

# Sixth Grade Social Studies Overview

## Social Studies

### First Semester

Early human culture  
Ancient cultures of Africa, Asia, and  
the Middle East  
Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire  
Ancient systems of government, religion,  
and philosophy

### Second Semester

Celtic and Germanic tribes  
Europe in the Middle Ages  
Innovations and art of the Renaissance  
The Reformation  
Early cultures of North America  
Ancient civilizations of the Aztec,  
Maya, and Inca  
Early navigation and exploration

# Grade 6

## Ancient Civilizations

### Teacher Manual



**Oak Meadow**

Oak Meadow, Inc.

Post Office Box 615

Putney, Vermont 05346

[oakmeadow.com](http://oakmeadow.com)



# Table of Contents

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<b>Introduction</b> .....	vii
<b>Lesson 1 The Stone Age</b> .....	1
Early humans; tools and survival; prehistoric art	
<b>Lesson 2 Ancient Mesopotamia</b> .....	5
Sumerian culture; early writing; Hammurabi's Code; Hanging Gardens of Babylon	
<b>Lesson 3 Ancient Egypt</b> .....	9
Early Egyptian culture; pharaohs; early methods of measuring time; research report	
<b>Lesson 4 Ancient Egyptian Civilization</b> .....	13
Early Egyptian writing; Hatshepsut; research report	
<b>Lesson 5 Ancient Israelites</b> .....	17
Old Testament stories; migration of ancient Hebrews; Moses; compare and contrast	
<b>Lesson 6 Hebrew History</b> .....	19
The twelve Hebrew tribes; King Solomon; proverbs	
<b>Lesson 7 Ancient Persia</b> .....	21
Cyrus the Great; King Darius I; Zoroaster; paper marbling	
<b>Lesson 8 Ancient India</b> .....	23
Indian religions; Buddhist Eightfold Path; Indian music; research report	

<b>Lesson 9 Ancient China</b> .....	27
Chinese dynasties; traditional family life; role of females; comparing traditional and modern values	
<b>Lesson 10 Chinese Philosophy and Inventions</b> .....	29
Confucius; Lao-Tzu; Chinese inventions	
<b>Lesson 11 Ancient Africa</b> .....	31
Pygmies; Nubia and Kush; Sundiata of Mali; Anansi stories; African drumming and arts	
<b>Lesson 12 Ancient Crete</b> .....	35
Minoan culture; palace at Knossos; Theseus and the Minotaur; creating a labyrinth	
<b>Lesson 13 Ancient Greece</b> .....	37
Mycenaean; democracy; Greek architecture; Seven Wonders of the World; battle of Troy	
<b>Lesson 14 Ancient Greek Civilization</b> .....	41
Spartan life; Alexander the Great; Greek arts and entertainment; sports and competitive games	
<b>Lesson 15 Ancient Rome</b> .....	43
The fall of the Roman Republic; Justinian Law; Hannibal crossing the Alps; rhetoric	
<b>Lesson 16 The Roman Empire</b> .....	47
Gods and goddesses; poets; community life; Mt. Vesuvius and Pompeii; the fall of the Roman Empire	
<b>Lesson 17 Christianity</b> .....	51
The early life of Jesus; Christian teachings and philosophy; the spread of Christianity	

<b>Lesson 18 Islam</b> .....	53
The early life of Mohammad; Islamic teachings and philosophy; the Five Pillars of Islam; the spread of Islam	
<b>Lesson 19 Celtic and Germanic Tribes</b> .....	57
Early Germanic tribes; ancient Celtic gods; early art and architecture	
<b>Lesson 20 Middle Ages</b> .....	59
Influence of the Catholic Church; Vikings; arts of the Middle Ages	
<b>Lesson 21 Knights and Nobles of the Middle Ages</b> .....	63
Feudal system; castle defenses and castle life; Norman conquest	
<b>Lesson 22 England and France in the Middle Ages</b> .....	67
Magna Carta; serfdom; self-sufficient communities; Joan of Arc	
<b>Lesson 23 The Changing Society of the Middle Ages</b> .....	71
Medieval guilds; education; entertainment; commerce and trade; Byzantine Empire	
<b>Lesson 24 The Crusades of the Middle Ages</b> .....	75
Religious conflict; the fall of the Byzantine Empire; Genghis Khan; research report	
<b>Lesson 25 The Birth of the Renaissance</b> .....	79
New ideas; the middle class; the ruling class; manners; the printing press	
<b>Lesson 26 Art and Artists of the Renaissance</b> .....	81
Modernized commerce; patrons of the arts; architecture; biography of an artist	
<b>Lesson 27 Artistic Innovations of the Renaissance</b> .....	83
Drawing perspective; artistic techniques; performing arts; Shakespeare	
<b>Lesson 28 Innovative Ideas of the Renaissance</b> .....	85
Humanism; writers and philosophers; the Scientific Revolution	

<b>Lesson 29 The Reformation</b> .....	89
Martin Luther; other leaders of the Protestant Movement	
<b>Lesson 30 Mayan Civilization</b> .....	91
Mathematical system; art and architecture; community life; religion customs	
<b>Lesson 31 First Peoples of North America</b> .....	93
Mound builders; Anasazi; coastal and Arctic tribes; Chief Seattle	
<b>Lesson 32 Aztec Civilization</b> .....	97
Tenochtitlán; Aztec glyphs; culture and crafts; religious practices; warfare	
<b>Lesson 33 Empire of the Incas</b> .....	99
Herbal remedies; Inca society; family life; Machu Picchu; stone structures	
<b>Lesson 34 Early Explorers</b> .....	103
Tools of navigation; Cortés; early slave trade; Magellan; Sir Frances Drake	
<b>Lesson 35 Around the World</b> .....	107
Latitude and longitude; prime meridian and International Date Line; oceans; Gulf Stream	
<b>Lesson 36 Year-End Review and Final Exam</b> .....	111
Time line of ancient civilizations; world map	



# Introduction

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This teacher manual is intended to help you support your student's learning. In addition to factual answers to assignment questions, you will find suggestions for ways to guide your student's learning and tips on how to assess their responses. Along with the learning assessments found at the end of each lesson (which highlight learning goals for each lesson), this teacher manual will help you evaluate, track, and document your student's progress.

You are encouraged to use a weekly planner and the assignment checklists and to help your child learn to use these organizational tools as well. Time management is an essential skill for students to learn, and one that will be useful for their entire lives.

In this teacher manual, you will find the full text for all assignments. Some activities are listed without the full text. Teacher manual answers are seen in **orange**. If more information is needed about any assignment, you can refer to the full text and reading material in the student's coursebook.

If a writing assignment asks for one or more pages of writing, you can assume that one page equals two or three paragraphs of three to eight sentences each. Students are advised to use their best judgment—two three-sentence paragraphs are not going to equal one page.

When working on assignments, students are encouraged to find out more if their curiosity is not sufficiently satisfied. The project choices found in most lessons encourage original thinking, exploration, and analysis, which are essential elements of the learning experience.

**Note about workload:** Please note that there are a wide variety of assignments included in this course to give students many options for engaging with the material. Students are not expected to complete every single assignment. You can help your student determine which assignments to focus on each week, based on the student's interests, strengths, and areas needing development. You might also give your student the option to complete some of the written assignments orally. Keep an eye on the workload as your student progresses, and make adjustments so that the student has time for meaningful learning experiences rather than rushing to try to get everything done. If your student is enrolled in Oak Meadow School, please consult with your teacher when making adjustments to the workload.

For obvious reasons, it is best not to share this teacher manual with your student. Each student should be encouraged to come up with their own answers, and sometimes a student might go beyond what is required for the assignment. This is to be encouraged! When a student gets a factual answer wrong,

you can share the correct answer. The focus should always be on the learning process rather than on a sense of judgment. Several incorrect answers related to a particular topic point to an area the student will benefit from revisiting.

If you notice a student's answers matching those of the teacher manual word for word, the student should be advised about plagiarism and the importance of doing original work. Students in sixth grade are starting to understand this concept and its ramifications, and any discussion about it should be approached as a learning opportunity. The issue of plagiarism and properly attributing sources is addressed in the English course.

We encourage you and your student to explore the topics introduced this year in active, experiential ways. We believe a real understanding and appreciation of the wonders of the world and the joy of learning only comes about when you and your student are fully participating in it.



## Lesson

# 1

# The Stone Age

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## Reading

Read “The Stone Age” (found in Reading Selections below).

## Assignments

1. Draw a large map of the outline of the continents of Africa, Asia, and Europe on a large piece of poster paper. Use a world map as a reference, and try to draw continents accurately and to scale. Do not add any countries yet. You will be adding to this map all year, so you should use a very large piece of paper. Make your continents big enough that you have space to add in the countries later. You can put the North and South American continents on this map, or you can create a separate map for them (in lesson 30).

Include the following on your map (each should be labeled):

- A compass rose showing the four directions (north, south, east, west)
- Major bodies of water
- The equator

Keep this map. You will be adding to it throughout the year.

**It might help if your student first draws an outline on the paper with one finger, getting a general idea of where each continent will go and how big it will be. Next, your student can use a pencil and lightly sketch the outlines, making sure that everything fits on the page in relative size and proximity before making the lines permanent.**

**Check that each continent and major body of water is labeled, and that the equator is clearly shown.**

## ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- ☐ Read “The Stone Age.”
- ☐ Begin creating a world map.
- ☐ Write about a topic related to life in the Stone Age.
- ☐ Draw a representation of prehistoric art.
- ☐ Choose a project to complete.
- ☐ Activity: Stone Age Art and Tools

2. Choose one of the following topics and write one page:

- a. In what ways do you think fire was important to the Stone Age people? What do you think they used it for? What kinds of changes in their lives might have occurred after they learned to use fire?

**Fire was important to Stone Age people for warmth, to light the inside of caves and other shelters, to cook meat, to keep animals away, and to provide protection from others. Your student may think of more ideas.**

- b. Find out three animals that were alive at the same time as the Stone Age people. Think about the ways in which people may have used the different parts of each animal. Give specific examples and add illustrations if you'd like to.

**Some animals concurrent to the Stone Age, and now extinct, are the mammoth, saber-toothed tiger, and woolly rhinoceros. Animals that are not extinct, but were hunted by the early humans, include pig and wild boar, deer, caribou and reindeer, rhinoceros, fish, bison, bear, hare, and fox. Animal parts and their possible uses include the following:**

- **Bones were used for tools and weapons; mammoth bones were sometimes used to make the frame for a hut.**
- **Skins and fur were used for clothing and bedding and to carry things; thick hides were used for shelter.**
- **Horns, antlers, and tusks were used for tools and weapons.**
- **Sinew was used for tying, strapping, and sewing.**
- **Hoofs were used for tools.**

- c. Explore your neighborhood, and look for food that you think a Stone Age person might eat in your area today. (Remember, list only foods that would be naturally found in the environment.) Write a report describing the foods and why they might be edible or appealing to eat. If you like, make a colorful illustration of the nuts, berries, leaves, fruits, and roots you find.

**Results will vary according to the part of the country the student lives in. *Peterson's Field Guide* is a helpful resource.**

3. Go to the library or search online to look at pictures of early cave paintings and carvings. Draw a picture showing an accurate representation of one or more. Label it with where the original was found and any other information known about it.

**The most famous cave paintings have been found at Lascaux in France and Altamira in Spain. Other sites include Font de Gaume, La Mouthe, Pair-non-Pair, and Niaux in France. Carvings and figures have been located at La Madeleine, Lespugue, Laugerie Basse, and Mas d'Azil in France; Pavlov and Brno in The Czech Republic; and in Kostyonki or Kostenki, Russia.**

4. Do **one** of the following projects this week:

- a. Write a diary about one week in the life of a cave man, woman, or child. Write it in the first person, with yourself as the central character.

**This project should include information about life as a hunter and/or gatherer. Students are likely to mention the difficulty of having to find food, and may describe details of shelter and clothing. Dangers from wild animals, harsh weather, and rudimentary medicine might also be mentioned.**

- b. Pretend you are going on an archaeological assignment. You are about to excavate one of the early caves used by primitive humans. Write a newspaper article describing your findings. Be sure to include information about the tools you find, the floor plan of the cave, paintings on the walls, and various other artifacts you might find. You will need to look in the encyclopedia or other resource book to find more information about caves and archaeological finds of early humans to help you write this article.

**Information given in the article might include the following:**

- **Descriptions of tools, such as spears, knives, axes, hammers, skin scrapers, arrowheads, sewing needles, and digging sticks, including what they are made of and how they were made**
  - **Any humanlike bones or skulls**
  - **Artifacts such as carvings or paintings**
  - **Evidence of the use of fire**
  - **An idea of what was found in which parts of the cave and thoughts as to why**
- c. Pretend you are mysteriously transported back in time to the Stone Age, where you meet a cave man, woman, or child. List ten questions you would like to ask this person. What would you like to know about the world of the past? After listing your questions, write a dialogue between you and the Stone Age person in which they answer your questions and discuss what prehistoric life is like.

**Questions should not only ask what the Stone Age person eats or wears, but where and how they got the food or the garments. Look for details in the responses that show a clear sense of the era (even if the details are not strictly historically accurate).**

## Activity

### Stone Age Art and Tools

Choose **one** of the following activities to complete:

- a. Cave Painting
- b. Stone Tools
- c. Clay Figurine

**The student may want to look at pictures on the internet or in the library to get ideas for this creative project.**

## Learning Assessment

These assessment rubrics are intended to help track student progress throughout the year. Please remember that these skills continue to develop over time. Parents and teachers can use this space to make notes about the learning the student demonstrates or the skills that need work.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Demonstrates knowledge of prehistoric human culture				
Demonstrates knowledge of Stone Age tools and art				
Draws a map to scale with detail, color, and labels				

## Lesson

# 2

# Ancient Mesopotamia

## Reading

Read “Ancient Mesopotamia” (found in Reading Selections below).

## Assignments

1. Add the Fertile Crescent to your map and name it. Make sure to include the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Use color to make your map more interesting. Make sure your labels are clear (both legible and clearly attached to a particular feature of your map).

**The Fertile Crescent includes the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (present-day Iraq), and then curves around to the west to include present-day Syria and the area on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea (present-day Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon). The Arabian Desert is inside its curve.**

2. Draw a picture or build a model of a ziggurat. Look at a variety of pictures first to get a good sense of how they were built.
3. How do you feel about Hammurabi’s code of laws? How do you think it would be received in your town today? Do you think you could live with it? Write at least one full paragraph. Follow the rules for paragraph writing (topic sentence, supporting details, concluding sentence, complete sentences, correct punctuation, etc.).

When you have completed your writing, choose one statement from Hammurabi’s Code, and draw or paint it to accompany your paragraph. Make a border for it and illustrate it.

**Students are asked to express their own feelings and ideas about Hammurabi’s laws. Hammurabi’s code of laws may evoke strong emotion in students. They may express shock at the brutality inherent in the laws, or may notice how the laws unfairly favor wealthy citizens or those of higher social rank. Encourage your student to consider how it would impact them personally if such a code of laws was in effect today.**

## ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- ☐ Read “Ancient Mesopotamia.”
- ☐ Add to your world map.
- ☐ Draw or build a model of a ziggurat.
- ☐ Write about Hammurabi’s code of laws.
- ☐ Choose a project about ancient Mesopotamia.
- ☐ Activity: Life in Ancient Babylon

**Look for students to express their ideas in an organized way, writing at least one paragraph that shows thoughtful consideration of the topic.**

4. Choose **one** of the following projects.

- a. The Babylonians wrote on clay tablets. Make a list of some of the ways in which we use paper today, and then describe how our culture would be different if we had to use clay tablets instead of paper. Think of as many examples as you can.

**As your student goes through the day, have them make note of the many ways paper is used and how it would be different if we did not have paper. Consider bags, newspapers, signs, food labels, art, books, etc.**

- b. Research the Sumerians, and find examples of their accomplishments. List and describe what you discover.

**This option is a research and writing assignment. Some accomplishments are listed below.**

- **Plow drawn by oxen**
- **Dairy processing**
- **Beer made from mashed barley**
- **Inventing the wheel, carts, and wagons**
- **Working with metal and inventing bronze**
- **Trading by ship and by land with India and eastern Africa**
- **Building the first cities, harbors, canals, temples, and palaces**
- **Instituting a ruling class**
- **Inventing writing and record-keeping**

- c. Find out more about the city of Ur and why it was an important discovery. Give specific examples in your discussion.

**This option is a research and writing assignment. The city of Ur (sometimes called Uruk, located in the “Land of Ur”) is considered to have the most extensive and comprehensive sources of the earliest known civilization. It has been called “the country of origin” for many of the things that we now take for granted as being a part of civilization. Some believe it was where the gods first gave Earth to humankind, or even that it was where the original Garden of Eden was located. Language, art, worship, mathematics, commerce, tool-making, agriculture, government, etc., were all developed for the first time into what we can undoubtedly call “civilization.”**

## Activity

### Life in Ancient Babylon

Choose **one** of the following projects.

- a. Personal Trademark
- b. Cuneiform Writing
- c. Measuring System
- d. Moon Calendar
- e. Hanging Gardens
- f. Clay Writing

## Learning Assessment

These assessment rubrics are intended to help track student progress throughout the year. Please remember that these skills continue to develop over time. Parents and teachers can use this space to make notes about the learning the student demonstrates or skills that need work.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Demonstrates knowledge of cuneiform and early systems of writing				
Compares historical culture to modern day				
Demonstrates knowledge of Sumerian and Babylonian cultures				
Identifies locations on a map				
Draws a map to scale with detail, color, and labels				

## Lesson

# 6

# Hebrew History

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## Reading

Read “The Twelve Hebrew Tribes” (found in Reading Selections below).

## Assignments

1. Choose two of the proverbs below, and think about what they mean. Write down your ideas. Have you seen these truths in your own life? Give specific examples.
  - a. “A wise man takes a command to heart; a foolish talker comes to grief.”
  - b. “A soft answer turns away anger, but a sharp word makes tempers hot.”
  - c. “Like a tooth decayed or a foot limping is a traitor relied on in the day of trouble.”
  - d. “A man who deceives another and then says, ‘It was only a joke,’ is like a madman shooting at random his deadly darts and arrows.”
  - e. “If he digs a pit, he will fall into it, and if he rolls a stone, it will roll back upon him.”

**It may help your student to discuss the meaning of these proverbs with you before choosing two to write about. Student responses will include an explanation of the meaning behind the words, and a specific example that relates to the student’s own experience.**

## Activity

### Jewish Culture

Choose one of these projects to complete.

- a. Jewish Meal
- b. Symbols of Judaism
- c. Hebrew Alphabet
- d. *The Ten Commandments* Movie

### ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- ☐ Read “The Twelve Hebrew Tribes.”
- ☐ Explain the meaning of two proverbs.
- ☐ Activity: Jewish Culture



## Learning Assessment

Use assessment rubrics to track student progress and to make notes about the learning the student demonstrates or any skills that need work.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Demonstrates knowledge of early Hebrew culture				
Demonstrates knowledge of early Hebrew history				
Shows empathetic awareness of challenges brought on by historical events				
Shows original thought in interpreting proverbs				
Accurately recounts historical events				
Draws a map to scale with detail, color, and labels				

## Lesson

# 17

# Christianity

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## Reading

Read “Christianity” (found in Reading Selections below).

## Assignments

1. Think about the issue of tolerance. The Romans and Jews didn’t tolerate the Christians. Do you think there is room in our human communities for more than one belief about spirituality and religion? Write your thoughts in one paragraph.

**This open-ended assignment requires students to reflect on historical and modern societies, and to state an opinion. Look for a response that directly addresses the issue of religious tolerance.**

2. Consider the “Golden Rule”: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you (or treat others as you’d like to be treated). In ancient China Confucius said, “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.” In ancient Greece, Aristotle said, “We should behave to our friends as we would wish our friends to behave to us.” In ancient Palestine, Jesus said, “Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.” Do you think these ideas still need to be encouraged today? How would the world be different if everyone followed these teachings?

**Students should clearly state their opinions and include supporting details or examples. Students might point to societal changes such as less crime in general, fewer homeless or displaced persons, an elimination of bullying, prejudice, and hate crimes, or an end to wars.**

## ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- ☐ Read “Christianity.”
- ☐ Reflect on the issue of tolerance.
- ☐ Apply the Golden Rule to modern society.

## Learning Assessment

Use assessment rubrics to track student progress and to make notes about the learning the student demonstrates or any skills that need work.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Demonstrates knowledge of early Christianity				
Demonstrates knowledge of foundations of Christian philosophy				
Reflects on life in ancient times				
Applies aspects of Christian philosophy to modern society				
Expository essay: Introductory paragraph gives overview of topic				
Expository essay: Uses topic sentences to introduce paragraph themes				
Expository essay: Provides specific supporting details				
Expository essay: Organizes information in a logical way				
Expository essay: Concluding paragraph summarizes and connects information				
Expository essay: Writing shows evidence of revision, editing, and proofreading				
Shows original thought in assignment responses				
Accurately recounts historical details and events				
Draws a map to scale with detail, color, and labels				

## Lesson

# 23

# The Changing Society of the Middle Ages

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## Reading

Read “The Changing Society of the Middle Ages” (found in Reading Selections below). Review the location of Istanbul, Turkey on your map. This is also the location of the city of Constantinople.

## Assignments

1. This week you will finish your outline and write the rough draft of your report. Finish adding any additional information or ideas to your detailed outline, and then use it to begin writing your rough draft. As you start to fill in the paragraphs of your rough draft, think about where an illustration would enhance the report. You might draw several small sketches, or one full page, full color illustration for your report (you will still have five pages of written text in addition to your drawings). Put your illustrations on separate pieces of paper so they can be added to your report at the very end. By the end of the week, you should have your rough draft complete and your illustrations drawn.

**Hopefully, all the preparation your student has done will make writing the rough draft a smooth process. It may help to have your student complete one section per day (approximately three paragraphs or one page), rather than trying to write the entire five-page rough draft in one or two sittings. The illustrations should be decided upon, including where they will be inserted into the report, and completed this week.**

2. Learn about Marco Polo, and write a first-person letter from him in which he describes the marvels of the world that he experienced on his travels to China. Make sure he describes things in detail and talks about not only the goods he learned about but also the people he met and places he saw. Use vivid descriptive words to bring his experiences to life. Plot his course on a simple map to include with his letter (make sure to label the places he visited).

## ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- ☐ Read “The Changing Society of the Middle Ages.”
- ☐ Write the rough draft of your research report.
- ☐ Write a letter from the perspective of Marco Polo.
- ☐ Learn about the Hagia Sophia.
- ☐ Activity: Medieval Entertainment

**This assignment is a simple exercise in descriptive writing. Writing in letter form, the student will tell about Marco Polo's travels to meet the great Mongolian emperor of China, Kublai Khan. The letter might mention sailing to Palestine and riding camels across Asia on the three-year trip to China. Marco was valued by the Khan for knowing languages and was sent on many official missions throughout the Chinese empire, where he was surrounded by riches of ivory, jade, porcelain, silk, and jewels.**

3. Look at pictures of Byzantine architecture and art at the library or online. Look for information on the Hagia Sophia, and write a paragraph about this famous church in Constantinople. Include information on its history, the meaning of its name, and the artwork inside. Alternately, you can draw a picture of the Hagia Sophia. Make sure to include specific, realistic details.

**Built between 532 and 537 CE, the Hagia Sophia uses an elaborate framework of arches to make the central dome, which is 102 feet in diameter and 185 feet above the floor. Multicolored marble veneers and ornamental mosaics decorate the inside.**

## Activity

### Medieval Entertainment

Choose one or more of the following creative activities to do this week.

- a. Jongleur Act
- b. Musical Instruments
- c. Play Performance
- d. Nine Men's Morris
- e. Byzantine Mosaics
- f. Medieval Guilds

## Learning Assessment

Use assessment rubrics to track student progress and to make notes about the learning the student demonstrates or any skills that need work.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Demonstrates knowledge of history of the evolution of society in the Middle Ages				
Demonstrates knowledge of culture of the Middle Ages				
Research report: Uses a variety of sources				
Research report: Demonstrates good note-taking skills				
Research report: Acknowledges sources using in-text and full MLA citations				
Research report: Identifies key aspects of the topic in outline form				
Research report: Organizes notes and ideas in a logical order				
Research report: Writing includes accurate information and factual details				
Research report: Demonstrates good paragraphing skills				
Shows original thought in assignment responses				
Accurately recounts historical details and events				
Draws a map to scale with detail, color, and labels				