to become a wandering monk, seeking a way to end the suffering. After six years of solitary searching, he found an answer and began to teach. His followers called him the “Buddha” or “the enlightened one.”

Buddha taught that our life in the physical world is merely an illusion. When people let go of their worldly pain and worries, they can unite with the universal soul and achieve a state of complete peace called **nirvana**. Like Hindus, Buddhists believe nothing is permanent, that life constantly moves through cycles of birth, death, and rebirth like the turning of a wheel. Although Buddha accepted the Hindu belief in reincarnation, he taught that people could achieve nirvana from their actions in this life alone, and he rejected the caste system. For these reasons, Buddhism became popular among the lower classes in India.

Today Buddhism is a major world religion. Although it began in India, Buddhism spread to the east and declined in India as Buddhism was absorbed into Hinduism. Buddhists are now found in the greatest numbers in East Asia and Southeast Asia.

34. Asoka

Centuries after the Indus Valley Civilization died, cities and civilization arose again farther to the east in the fertile **Ganges** river valley. India was torn by warfare between kingdoms until the first Indian empire was established in the Ganges valley by the **Mauryan** dynasty in 324 BC. Its greatest leader was Asoka, who extended his empire to the south in a bloody invasion that conquered all but the southern tip of India.

Then Asoka had a sudden change of heart. He publicly announced his grief at the suffering caused by his armies, and he rejected violence. He even gave up hunting and eating meat. Asoka converted to Buddhism, and he spread Buddhist ideals throughout India and to neighboring countries. Ruling India with Buddhist ideals, Asoka’s government promoted the welfare of the people by kind acts such as digging new wells, building hospitals for people and animals, allowing freedom of religion, and easing harsh laws.

Asoka also encouraged long-distance ocean trade. It was during his reign that India became the center of a vast southern ocean-trading network that stretched from China to Africa and the Middle East.

35. Gupta Empire

Historians consider the Mauryan Empire and the Gupta Empire that followed (in the 300s and 400s AD) to be the greatest civilizations of India’s **classical period**, a period when India underwent great cultural and political advancement. The reign of the Gupta Empire has been called India’s “golden age,” a high point of Indian history when art, drama, literature, and science flourished.

Gupta mathematicians invented the zero, an amazing number with no value that gives value to the place of other numbers. The zero made it possible to calculate numbers faster and more accurately, and it was adopted the world over. Doctors developed an inoculation against smallpox. Farmers learned how to turn the juice from sugarcane into dried sugar crystals that could be easily stored and traded over long distances. Cotton from India clothed people across much of the ancient world. Gupta India was a land of wonders.

The Gupta Empire declined in the early 500s AD when tribes of nomadic horsemen called **Huns** invaded from grasslands to the north, but the cultural patterns that developed during India’s classical period created a vital civilization in southern Asia that endures to this day.

36. nomadic raiders

People of ancient times developed four basic patterns for making a living. Some were still hunters and gatherers stalking wild game herds, but most people lived in farming villages. Another group lived in cities supported largely by wealth from agriculture. A fourth group lived in **pastoral** societies; these were nomadic herders of the grasslands who did not settle down in one place like farmers. They moved their domesticated (tame) animals -- sheep, goats, cows, horses, and camels -- from pasture to pasture with the seasons.

Pastoral people were mobile, and they developed military tactics to protect their animals from thieves. Pastoral nomads of the **steppes** (grasslands of central Eurasia) became skilled at using horses in warfare, and they sometimes raided settled communities. These were the nomadic raiders who attacked Jericho, Sumer, the Gupta Empire, and others. Many governments of Eurasia began with nomads sweeping in from the steppes and taking control. Centuries of warfare between nomadic raiders and civilized peoples in Eurasia led to advancements in military organization and technology unmatched elsewhere in the world.

37. China

The world's fourth great civilization also got its start along a river valley, the **Yellow** river of northeastern China where farmers grew millet and wheat. Farming later moved south to the **Yangtze** (YONG-zuh) river, where rice production led to an increase in China's population. The land between the rivers became the center of Chinese civilization, the so-called "Middle Kingdom." Early Chinese culture grew in relative isolation due to physical barriers and long distances that separated it from other major civilizations of Eurasia. The world's highest mountain range, the **Himalayas**, separate China from India.

The Chinese have long believed in a **philosophy** that recognizes a fundamental balance in nature between opposite but complimentary principles called **yin and yang**. Examples include day-night, hot-cold, wet-dry, and male-female. Central to Chinese philosophy and religion is a belief that people should avoid extremes and seek harmony with the balance of nature. (A philosophy is a system of basic beliefs about life.)

With nearly one-fourth of the world's population, China today is the world's most populous country, and it has a fast-growing economy. China was a superpower in the past, and it has become a superpower again in this century. China and its neighboring countries of Mongolia, Korea, and Japan form a region bordering the Pacific Ocean known as **East Asia** or the Far East.

38. mandate from heaven

The **Zhou** (JOH) dynasty took control of China in 1122 BC and ruled for nearly 900 years. To give their government legitimacy, Zhou and later Chinese rulers claimed to rule with approval from the gods, a mandate from heaven. Although this claim was meant to enhance the emperor's authority, it also established the right to overthrow an ineffective emperor. The emperor was expected to protect his people by ruling in a way that pleased the gods. If trouble developed in the empire -- droughts or military defeats, for example -- people might say the emperor had lost his mandate from heaven, and the emperor could be overthrown.

Over many centuries, China's history experienced a recurring pattern. A ruling dynasty would start out strong and gradually weaken over time until it was replaced by a new dynasty. Then the pattern would repeat. Zhou rulers controlled their kingdom through a **feudal system**, meaning they divided the land into smaller territories and appointed officials to govern them. When the Zhou dynasty eventually weakened, some of these territories developed into strong states that opposed the emperor and began fighting among themselves. These bloody conflicts lasted for over two centuries, a time called the "Warring States" period.

39. Confucius

Confucius was born in 551 BC when Zhou rulers were losing control of their empire. He tried to return harmony to China with a philosophy based on devotion to the family, respect between the classes, high moral ideals, and learning. He emphasized individual duty and responsibility, what we might call a strong work ethic. The family was the center of Confucian society with the father at the head. The mother and children owed total obedience to the father. Family ancestors were honored and not forgotten.

Confucius promoted an orderly society in which people of higher rank were courteous to those below, and those of lower rank were respectful to those above. Confucius said a ruler should act like a good father and lead by example, not through power and harsh laws. "When the ruler does right, all men will imitate his self-control." While the teachings of Confucius were not influential in his lifetime, they soon became a guiding philosophy of Chinese civilization, and they still exert a strong influence on Chinese culture today.

40. The First Emperor

One of China's warring states, the **Qin** (CHIN) kingdom of western China, grew wealthy from agriculture based on extensive irrigation. With this wealth, the Qin ruler raised a powerful army and spent twenty years ruthlessly conquering China's warring states. He declared himself First Emperor in 221 BC. Thus, it was the First Emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi, who created the country of China and gave China its name.

In order to unify China, the First Emperor stripped the regional warlords of their power, and he forced them to move to the capital where he could control them. He also standardized the Chinese language, money, roads, and weights and measures. The First Emperor ruled with a philosophy that considered people selfish and evil by nature; he adopted strict laws and harsh punishments to keep people in line. He also tried to control what people could think. It is said he buried scholars alive, burned books including the teachings of Confucius, and he brutally eliminated those who disagreed with him.

41. Great Wall of China

Natural barriers protected China on three sides: oceans to the east and south, mountains and desert to the west. But, China's northern border lay open to attack from Huns. The First Emperor ordered a number of individual walls joined together to form one great stone wall to defend China's northern border from attack. Hundreds of thousands of laborers worked on the Great Wall for years, and many workers died under the harsh conditions. Gates in the wall became centers of trade with the nomadic peoples who lived outside. The Great Wall was repaired and rebuilt a number of times over the centuries, and parts of it still stand.

The First Emperor also built for himself a magnificent underground tomb, and nearby he buried a **terra-cotta army** of life-size soldiers to protect him for eternity. (Terra cotta is the brownish-orange pottery used today to make flowerpots.) One pit contained sculptures of 6,000 **infantrymen** (foot soldiers), and a second pit held the **cavalry** (mounted soldiers) complete with life-size horses, all arranged in battle formation. Each clay soldier was modeled after an actual soldier of the emperor's army. One of the great archeological finds of the twentieth century, the terra-cotta army was uncovered accidentally in 1974 by a farmer digging a well.

Hoping to find a way to avoid death, the First Emperor experimented with a number of potions until he killed himself by accidental poisoning. The Qin Dynasty lasted for only fifteen years, but it began a Chinese tradition of strong central governments controlled by powerful rulers.

42. Han Dynasty

The harsh rule of the First Emperor was so unpopular that the Qin Dynasty was overthrown shortly after the emperor's death. Following a period of civil war, the Han Dynasty took control of China in 206 BC. Han rulers adopted Confucian ideas about creating a respectful and orderly society, and they set-up a **civil service system** to run the government with well-educated officials chosen by written tests.

The Han Dynasty expanded China's empire to the south and west, and it produced marvels that would change the world including the ship's rudder, the magnetic compass, and paper. The four-hundred-year reign of the Han Empire was so successful that it is considered the greatest of China's classical dynasties. The Han Empire eventually weakened, fell apart, and was replaced by three kingdoms in 220 AD. About a hundred years later, Hun invaders took control of the Chinese heartland. The period of classical civilization in China was over, but the Chinese were left with an enduring belief that China was the center of civilization.

43. the Silk Road

During the Han Dynasty, regular trade began over the Silk Road, actually a network of trails that stretched 4,000 miles from China to the Roman Empire. Only the Chinese knew how to raise silkworms and weave silk; Chinese silk was worth its weight in gold in Rome. Europeans also acquired a taste for other Asian luxury goods including spices, a taste that would later send Columbus on his voyages of discovery.

The Silk Road was a two-way street. Asian goods were traded for Western goods, which flowed back along the Silk Road to China. Imports from the west to China included gold, silver, powerful horses, new foods, and Buddhism. This overland trade was made possible by the camel, the "ship of the desert," with its large padded feet for walking on shifting desert sands and its ability go long distances without food or water.

Trade routes such as the Silk Road were pioneered by nomads. For a price, nomads provided caravans with pack animals and protection. The Silk Road in the north joined with the southern ocean shipping routes to form a trading web that spread goods, technologies, and ideas between Asia, Europe, and North Africa

44. Iron Age

The Bronze Age was followed by the Iron Age. This is when people learned how to use a draft of air from a furnace or bellows to produce the hot temperatures needed to melt iron from iron ore and to shape it into tools and weapons. Iron was much stronger than bronze, and it was less expensive because iron ore was easier to find than the tin needed to make bronze. Iron working not only meant better tools and weapons, it meant lots more of them, a major technological change.

Iron working probably began in the Middle East about 1200 BC and quickly spread. Iron had a big impact on agriculture and warfare. Iron plow blades and hoes made it possible to work heavier soils than before, extending agriculture into new lands and boosting human populations. Armies grew bigger and deadlier due to more effective and less expensive iron weapons and armor. The Iron Age continues to the present day, although some might say we live in the "Industrial Age" or the "Digital Age."

Unit 4 - Ancient Greece and Rome: Civilization Spreads West

LOCATIONS: Greece, Crete, Black Sea, Athens, Persian Empire (Iran), Alexandria, Italy, Rome, Roman Empire, Carthage, Alps, Constantinople (Istanbul)

45. Greece

The first civilizations to develop in Europe were extensions of the early civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Europe's earliest major culture was the **Minoan** civilization of **Crete**, the largest of the Greek islands. Minoan culture was strongly influenced by Egypt. Minoan civilization is the source of the Greek myth about the hero Theseus who entered the labyrinth (a maze) and slayed the Minotaur.

Greece is a mountainous and rocky peninsula with little good farmland, but its long irregular coastline and numerous islands provided fine harbors. Many Greeks turned to the sea to make a living by fishing and trading. Greeks established colonies and dominated trade in the eastern Mediterranean and Black Seas. Greek communities isolated by mountains developed into independent self-governing **city-states** that often fought one another. The leading city-states were **Sparta** with its strong military government and **Athens**, the present-day capital of Greece. The Greeks had a polytheistic religion; their gods lived on Mount Olympus.

Greece is known for its classical civilization of 500 to 300 BC. Classical Greek culture, particularly that of Athens, is famed for its beautiful arts, architecture, philosophy, theater, Olympic games, and for creating the first democracy. Classical Greece is usually considered the principal source of Western Civilization.

46. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*

Modern people still read literature from ancient Greece including the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, two epic (meaning long and heroic) poems by **Homer**. The *Iliad* takes place during the **Trojan War** when the Greeks used a large wooden horse with soldiers hidden inside to defeat the defenders of Troy in Asia Minor. The *Odyssey* recounts the adventures of the hero Odysseus who had to overcome many obstacles during his 10-year voyage home from the war in Troy. These poems are the first literary works of Western Civilization.

The heroes of Greek myths such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* served as models of excellence for the ancient Greeks. In both poems, reason and wisdom are more powerful than physical strength. Homer's Bronze Age poems later inspired a great outpouring of literature during the classical Greek age.

47. Persian Wars

Centered in present day Iran, the **Persian Empire** stretched from the Middle East to India; it was the largest empire the world had yet seen. The Persians tried to add Greece to their empire in the 400s BC, but the Greeks united long enough to defeat them. At the Battle of Marathon, Greeks repelled a larger invading force of Persians, and legend says a Greek soldier ran nearly 26 miles from the battlefield to Athens where he died after delivering news of the victory. This legend is the basis for the modern marathon foot race.

In fighting ten years later (480 BC), the people of Athens fled to the nearby island of Salamis after the Persians conquered and burned Athens. The Persian king Xerxes had his throne placed on a hill where he could watch his fleet of 700 warships destroy the Greek navy of about 300 ships. Instead, Xerxes watched in horror as the Greeks lured his navy into a narrow strait that prevented many of the Persian ships from joining the battle. The Greeks won the battle, and the Persian Wars soon ended. Because the victory at Salamis preserved Greek culture, some historians have called this "the battle that saved Western Civilization."

48. Parthenon

A statesman named **Pericles** became the political leader of Athens following the Persian Wars. Although the wars had ended, Persia remained a military threat, and other Greek city-states paid money to Athens for protection. Pericles used this income to rebuild his burned-out city and to finance the construction of magnificent new buildings including the Parthenon. The Parthenon is a temple built to honor Athena, goddess of wisdom and war and the patron goddess of Athens. The Parthenon is the main building on the **Acropolis**, a high point in Athens that was the center of Athenian life and a fortress against attack.

Although the Parthenon is now in ruins, it is famed for its beauty and proportion. It is probably the most influential building in the history of Western architecture. The Parthenon has served as a model for important buildings in much of the world including the Lincoln Memorial in the United States. Like all classical Greek temples, the Parthenon was built with closely spaced columns that left little interior space.

49. democracy

The Greeks established a new kind of society by inventing the **polis**. The polis was an association of free male citizens who served as the soldiers who defended their city-state from attack, and they managed the government. The polis chose leaders to govern the city-state for a limited period of time, often a year. This approach was quite different from other ancient societies in which government was headed by a king, and the people were separated by class into a small group of the rich and a large group of the poor.

The democratic principals developed in the polis reached their greatest extent during the rule of Pericles in Athens where every citizen was expected to participate in government. Democracy is a form of government in which power lies with the people who may exercise that power directly as they did in ancient Athens where all citizens could vote on new laws. Or, power may be exercised indirectly through elected representatives as we do in the United States. (“Democracy” comes from the Greek word for “the people.”)

Most of the Greek city-states did not have democratic governments, and even in Athens, citizens were a minority of the population because women, slaves, and foreign-born persons did not qualify as citizens.

50. humanism

The ancient Greeks considered human beings to be the center of existence. Unlike other ancient cultures that were deeply concerned with religion, gods, and the afterlife, the philosophy and arts of classical Greece were more concerned with the value of human beings on earth. This emphasis on humans can be seen in Greek art that portrayed the human body realistically. Art of the classical Greek period was much more realistic than the stiff, formal art of earlier eras such as the art of ancient Egypt and early Greece.

Greeks strived for excellence in the way they conducted their daily lives. They believed that reason was the true source of knowledge and that a wise person was the best person; reason, not emotion, should rule our lives. This concern with human life, and the effort to improve humanity through reason, is called humanism. Greek humanism emphasized order in daily life, nothing in excess, a balance between extremes known as “**The Golden Mean.**” In school, for example, both the body and the mind were trained. Over two thousand years later, Greek humanism would help shape the Renaissance and the Enlightenment in Europe.

51. Socrates (SOCK-ruh-tees)

Talented artists and thinkers were drawn to Athens during the Age of Pericles. One of the best known was the philosopher Socrates. He was famed for saying, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Socrates encouraged his students to question accepted wisdom including government policies.

But, the golden age of Athens was about to end as Athens went to war with Sparta. Early in the fighting, a plague of typhoid fever killed a third of the residents of Athens including Pericles. After 27 years of warfare, Athens was defeated and went into decline. Socrates was condemned to death by the citizens of Athens for neglecting the gods and corrupting the morals of the young. Many historians believe, however, that Socrates was made a scapegoat for the decline of Athens after it was defeated by Sparta.

Socrates did not leave behind written works; his philosophy was carried forward by his student, **Plato**. Plato was deeply troubled by the death of his friend Socrates. It caused him to question democracy; Plato warned that clever leaders could easily manipulate citizens who knew little about the important issues of the day. Plato established a school called The Academy, the first real university. His most famous student was the philosopher **Aristotle** whose ideas would dominate Western scientific thought for centuries to come.

52. Hellenistic Civilization

Despite the decline of Athens, Greece would again take the center stage of history with the conquests of **Alexander the Great**, a young man from the mountainous northern region of Greece called **Macedonia**. Alexander’s tutor was the philosopher Aristotle, and his father was Philip of Macedon, who succeeded in conquering all of Greece in 338 BC, ending the independence of the Greek city-states. After his father died, Alexander took control of Greece at the age of 20, but Alexander wanted more.

Alexander succeeded in conquering Egypt and much of the ancient world, extending his empire all the way to India. In the process, he defeated Greece’s old enemy, the Persian Empire. Alexander never lost a battle, but he became sick with fever and died at the age of 32. His empire fell apart and was divided among his top generals. After his death, a new culture emerged known as Hellenistic civilization, a blend of Greek, Persian, Egyptian and Indian influences that would flourish for centuries. One of the cities founded by Alexander, **Alexandria, Egypt**, had a great library that was the center of learning of the Hellenistic world.

53. Roman Empire

Rome, the capital of present-day Italy, was also the capital of the ancient Roman Empire. The Romans were a practical and hard-working people, and Rome's sturdy farmers made good soldiers. Rome was only a small town on the Tiber River when Athens was at the height of its glory, but Rome grew to become a strong city-state at about the time of Alexander the Great. The Romans adopted Hellenistic culture; their gods, arts, and architecture resembled those of the Greeks. At first, kings ruled Rome, and then about 500 BC, the **Roman Republic** was established with a law-making body called the **Senate**. Every year the Senate chose two of its members to serve as co-rulers, or consuls. For a time Rome had a form of democracy, although wealthy upper-class families held most of the political power. Later, during a time of trouble in the republic, Julius Caesar seized control of the government. His successors took the title of emperor.

At its height, the Roman Empire completely encircled the Mediterranean Sea, extending from the Middle East to the British Isles. Rome's central location in the Mediterranean made it an ideal location for building a large Mediterranean empire and international trading network. It was said, "All roads lead to Rome." The empire had a strong central government that produced massive public works including paved roads, government buildings, baths, sports arenas, and aqueducts (water transport structures). As the years passed, the Roman Empire weakened, was divided into two parts, and eventually fell to nomadic invaders.

54. Carthage

Carthage was an ancient city on the coast of North Africa, and it was a powerful rival of Rome. From 264-146 BC, Carthage and the Roman Republic fought three **Punic Wars**. During the second war, a general from Carthage named **Hannibal** led a huge army supported by war elephants from Spain through the **Alps** into Italy, a troop movement considered one of the greatest in history. Hannibal could not be stopped, and he was threatening Rome when Roman armies attacked Carthage, forcing Hannibal to return to protect his homeland. Hannibal later poisoned himself rather than become a prisoner of the Romans.

In the third and final Punic War, Roman armies burned Carthage to the ground, and the people of Carthage became Roman slaves. As in ancient Greece, much of Rome's work was done by slave labor. With Carthage defeated, Rome was free to expand into new territories including Spain, Greece, and Egypt.

55. Julius Caesar

Turmoil came to the Roman Republic following the Punic Wars. Small farmers could not compete with cheaper agricultural products and slave labor imported from the conquered territories. Farmers lost their land to rich landowners and drifted to the cities. Mobs of poor people rioted in the streets of Rome demanding more power. Civil war broke out when a successful general, Julius Caesar, moved his army out of Gaul (present day France) and marched toward Rome. Caesar won the civil war, and he had the Senate declare him dictator for life in 48 BC, ending the Roman Republic that had existed for over 400 years.

Caesar was assassinated on the Ides of March (March 15th) in 44 BC by his friend **Brutus** and other senators opposed to Caesar's dictatorship. Brutus and his fellow assassins wanted Rome to continue as a republic. It didn't. While some people believed Caesar was an arrogant tyrant, others gave him credit for restoring order at a time when Rome's republican government was no longer functioning effectively.

56. Pax Romana

During a trip to Egypt, Caesar fell in love with **Cleopatra**, the young queen of Egypt, and he brought her with him to Rome. After Caesar's death, Cleopatra returned to Egypt, and civil war broke out again in Rome between Caesar's supporters and his killers. Caesar's friends won the struggle, and two of them took control of the empire, **Octavian** in the west and **Antony** in the east. When Antony traveled to Egypt, he too fell in love with Cleopatra although he was married to Octavian's sister. In Rome, Octavian declared war on Antony and Cleopatra, and he eventually defeated their combined military forces. To avoid being captured, Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide. While alive, Cleopatra tried to keep Egypt great. After her death, Egypt became a province of the Roman Empire, ending the 3,000-year reign of the pharaohs.

Octavian became sole ruler of Rome and took the name **Augustus**. Considered a political genius by many historians, Augustus proclaimed himself Rome's first emperor, and he was worshipped as a god. He quietly stripped the Senate of its power, turning Rome into an empire disguised as a republic. Nonetheless, the reign of Augustus ended nearly a century of political strife in the Roman world, and it was the beginning of a 200-year-long period of peace and prosperity called Pax Romana, Latin for the "Roman Peace."

57. Roman law

Rome's empire grew to its largest size during the Pax Romana. One way Roman emperors controlled their vast empire was through a uniform system of laws that was enforced from one end of the Roman world to the other. Judges were required to weigh evidence fairly, and accused persons were considered innocent until proven guilty. The courts enforced legal contracts. These principles were later adopted in legal systems of other nations including the United States. Roman law is one of the greatest legacies of the empire.

The empire was also held together by a well-trained army, by communications over an extensive road system, and by the **Latin** language. The Latin alphabet was derived from an earlier writing system created by sea traders from Phoenicia on the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. From their travels, Phoenicians learned about Sumerian cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphics, writing systems that used hundreds of symbols to represent words or syllables. The Phoenicians had a better idea; they created just 22 symbols to represent spoken sounds. We call these symbols letters. Because the **Phoenician Alphabet** was simpler and more precise than picture writing, it spread to other cultures. It was adopted by the Greeks who added vowels and by the Romans who modified the letters to become the alphabet we use today.

58. arch

An arch is a curved opening that spans a doorway, window, or other space. The arch could span much greater distances than the column-and-beam architecture of the Egyptians and Greeks. Arches built side-by-side created aqueducts; arches placed in front of one another formed large "vaulted" ceilings, and arches arranged in a circular pattern created domes. The arch was adopted on a large scale by the Romans who also developed the use of concrete as a construction material. The arch and concrete made it possible to construct public buildings with large interior spaces that could be used for practical purposes, not just as temples.

One of the most impressive of these buildings is the **Colosseum**, a great arena of ancient Rome that seated 50,000 spectators. Bloody and deadly contests were staged in the Colosseum for the entertainment of Roman citizens. Although the Colosseum is now in ruins, it remains a monument to Roman engineering, and it is the symbol of the present day city of Rome. The Colosseum also stands as a monument to human cruelty that symbolizes the decadence, or moral decay, of the later years of the Roman Empire.

59. Constantine the Great

By the fourth century AD, the Roman Empire was in confusion; it was running short of money and facing increasing pressure from raiders pushing in from the borders. In one 50-year period, 26 emperors reigned, and only one of them died of natural causes. At about this time a strong general named Constantine took control of the empire and tried to stop its decline. He is remembered as Constantine the Great.

Although Christianity had long been outlawed in the empire, Constantine legalized Christianity, and he ended the blood sports in the Colosseum. He also established **Constantinople** as the capital of the stronger eastern part of the Roman Empire, while Rome remained capital of the weakened western part of the empire. Constantine ruled over both parts of the empire from Constantinople located on the **Bosporus Strait** that connects the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. Constantinople was a prosperous crossroads of trade routes where Europe meets Asia. Today, Constantinople is called **Istanbul**, and it is Turkey's largest city.

60. Fall of Rome

The fall of Rome was a slow-motion process that took centuries to unfold. Despite the best efforts of Constantine, the Roman Empire continued to decline after his death as nomadic warriors stepped-up their attacks. These nomads included **Huns** who swept down from the Eurasian steppes pushing other nomadic tribes like **Goths** and **Vandals** ahead of them. Many nomads were simply seeking a better life inside the empire. The Romans considered these nomadic peoples to be culturally inferior and called them **barbarians**. Near the end, the Roman Empire was in chaos, hiring barbarians to fight other barbarians.

The last emperor in the west was defeated in 476 AD, the date usually given as the Fall of Rome. It should be remembered, however, that the eastern portion of the Roman Empire lived on for another thousand years as the Byzantine Empire. Historians have long debated the causes of the Fall of Rome. Factors included a terrible plague, the decline of agriculture, heavy taxes, and a decadent upper class devoted to luxury and greed. Perhaps the more important question is not why Rome fell, but why it lasted so long.

Unit 5 - The Early Middle Ages, 500 AD to 1000 AD

LOCATIONS: Byzantine Empire, Scandinavia, Russia, Southeast Asia, Korea, Maya, Arabia, Mecca

61. the classical period

The classical period came at the end of ancient times. Ancient times began with the early river valley civilizations starting about 3500 BC and ended with the fall of classical civilizations around 500 AD. When people in the West speak of the classical period, they usually mean ancient Greece and Rome. But in a larger sense, a classical period is when any civilization undergoes advancement in several fields such as religion, government, or the arts. It is a time when a culture develops features that help to define it far into the future.

The three great classical civilizations of India, China, and the Mediterranean created larger empires than had existed before. They all suffered from internal weaknesses before falling to Hun invasions by about 500 AD, marking the end of ancient times. Still, each civilization had its own distinctive character. The Mauryan and Gupta dynasties gave India religious philosophies that focused on union with a universal spiritual force and de-emphasized the concerns of this life. The Qin and Han dynasties left China with a tradition of strong central governments headed by powerful rulers and a Confucian philosophy that promoted order, respect, and learning. Greece and Rome gave Western Civilization a humanistic philosophy concerned with improving life through reason, along with traditions of citizen involvement in government and rule by law.

62. the middle ages

Historians disagree about the best way to classify eras of history, but many people use the term “middle ages” to identify the period between ancient times and modern times, a thousand years from approximately 500 AD to 1500 AD. Although civilization was in decline at the beginning of this period, a powerful new Islamic civilization was about to arise in the Middle East, and older civilizations would eventually revive. During the middle ages, international trade would grow, helping to spread civilization and major religions from core civilizations to outlying regions including sub-Saharan Africa, Japan, and Russia.

The first few centuries of the middle ages in Europe are often called the **Dark Ages** because civilization had collapsed after the Fall of Rome, and Europe was torn by widespread fighting among barbarian tribes. We shall begin our journey through the middle ages in Europe where civilization had fallen the farthest.

63. Germanic tribes

Although the Romans called them barbarians, German-speaking nomads defeated the Romans because the empire had grown weak, and it could no longer defend its vast borders. But the Germanic tribes were illiterate (could not read and write), and warriors were loyal only to their local chiefs, which made the development of nations or empires impossible. This was a time of much warfare between competing tribes and bands; the populations of cities declined as people fled to the countryside to escape the fighting.

The loss of writing, cities, and government organization meant that civilization had largely ended in Western Europe. As time went on, barbarian chiefs would become nobles and kings, and these German-speaking tribes would evolve into the powerful kingdoms that ruled Europe later during the middle ages.

64. Christianity

Christianity took hold in the Roman Empire as the empire was falling apart. It is based on the Old Testament of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus, a Jewish holy man born in the Middle East during the reign of Augustus Caesar. Jesus encouraged his followers to be kind to others and to reject violence. Jewish leaders disagreed with some of Jesus’s teachings and had him placed on trial. He was executed by Roman officials. Later, the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as its official religion, which spread Christianity over a large area and made Christianity a major world religion. Today it is the world’s largest religion.

The **Roman Catholic Church** was one institution from Roman times that did not break down. During the Dark Ages, Latin-educated Catholics kept the flame of learning alive in Western Europe. Even the Germanic tribes converted to Christianity by about 600 AD. Over time, the bishop of Rome came to be accepted as the leader of the Catholic Church, the **pope**. Christianity, like other major religions of the time, came to dominate art, architecture, and thinking in the lands where it was adopted. Christianity was so central to life during the middle ages in Europe that Western Europe was called **Christendom**.

65. Charlemagne

We begin to see civilization returning to Europe with the reign of Charlemagne, the Christian king of a Germanic people called the **Franks**. The Franks gave France its name. Charlemagne established a large empire in western and central Europe. After his armies defended the pope, the pope crowned Charlemagne as the new Roman emperor on Christmas day in the year 800. This attempt to revive the western Roman Empire didn't last long. When Charlemagne died, his empire was divided among his three sons. Two of these kingdoms formed the general outlines of today's Germany and France.

In addition to his success as a warrior, Charlemagne is remembered for his encouragement of learning: he needed reading and writing to manage a large empire. Charlemagne established schools and surrounded himself with scholars. He encouraged monks in **monasteries** to copy literature from the ancient Greeks and Romans; without this work, much of what we know about the classical world would have been lost forever.

Monasteries were Catholic religious communities where monks raised their own food, operated schools and libraries, and copied books. Catholic nuns had similar institutions called **convents**, which were one place in Europe where women could receive an education and live free of male control.

66. Vikings

Vikings were fierce warriors, traders and raiders from **Scandinavia**, present day Norway, Sweden and Denmark. During the 800s and 900s, Vikings terrorized much of coastal Europe and traveled far inland by river to loot, destroy, and slaughter. They fought the Franks among others, and they conquered **Normandy** (land of the Northmen) in northern France where they settled down and converted to Christianity.

Vikings traveled the stormy North Atlantic in excellent ships that could also navigate shallow rivers. The Vikings brought the adventurous spirit of ocean exploration to Europe. A Viking named **Leif Erickson** was probably the first European explorer to discover North America, but little resulted from his visit.

67. feudalism

Farming villages in Europe needed defense against waves of nasty invaders like the Vikings. The solution was mounted warriors called **knights** who could respond quickly to an attack. The invention of the stirrup gave knights a steady platform from which to fight while wearing heavy metal armor and using heavy weapons. Local lords (the nobility) hired knights to protect villagers because the villagers' farms provided the lord's income. The farmers, called **serfs**, were not slaves but were poor and had few rights.

The lord, in turn, owed military service to the king who gave the lord his land. In this way, the king ruled through local lords who controlled smaller territories within the kingdom. This kind of military and social system is called feudalism. Under feudalism, people owed loyalty and service to those above, while those above owed protection to those below. Feudalism was a middle stage in the development of government between rule by tribes and rule by large nations with centralized governments that would come later.

Conditions in Western Europe had gradually improved since the Dark Ages. The feudal system offered people some protection, and the church provided cultural unity and the hope of a better life in heaven. But Christendom was divided among many competing kingdoms, and commercial activity was weak. In the early middle ages, Europe was still a backward society compared to the great civilizations of Eurasia.

68. Byzantine Empire

One of the world's great civilizations was next door to Europe in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, the part that did not fall to barbarians. The eastern Roman Empire survived for another thousand years under a new name, the Byzantine Empire with its capital at Constantinople. The size of the empire fluctuated over the centuries, but it generally included Greece and Asia Minor. Byzantine culture extended into Russia.

Byzantine emperors served as head of both the Christian church and the state. Greek replaced Latin as the official language. Eventually the Christian church split into eastern and western branches, with Latin-speaking Roman Catholics in Western Europe and Greek-speaking **Orthodox** Christians in the East.

Byzantine emperors promoted a style of art that featured beautiful **mosaics**. The best-known example of Byzantine architecture is the church of Saint Sophia constructed by emperor **Justinian** in Constantinople. Built as the largest Christian church in the world, it became the model for later Eastern Orthodox churches.

Justinian also brought together all of the laws of the Roman Empire into a single legal code that became the basis for modern legal systems in Europe. Rules and customs in the Byzantine court became so complex that the term "byzantine" is now used to indicate any set of complicated laws or procedures.

69. Russia

Viking traders moved into western Russia and developed river trade routes that reached south to Constantinople. Furs from Scandinavia were traded for luxury products from the Byzantine Empire. Many Russians visited Constantinople, and **missionaries** traveled to Russia spreading the Eastern Orthodox religion. One of Russia's early rulers, a Viking descendent named Vladimir I, married the sister of a Byzantine emperor, and he accepted Orthodox Christianity for his people. His choice of Christianity might have been influenced by Islam's ban on alcohol. He reportedly said, "Drinking is the joy of the Russes."

Russia's culture, including its art and architecture, began to resemble Byzantine culture. The Russian alphabet is derived from the Greek alphabet, and Orthodox Christianity is the main religion in Russia today.

70. Tang Dynasty (TONG)

In China, nearly four centuries of disorder followed the fall of the Han Dynasty in 220 AD. During this long period of unrest, Buddhism gained strength in China. China finally became united again under a new emperor in the early middle ages, and shortly thereafter the Tang Dynasty took control of China and returned China to greatness. Under the Tang, the ideals of Confucius were revived; art and music flourished, and gunpowder and printing were invented. The Chinese first printed by carving words and pictures into blocks of wood, which were pressed against paper. Later the Chinese invented **movable type** with each character made from a single piece of hardened clay.

Tang emperors tried to improve agriculture by reducing large estates held by aristocrats and giving land to the **peasants** (poor and uneducated farmers). During the Tang period, China's economy was enriched by the new **Grand Canal** dug between the Yellow and the Yangtze Rivers. Canal boats now linked the political center of north China with the prosperous rice-producing Yangtze River basin in the south. Safe and inexpensive canal transportation brought more rice, precious goods, and taxes to northern China. The Tang dynasty lasted for three hundred years, from 618 - 907 AD. It weakened and was replaced by the **Song** dynasty that continued China's economic and cultural development for another three hundred years.

71. Southeast Asia

One of the most important events of the middle ages was the spread of rice farming in Asia. After a new and more productive variety of rice became available, large tracts of swampland and forest were converted to rice paddies. In China, population doubled between the 700s and 1100s. This new type of rice originated in Southeast Asia and reached China and India over ocean trade routes. These same routes brought manufactured goods such as scissors and cooking pots to Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia is a region comprised of two parts: the southeast corner of the Asian mainland and a large **archipelago** (chain of islands) between the Asian mainland and Australia. It includes the modern mainland countries of Vietnam and Thailand, and the island nations of Indonesia and the Philippines.

Sailors of Southeast Asia were among the world's most daring. During ancient times, they discovered how to ride the **monsoons**, seasonal winds that blow toward the continent of Asia during the warm months and away from the mainland during the cold months. These sailors opened the southern ocean trade routes that connected the Indian trading network with the China trade network. By the early middle ages, they were sailing two-thirds of the way around the earth from Africa to islands in the South Pacific.

72. Korea and Japan

As rice cultivation spread from the central civilizations of Asia, new societies began to develop in outlying regions. Rice growing became important in Korea about 100 AD, and rice took hold in Japan over a century later. Other imports from China and India soon followed. Buddhist monks brought reading, writing, and their religion first to Korea and then to Japan. Both countries adopted Chinese architectural styles. Rulers in Korea and Japan tried to organize central governments based on the Chinese model.

Korea, a peninsula attached to the Chinese mainland, was strongly influenced by China. Japan, an archipelago separated from China by 500 miles of ocean, was somewhat less affected by Chinese culture. Both societies managed to retain distinct cultures by blending Chinese influences with their own traditions.

As was generally true in civilized societies during the middle ages, women in Japan had fewer rights than men. Nonetheless, upper class women studied art and music, and they learned how to read and write. Japanese women produced some of the finest literature of the age including *The Tale of Genji* about life in the royal court. *The Tale of Genji* is believed to be the first novel written in any language.

73. the Maya

Humans came late to the Western Hemisphere, and civilization started later here too. Native Americans were isolated from advancements in Eurasia, so they had to invent agriculture and civilization on their own. Agriculture appeared in Mexico and South America about 5,000 years after it began in the Middle East. The first civilization of the Americas was probably the **Olmec** culture of southern Mexico (1200 BC to 400 BC). The Olmecs raised corn, beans, and squash and are known for their sculptures of giant stone heads.

The Maya civilization arose centuries later just east of Olmec lands. Maya city-states flourished between 300 and 900 AD in the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico and northern Central America. The Maya improved on the achievements of the Olmecs to create the most advanced native civilization of the Americas. They used hieroglyphics to write on stone and in books made of bark paper. They had a zero-based numbering system before the Europeans did. They created fine arts, a calendar of 365-1/4 days, and impressive pyramid-shaped temples in large cities. The Maya also practiced human sacrifice and apparently played a ball game that ended with the deaths of the losers. Perhaps the Maya were too successful; it appears they overpopulated their land depleting it of natural resources, which contributed to their decline.

74. Muhammad

One of the biggest historical events of the middle ages came out of the harsh deserts of the **Arabian peninsula**: the birth of Muhammad and his religion of Islam. Arabia was a land of camel caravans, a few trading cities, and fierce desert nomads called **Bedouins**. Bedouin tribes worshiped local gods and fought one another. Muhammad was born in the city of **Mecca** where he became a successful caravan trader and merchant. From his travels, Muhammad learned of Judaism and Christianity, religions with only one God.

Although Muhammad was prosperous and respected, he wanted more than a life devoted to material wealth. He was troubled by inequality between rich merchants and poor nomads. Muhammad would often go off by himself to think and meditate. One day he saw a vision of the angel Gabriel who told him to “recite” messages from God. Muhammad began to teach these messages, and eventually they were written in a holy book called the **Quran**. Muhammad’s teachings led to conflicts with the rulers of Mecca who threatened his life. In 622 AD, he fled to the nearby town of Medina where his religious teachings and wise advice gained him many followers. Muhammad also proved to be an effective military leader when his followers battled forces from Mecca. In 630 AD, Muhammad with thousands of followers returned to Mecca in victory. Muhammad died just two years later, but he is revered as the chief prophet or messenger of Islam.

75. Islam

Worshippers of Islam are called **Muslims**, their houses of worship are **mosques**, and their God is **Allah**. Today Islam is the world’s second largest religion. Most Muslims live in a geographic band that stretches from Morocco in west Africa to the islands of Southeast Asia. Muslims believe Allah is the same God worshiped by Jews and Christians; Muhammad said Islam is a refinement of these two earlier religions.

Muslims do not have priests; they have a direct relationship with God. Muslims are required to help the poor and sick and are expected to be kind and generous to those of lower rank. Muslims face Mecca five times a day to pray, and they are encouraged to go on a pilgrimage (religious journey) to Mecca.

Muhammad taught that all men and women are equal before God; women in early Muslim societies had more rights than women in many other cultures of the time. Muslim scholars developed the **Shari’a** (Shuh-REE-uh), a legal and moral code based on Islamic teachings that applied to government, business, and personal dealings. Under Shari’a law, there was no separation between religion and government.

76. Arab conquests

Islam gave Arabia’s Bedouin tribes one God to worship, and it promoted equality among believers. The tribes experienced a unity they had never known before. Rather than fighting each other, they went on a spree of foreign conquest aided by fast Arabian horses and camels well suited to desert warfare. These were wars of territorial conquest, not holy wars; Arabs did not attempt to spread Islam to lands they conquered.

Arabs subdued Persia to their east, parts of the Byzantine Empire to the north, and Egypt to the west. Then they took a breather to quarrel over who was the rightful heir to Muhammad. After splitting into two sects, the **Sunni** and **Shi’a**, the Arabs resumed their conquests in northern India, North Africa, and Spain. But, when they tried to expand farther into Christian Europe, they were stopped by the Franks in the west and by the Byzantine Empire in the east. In just a hundred years, Arabs created the largest empire since Rome.

Unit 6 - The Late Middle Ages, 1000 to 1500 AD

LOCATIONS: Holy Land, Swahili Coast, Timbuktu, Beijing, Mongol Empire, Istanbul, France, England, Andes Mountains, Aztec, Inca, Spain, Portugal

77. Abbasid Empire (uh-BA-suhd)

The Arab empire came under control of the Abbasid Dynasty in 750 AD. The great wave of Arabic conquest was over, and people of many lands were choosing to adopt Islam as their religion. Muslim traders, sailors, and preachers carried Islam to new territories in Central Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia. People converted to Islam because it promised a close relationship with God and equality among believers, and Muslims enjoyed the benefits of membership in a large and prosperous society.

Abbasid rulers were tolerant of different peoples and open to new ideas. Jews, Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists enjoyed freedom of religion in Muslim lands. Muslims learned from the cultures they encountered. They preserved the works of Aristotle and other classical Greek writers. They adopted the zero-based numbering system of India. They acquired the compass and papermaking from China. And they developed one of the most creative societies of all time. Islamic literature, art, and architecture flourished. Islamic civilization surpassed all others in science and technology and in size.

But the very size of the Abbasid Empire made it difficult to govern. At the same time the Islamic world was reaching new heights of achievement, Abbasid rulers were losing control of their empire to non-Arabs. As the empire weakened, it broke into competing Islamic kingdoms and then fell to nomadic invaders.

78. the Swahili Coast

It was during the Abbasid dynasty that Muslim traders brought sub-Saharan Africa into closer contact with the rest of the world and spread the religion of Islam in the process. As Muslim merchants developed trade links with cities in East and West Africa, African rulers in these trade centers often converted to Islam.

One trade center was on the east coast of Africa where the Swahili language was spoken. A string of prosperous Swahili Coast cities connected East Africa to the southern ocean trading network. These ports traded gold, ivory, and slaves from Africa for cotton from India, silk from Persia, and porcelain from China.

79. Empire of Mali

Islam came to West Africa with camel caravans crossing the Sahara Desert from North Africa. Camels could go no farther south than a band of savanna lying on the southern edge of the desert because camels sickened in wetter climates to the south. Trading cities such as **Timbuktu** grew and prospered where caravans stopped and exchanged salt and other goods from the north for gold from sub-Saharan Africa.

Several large states developed around these trading cities in the “hump” of West Africa. One was the Empire of Mali that thrived during the 1200s and 1300s. A Mali ruler, **Mansa Musa**, went on a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324 and distributed so much gold on his journey that the value of gold dropped in Egypt.

Although Islam came to African trade centers, much of the interior of Africa was untouched by Muslim culture. People there continued to follow traditional religions, and many lived in **stateless societies** without formal rulers. In stateless societies, the community or a council of families made decisions.

80. Crusades

While the Abbasid dynasty was struggling to maintain control over its weakening empire, it faced a new threat from Europe. Roman Catholic popes encouraged Christian kings and knights to undertake military expeditions, or Crusades, to capture the **Holy Land** from the Muslims. The Holy Land is a region at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea where Jesus lived; it is also holy to Jews and Muslims. Christian crusaders conquered much of the Holy Land, taking Jerusalem in 1099, but they were unable to hold it and were driven out by 1291. These Christian invasions are still recalled with bitterness by some Muslims.

Still, the Crusades probably had greater impact on Europe than on the Holy Land. Europeans now had first-hand knowledge of just how backward Europe seemed in comparison to the more advanced Islamic culture. This realization probably pushed Europeans to develop more rapidly to catch up with the rival Muslims. Europeans acquired important technologies from the Muslim world including the “Arabic” numbering system (from India), the compass (from China), and the astrolabe, an Arabic instrument for measuring latitude. These inventions would make it possible for European ships to sail far out to sea.

81. Mongols

The Abbasid Empire fell when Mongol invaders conquered the capital of **Baghdad** in 1258 and massacred some 800,000 Muslims including the caliph (emperor). The Mongols were nomadic tribesmen and superb mounted warriors from central Asia who swept east toward China and west toward Europe under the brilliant but ruthless leadership of **Genghis Khan** and his successors. Mongols created the largest land empire in world history. Their conquests stopped just short of Western Europe when a Mongol leader died, and generals returned home to choose a new khan. Genghis Khan's grandson, **Kublai Khan**, completed the conquest of China. He made himself emperor of China and established the present day capital of **Beijing**.

The Mongols left their mark. It took time for many regions to recover from Mongol destruction. The Mongol defeat of the Abbasid Dynasty left the Muslim world fragmented, and Mongol control slowed the development of Russia. But, a Mongol law code established order across the vast Mongol Empire ushering in a period of peace and increased trade between East and West over the old Silk Roads. These trade routes also transported the fleas that carried the **Black Death** (bubonic plague) from China to the Middle East and to Europe where it killed half the people of some areas. The Mongols were warriors, not administrators, and they did not develop the government institutions necessary to maintain an empire. Mongol unity withered in the late 1300s, and eventually the Mongols were absorbed into the cultures they had conquered.

82. Marco Polo

The Mongol invasions marked nearly the last time in history that nomadic raiders would threaten civilization. Settled societies eventually gained the upper hand against nomads with superior military organization and firearms. Because Western Europe was spared from Mongol attacks, Europe benefited in several ways from the Mongol conquests. The Mongol victories weakened Europe's Muslim rivals, and when the Mongols reestablished dependable trade along the Silk Road, Europeans acquired new knowledge and technology from the East including gunpowder weapons.

In Europe, Venice, Italy grew wealthy as the main trading crossroads between East and West. In 1271, a teenager from Venice named Marco Polo left on a trading trip to China with his father and uncle. They visited the court of Kublai Khan, who gave bright young Marco a job as ambassador to outlying regions of China. Marco returned to Italy 24 years later and was serving as captain of a Venetian warship when he was captured and sent to prison in Genoa, Italy. There he wrote what is probably the most influential travel book of all time, *The Travels of Marco Polo*. The book gave Europeans their first real knowledge of China, and about two centuries later it inspired another Italian, Christopher Columbus of Genoa, to set sail for Asia.

83. samurai

Although Kublai Khan ruled China, he failed to conquer Japan. In 1281, he sent a fleet of over 4,000 ships and 150,000 warriors against Japan. Japan appeared to be doomed until two days of typhoon winds destroyed much of the Chinese force. The Japanese called the storm *kamikaze*, or "divine wind."

At this time, warlords ruled Japan, and Japan had a feudal system very similar to the system in Europe. Poor farmers were bound to a land-owning lord, and the lord protected his holdings with mounted professional warriors called samurai. Some members of the samurai class became rulers in their own right.

84. the voyages of Zheng He (JUNG HUH, sometimes spelled Cheng Ho)

The Chinese resented being ruled by Mongol outsiders. After the death of Kublai Khan, a revolt drove the Mongols from China and established the **Ming Dynasty** that lasted nearly 300 years. The Ming are known for their fine blue and white porcelain (or china) that was exported to much of the world. The Ming built the **Forbidden City** in Beijing as a new home for the emperor with beautiful palaces and gardens.

In the early 1400s, Ming emperors sent Chinese admiral Zheng He -- a Muslim and a eunuch -- on seven great overseas voyages to demonstrate Chinese power and to collect treasure. On his first expedition, Zheng He commanded a fleet of 62 ships and 28,000 men. Some of his treasure ships were over 400 feet long, many times the size of the ships later used by Columbus. These expeditions traveled as far as Arabia and east Africa, extending Chinese influence over much of the civilized world. But Ming court advisers began to argue that China could learn nothing from foreign "barbarians," and China's money would be better spent closer to home improving defenses against Mongols and other nomads. The ocean expeditions stopped, and China's fleet went into decline. China's withdrawal from ocean exploration opened the door for the less-advanced civilization in Western Europe to explore and eventually dominate the world's oceans.

85. Ottoman Empire

Following the Mongol disruptions, three new Islamic empires emerged to replace the fallen Abbasid Dynasty. They were the Ottoman Empire in the eastern Mediterranean, the **Safavid** Empire in Persia, and the **Mughal** Empire of India. (A Mughal ruler built the famed Taj Mahal.) Of these three empires, the Ottoman Empire was the largest, and it lasted longest. The Ottomans were a branch of **Turkish** nomads from central Asia who fled west to escape the Mongols. They settled in Asia Minor and eventually extended their rule to Christian lands in southern Europe and to Muslim lands in the Middle East. The Ottoman Turks conquered the last remaining piece of the old Byzantine Empire in 1453 when they used early cannons to destroy the walls of Constantinople. They made the city their capital and renamed it **Istanbul**.

The Ottoman Turks were Sunni Muslims. Their neighbors in the Safavid Empire were Shi'a Muslims. The two empires battled for dominance, a struggle intensified by their religious differences. Today Shi'a Muslims remain concentrated in the vicinity of Persia, now Iran and Iraq, while Sunnis are a majority elsewhere. Distracted by conflicts with their rivals and by internal problems, the three Islamic empires paid little attention to the growing commercial and technological strength of the kingdoms in Europe.

86. guilds

In Europe of the late middle ages, improvements in agricultural technology led to bigger populations and the growth of cities. Townspeople gradually won the right from their local lords to run their own city governments. Trade grew, and cities became important centers of manufacturing and commerce.

Many of the goods traded in Europe were produced by self-employed craftspeople who formed organizations called guilds to regulate the price and quality of their products such as shoes or metalwork. Guilds were the forerunners of today's labor unions. Guilds also served as civic organizations that helped to run the towns. Some women began taking up trades like hat making or weaving that gave them greater financial independence. Merchants and craftspeople were becoming a new class in European society, a **middle class** between the peasants and the nobility (lords and kings).

87. Hundred Years' War

It might be said that two wars between France and England marked the beginning and the end of the age of knights and castles in Europe. The first of these wars was the **Norman Conquest** of England. In 1066, a duke from the Normandy region of northern France invaded and conquered England becoming the new English king, William the Conqueror. William used knights to help win his victory, and the Normans built castles in England for protection from hostile locals. As a result, knights and castles became more popular.

Several centuries later, William's descendants claimed the legal right to the French throne. This and other causes led to the Hundred Years' War fought on French soil from 1337 to 1453. In battle after battle, French knights were defeated by English forces that included foot soldiers firing powerful longbows that filled the skies with deadly arrows. Most of France had fallen under English control when an illiterate, teenage peasant girl appeared at the French court claiming that voices told her how to save France. That girl, **Joan of Arc**, led a French army to victory over the English in a battle at Orleans, France in 1429. It was the turning point of the war. The French continued winning and finally drove the English from France in 1453. This is why Joan is loved by the French as their greatest patriot and why the English burned her at the stake.

During the Hundred Years' War, knights were made obsolete by English longbows and guns. Kings replaced knights with paid armies. Castles became obsolete because cannons could destroy stone walls. The entire feudal system was breaking down as people in England and France developed loyalties to their countries rather than to local lords. In the process, the modern nations of **France** and **England** were born.

88. Gothic architecture

The Roman Catholic Church reached the height of its power and influence during the late middle ages. The most visible symbol of the church's power were magnificent Gothic cathedrals built in the 1100s and 1200s including Notre Dame, Chartres, and Reims, all in France. The most prominent feature of Gothic architecture is the pointed arch, but the Gothic style is also known for soaring ceilings, walls filled with glass windows, and flying buttresses. A flying buttress is an external, arched support for the wall of a building that allowed builders to construct tall, thin, stone walls filled with colored-glass windows. Glass was extremely important to Gothic cathedrals: it lighted the interior, its beauty seemed inspired by God, and the Bible stories portrayed on the windows taught about religion at a time when most people were illiterate.

89. Renaissance

Renaissance means reawakening or rebirth, and it refers to a rebirth of learning from classical Greece and Rome. In the late middle ages, Italians became interested in learning about the glories of their ancestors in the Roman Empire. They searched for classical literature forgotten in monasteries, and they acquired classical works from Muslim and Byzantine scholars. Archeologists uncovered classical art and architecture.

Italians became interested in humanism, the concern with human values in this life as opposed to religious beliefs and the afterlife. Renaissance architecture abandoned the church's Gothic style and adopted the simplicity and balance of more classical forms. Artists including **Michelangelo** and **Da Vinci** shaped Western art, **Shakespeare** wrote plays that explored human nature, and **Gutenberg's** printing press spread Renaissance knowledge through cheaper books that encouraged people to learn how to read and write. The Renaissance began in Florence, Italy about 1350 and spread to Rome and finally to much of Europe before it ended in the early 1600s. The Renaissance was a bridge between the middle ages and the modern world.

90. Aztecs

During the late middle ages, people of the Western Hemisphere continued to develop in isolation from the rest of the world. Agriculture had spread across much of the Americas, and Native American societies ranged from small bands of hunter-gathers to empires with millions of people. The two greatest empires of the time were the Aztec and the Inca. Both collected heavy taxes from groups they conquered.

The Aztecs were a fierce and warlike people of central and southern Mexico who controlled their subjects through fear and military force. Their polytheistic religion practiced human sacrifice on a scale unknown elsewhere in history. The Aztec's believed their sun god required blood from beating human hearts each night in order to rise again in the morning. Often the purpose of war was to obtain victims for sacrifice. The Aztecs built their capital on swampy marshland in what is now Mexico City. Floating gardens provided the city's food. When Europeans first saw the capital, they were amazed to find an island city of 200,000 people -- as big as any city in Europe -- with tall temples, a huge marketplace, ball courts, and even a zoo.

91. Incas

The Inca civilization was centered in present day Peru, but it grew to include most of the Pacific coast of South America between the **Andes Mountains** and the ocean. It was a high-altitude civilization; farmers developed irrigation systems and stepped terraces for growing crops on steep hillsides. The 3,000 mile-long Inca Empire was linked by the most extensive road system since the Roman Empire. Way stations built on main roads provided travelers with places to stay at the end of each day's journey. The Incas did not have writing as we know it, but they kept accurate numerical records on knotted strings called quipu (KEE-pu).

People living in the Americas, including the Aztecs and Incas, had no way of knowing their long separation from Eurasia was about to end with consequences they could hardly imagine.

92. the great voyages of discovery

As the year 1500 approached, the world faced a turning point in history, but none were yet aware of it. Sailing ships and navigation technology had improved to a point that ships could sail anywhere in the world. The Eastern and Western Hemispheres still did not know each other existed, but the time had come for them to meet. Who would make the introduction? Three civilizations had the necessary wealth and knowledge. The Islamic world was one of them, but it was weakened by the Mongol conquests, and it was preoccupied with local and regional matters. The Chinese civilization was another, but it had withdrawn from ocean exploration to deal with internal concerns. Only Christian Europe seemed eager to reach outward.

Europeans were hungry to explore. The Vikings had taught them how to sail the stormy Atlantic. The Crusades whetted their appetite for travel and adventure, and Marco Polo got them thinking about Asia. Europe also had the means to explore. The Renaissance brought European culture to a level of other advanced civilizations, and it gave Europeans a new sense of confidence. The competing kings of Europe were busy adopting new technologies and trade links to give them advantages over rival monarchs.

In August of 1492, **Spain** sent Christopher Columbus into the Atlantic Ocean with three small ships to search for a western trade route to the spice islands of Asia, a voyage that finally connected the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. Sailing for **Portugal**, Vasco de Gama rounded Africa and connected Europe to the Indian Ocean and Asia in 1498. In 1522, Magellan's Spanish expedition circled the earth and connected the world. The world would never be the same. The middle ages were over, and modern times had begun.