



The California History-Social Science Project | University of California, Davis
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The History Blueprint: Sites of Encounter in the Medieval World

A publication of the California History-Social Science Project

University of California, Davis

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This unit is dedicated to Janet Abu-Lughod and Ross Dunn, whose pioneering work in world history inspired our efforts.

Cover: "Map of the world created by traveller and writer, al-Idrisi in 1154 for Roger II, King of Sicily (oriented with South at the top)," The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS. Pococke 375, fols. 3v-4r. Courtesy of the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/bodley>.

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About the History Blueprint

Creating a Blueprint for History Education: Advancing Instruction, Assessment, Student Learning, and Engagement is a state-of-the-art program to address deficiencies in K-12 history education by providing a model for national innovation. Developed by the California History-Social Science Project (CHSSP), this initiative is also supported by the Library of Congress, the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, History Channel, the Social Science Research Council and the British Council.



A relief showing a sailing ship from Borobudur, a temple in Magelang in central Java. Photograph courtesy of Professor Michael Vann, California State University, Sacramento.

The *Blueprint* curriculum uses research-based strategies to develop critical thinking, reading, and writing to engage students, improve their learning, and address the achievement gap. *Blueprint* includes tools for teachers and parents to measure their students' progress and adapt instruction accordingly. These tools also provide discipline-specific and Common Core Standards-aligned support for English learners and native speakers with low literacy. In sum, the *History Blueprint* provides an effective method to improve student understanding of history, reading comprehension, and writing ability.

Curriculum. *Blueprint* curriculum provides comprehensive units of instruction, including

background materials, primary sources, detailed lesson plans, and visual resources. All curriculum is aligned with *both* the California Content Standards for History-Social Science and the Literacy in History/Social Studies section of the Common Core State Standards for English / Language Arts. Each unit combines:

- historical investigation - a discipline-specific form of inquiry-based learning
- relevant and carefully selected primary sources
- activities to improve students' reading comprehension and writing ability
- methods to teach students how to discern and evaluate arguments based upon evidence.

Assessments. *Blueprint* units feature assessments to measure student content knowledge, Common Core skills, and critical thinking. *Blueprint* curriculum also provides rubrics for assessing student work, examples of student products (with commentary from experienced grade-level teachers), and instructions to guide

interpretation and formulate next steps. These formative and summative assessments evaluate students' abilities to:

- read documents critically
- judge claims logically
- draw connections
- compose reasoned arguments
- master content knowledge.

Teacher Professional Development. Utilizing its state-wide network of experienced teacher leaders and university scholars, the CHSSP provides in-depth and ongoing professional development programming for teachers implementing *Blueprint* curriculum in their classrooms. Through summer programs, after school workshops, and ongoing online support, CHSSP leaders provide:

- step-by-step instructions to use *Blueprint* resources
- programs to develop teacher content knowledge
- research-based methods to improve student thinking and literacy
- an effective approach to identify student needs quickly and select intervention strategies to meet those needs.

Support for Student Literacy. History is a text-based discipline and proficiency in content-specific academic literacy is crucial to student achievement, especially for English Learners. The CHSSP has an innovative research-based approach to literacy development which differs from both other existing history materials and generic academic literacy activities. Educational evaluation studies show that this literacy approach improves students' writing and achievement on standardized tests. The *Blueprint* curriculum units, assessment tools, and professional development programs incorporate literacy development into each lesson with specific strategies to:

- improve student reading comprehension of abstract expository text
- teach students how to write clearly and coherently
- enable English Learners and those reading below grade level to access primary sources, textbooks, and assessments.

Blueprint Organization. Each Blueprint unit begins with a list of the major topics (the Lessons) and an overarching Historical Focus Question that guides the unit's organization. In addition, each unit includes a Standards-alignment matrix and assumptions about student literacy and historical content understanding, in order to pinpoint the content and skills teachers need to cover before beginning. Individual lessons within the unit are organized similarly, but also include modifications for student literacy, step-by-step procedures, student worksheets, assessments, and teacher keys. Each step covers not only the procedures, but also a short, clear list of the ideas all students should walk away with from the lesson. Additional tools to support implementation include disciplinary icons to signify historical inquiry, assessment, focus questions, and literacy support.

The History Blueprint: Sites of Encounter in the Medieval World

Major Topics:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| ✓ Sicily | ✓ Black Death in Afro-Eurasia |
| ✓ Mongol Empire | ✓ Mali |
| ✓ Quanzhou | ✓ Majorca |
| ✓ Voyages of Zheng He | ✓ Calicut |
| ✓ Cairo | |

How Did Sites of Encounter Change the Medieval World?

The Sites of Encounter in the Medieval World unit introduces students to the connections between regions and peoples in Afro-Eurasia (the “world”) between 1000 and 1500 (the “medieval” period.) Following recent world historical scholarship about connections between cultures in and around the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea, the lessons immerse students in sites of encounter – Sicily, Quanzhou, Cairo, Mali, Majorca, and Calicut - where merchants, travelers, and scholars exchanged products, technologies, and ideas. These exchanges also sparked new ideas and cultural productions, which then diffused outward from the site of encounter. Without denying that cultural encounters were often marked by conflict, our approach focuses on the shared norms and practices that made exchanges possible. To make these abstract ideas more understandable to students, the lessons begin with the study of concrete objects – maps, ships, astrolabes, silks, and spices – exchanged or produced at the sites of encounter. In the first lesson, Norman Sicily, a major site of exchange between the Muslim and Christian worlds, students will examine the world map al-Idrisi and his team of Muslim, Jewish and Christian mapmakers drew for Christian king Roger II. For Quanzhou, students will analyze excerpts from the travel narratives of Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta and the technology of the sea-faring junk; for Cairo and Calicut, they will examine descriptions of the cities written by travelers from different cultures, along with local accounts, art and architecture. Between the major lessons, there are mini-lessons on the Mongol Empire, the voyages of Zheng He, and the Black Death.

This unit also provides detailed instructions to support student analysis of a number of relevant primary sources, including texts written by Ibn Jubayr, Geoffrey Malaterra, Al-Bakri, Al-Umari, James I of Aragon, Benjamin of Tudela, Al-Maqrizi, Ramon Llull, Zhao Rugua, Ibn Battuta, Marco Polo, Ma-Huan; letters from the Cairo Geniza and the Venetian archives; visuals of maps by Al-Idrisi and Cresques Abraham, Ming dynasty porcelain, and silk-making machinery. Throughout the unit, students focus on an engaging and historically significant question: *How did sites of encounter change the Medieval World?*

In addition to teaching students about the medieval world, this unit teaches students how to read, write, and think historically, analyze historical evidence from primary and secondary sources, and make interpretations. Students will practice Common Core reading and writing skills, especially identifying the perspective and point of view of a source, integrating information from visual and written sources, identifying evidence from sources, using that evidence to support an argument or interpretation, and communicating that argument in well-conceived sentence, paragraph, essay, or explanation. They will also practice geographical skills through interactive map exercises using the World Trade Circles Map, which is based on Janet Abu-Lughod's interpretation of the 13th-century world system.

Assumptions

This unit is designed for middle-school students at all ability levels. Each activity includes instructions for teachers on how to develop students' Common Core reading and writing skills and historical thinking skills, as well as their understanding of the medieval world. However, students will benefit the most from this unit if they have met the following conditions. (Please note: In many states, including California, world history from 1000-1500 is part of the 7th-grade History-Social Science curriculum).

Student Historical Knowledge

This unit is designed to come after the regional units on the Roman Empire, Islam (600-900), China during the Tang, Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties, Ghana and Mali, Medieval Japan, and Medieval Europe, and before the unit on Mesoamerica and the chronological units focusing on Europe, beginning with the Renaissance. Students might benefit from having studied each region before studying this unit on Afro-Eurasia as a whole, but the unit does not assume that students have already been taught about these regions. Students should have a basic understanding of the religions of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism and the philosophy of Confucianism.

Student Disciplinary Skills

This unit of study assumes that students can differentiate between a primary and secondary source and have had experience analyzing primary sources in the past. In addition, students should have some experience analyzing maps, graphs, and charts. They should also have some practice in organizing events chronologically, and some idea of the differences between historical evidence and interpretation or inference.

Student Literacy

To benefit from this unit, students do not have to read at grade level, nor do they have to have an advanced vocabulary. Students should know how to annotate text by circling key phrases and terms. They should also be able to synthesize basic information (such as who, what, when, where, etc.) from their text. They should have some practice in writing logical thesis statements.

Authors & Contributors



The intellectual inspiration for this unit came from **Teofilo Ruiz**, award-winning Professor of History from the University of California, Los Angeles.

This unit was co-authored by a large and diverse group of history educators, working under the leadership of the **California History-Social Science Project (CHSSP)** statewide office at the **University of California, Davis**. This effort was led by CHSSP Coordinator **Shennan Hutton**, along with **Beth Slutsky** and **Shelley Brooks**, and **Mary Miller**, Co-Director of the UCLA History-Geography Project.

A network of professors, including **Beverly Bossler**, **Sudipta Sen** and **Emily Albu**, from the University of California, Davis, **Laura Mitchell**, from University of California, Irvine, **Michael Vann** from California State University, Sacramento, and **Jeremy Ledger**, a graduate student at University of Michigan, lectured on content, identified sources, and commented on drafts.

UCLA graduate students **Maya Maskarinec** and **Antonio Zaldivar** located and edited sources and provided extensive content support.



Four 7th-grade public school teachers from across California contributed lessons for this unit: **Erica Aguirre**, (not pictured) from Ross Middle School in Cerritos; **John Muller**, from Will C. Wood Middle School in Alameda; **Shomara Gooden**, from Cesar Chavez Middle School in Lynwood; and **Michelle Delgado**, from Harris Middle School in Elk Grove.

The **History Blueprint Advisory Council** (**Tom Adams & Kristen Cruz Allen**, California Department of

Education; **Nancy Bier**, SRI; **Kimberly Gilmore**, History Channel; **Karen Haltunnen**, USC; **Anthea Hartig**, California Historical Society; **Anne Hyde**, Colorado College (American Historical Association Representative); **Ralph Lewin**, Cal Humanities; **Betsy Marchand**, Yocha dehe Wintun Nation; **Dante Noto**, University of California; **Mary Schleppegrell**, University of Michigan; **Michael Vann**, Sacramento State University (World History Association Representative); **Sam Wineburg & Joel Breakstone**, Stanford History Education Group) and K-12 school partners provided multiple edits to improve the draft.

Editing was provided by CHSSP Statewide Office Staff, including Coordinators **Slutsky**, **Hutton**, and **Brooks**, as well as Executive Director **Nancy McTygue**, and Assistant Director **Tuyen Tran**.

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Standards

Note: Unlike the previous History Blueprint unit, the Sites of Encounter in the Medieval Unit is not centered around one or two of the California History-Social Science Content Standards, which follow a regional format. Instead the unit addresses nine items from five standards. All of these items address the interconnections and exchanges among regions in Afro-Eurasia.

California History-Social Science Content Standards

7.2.5: Describe the growth of cities and the establishment of trade routes among Asia, Africa, and Europe, the products and inventions that traveled along these routes (e.g., spices, textiles, paper, steel, new crops), and the role of merchants in Arab society.

7.2.6: Understand the intellectual exchanges among Muslim scholars of Eurasia and Africa and the contributions Muslim scholars made to later civilizations in the areas of science, geography, mathematics, philosophy, medicine, art, and literature.

7.3.4: Understand the importance of both overland trade and maritime expeditions between China and other civilizations in the Mongol Ascendancy and Ming Dynasty.

7.3.5: Trace the historic influence of such discoveries as tea, the manufacture of paper, wood-block printing, the compass, and gunpowder.

7.4.3: Describe the role of the trans-Saharan caravan trade in the changing religious and cultural characteristics of West Africa and the influence of Islamic beliefs, ethics, and law.

7.6.7: Map the spread of the bubonic plague from Central Asia to China, the Middle East, and Europe and describe its impact on global population.

7.8.3: Understand the effects of the reopening of the ancient "Silk Road" between Europe and China, including Marco Polo's travels and the location of his routes.

7.9.6: Understand the institution and impact of missionaries on Christianity and the diffusion of Christianity from Europe to other parts of the world in the medieval and early modern periods; locate missions on a world map.

7.9.7: Describe the Golden Age of cooperation between Jews and Muslims in medieval Spain that promoted creativity in art, literature, and science, including how that cooperation was terminated by the religious persecution of individuals and groups (e.g., the Spanish Inquisition and the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain in 1492).

Standards

Common Core Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies and/or Writing Standards (Grades 6-8 Students) taught in this unit

RH 1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

RH 2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

RH3. Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

RH 4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

RH 5. Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

RH 6. Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

RH 7. Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

RH 8. Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

RH 9. Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

WHST 1. Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

WHST 2. Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

WHST 4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WHST 7. Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

WHST 8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

WHST 9. Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.