

AP World History Themes

AP World History highlights six overarching themes. They function as unifying threads, helping students to put what is particular about each period or society into a larger framework. The themes also provide ways to make comparisons over time. The complete statement of each theme (from the *AP World History Course Description* or “Acorn Book”) is listed below, along with “short form” summaries of each. Also below are ways the themes might all be incorporated throughout the year.

Theme 1: Interactions in Economy and Politics

Impact of interaction among major societies (trade, systems of international exchange, war, and diplomacy).

Theme 2: Change and Continuity

The relationship of change and continuity across the world history periods covered in this course.

Theme 3: Technology, Demography, and Environment

Impact of technology and demography on people and the environment (population growth and decline, disease, manufacturing, migrations, agriculture, weaponry).

Theme 4: Systems of Social and Gender Structure

Systems of social structure and gender structure (comparing major features within and among societies and assessing change).

Theme 5: Cultural and Intellectual Developments

Cultural and intellectual developments and interactions among and within societies.

Theme 6: Changing Functions of States

Changes in functions and structures of states and in attitudes toward states and political identities (political culture), including the emergence of the nation-state (types of political organization).

Consult the Table of Contents for a list of the eight lessons in this *Guide* under “Habits of Mind,” organized by their principal theme.

Yearlong Classroom Applications for the Themes

- Have students follow a theme throughout the year, connecting it to daily lessons, novels, current events, history day projects, or other independent research. See Unit 1, Appendix B.
- Regularly tie current events to the six themes.

- Create thematic (mental) maps for each time period.
- Use an interactive notebook where students write their own thematic connections on the left side each day. (See the section about “Notebooks in Chapter 5, “Strategies for Teaching and Learning.”

Thematic Examples of Best Practices

In this section of the *Best Practices*, there are six sets of best practices activities organized by AP World History themes. Under each theme, there are three activities for each of the five chronological periods. Altogether there are ninety suggested activities. These are meant to be representative of best practices that teachers regularly carry out in their classroom. For some of the examples, resources are listed to develop the activity. For additional examples of these types of activities for World History in general, see *Bring History Alive* edited by Ross Dunn and David Vigilante.

NOTE: Bold text in the following Thematic Examples of Best Practices indicates the specific activity in each.

Theme 1: Interactions in Economy and Politics

Foundations

- Students explore trading patterns through a **simulation** on the Trans-Saharan gold-salt trade (see *History Alive* materials) and the Silk Roads.
- Students **create an advertisement** for a product of the time: camels (see Bulliet, *Camel and the Wheel*), silk, stirrups, etc.
- **Using jigsaw cooperative groups**, examine the extent of trade, diplomacy, and intellectual exchanges among Roman, Parthian, Mauryan/Gupta, and Han empires.

1000– 1450¹¹

- Students **create a mental map**¹² of Indian Ocean trade including: monsoon winds; East African, Arab, South Asian, and Southeast Asian ports; products of exchange; migrant communities of sailors; missionaries and merchants; movement of religions and technologies; and hazards.
- Students **create a chart** comparing the impact of the Crusading movement with Viking exploration and Mongol expansion, looking specifically at disease, agriculture, technology, religion, and ideas about the “other.” (Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*)

¹¹ Please note that the second time period in AP World History has been revised from 1000-1450 to 600-1450. This change is effective for the May 2004 exam administration.

¹² An individual’s map of his/her known world or a map “drawn from memory.”

- Students **write a feature story** for a newspaper of the time focusing on Chinese influence on Japan as seen by one of three points of view — Japanese, Korean, or Chinese.

1450 – 1750

- Students **create a photo essay** using six to ten images from the textbook, Web, or other source on the topic of the Columbian exchange. They write only captions, so that the pictures need to tell the full story.
- Students **role-play** Western advisors to Russia, the Ottoman Empire, China, Tokugawa Japan, and/or Mughal India. Each group should have: two advisors from the West who research how a particular region interacted with Europe, or a specific area of Europe; a journalist who will report to the class about the interaction; and two local representatives who research the extent to which the change suggested by the Western advisors was welcomed or rejected.
- Students **create a graphic organizer** (map, Web, chart, Venn diagram, foursquare) that looks at military conquests and expansions in the period, such as the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, the Siege of Vienna, the conquest of the Inca, and others. This graphic organizer might be used by students later to write a comparative essay.

1750 – 1914

- Students **produce a pamphlet** encouraging migration to a new location (Australia, South America, United States, or Canada, among others).
- Students **create a decision-making chart** (options schema), described elsewhere in *Best Practices*, on the building of railroads or canals in the nineteenth century.
- Students compose and **deliver a “Hyde Park Speech”** (a rhetorical speech given with point of view — and attitude) about immigration or trade. Students might choose to be a worker, ship captain, or a factory owner from anywhere. Note: Hyde Park is an area of London where speakers stand on soapboxes to express their opinions. Decide whether or not to permit the usual heckling.

1914 – Present

- After looking at satellite pictures of Earth from space and listening to the song “From a Distance” sung by Bette Midler, students **write a poem or song** about whether peace in the twenty-first century, either as the norm or the exception in human relations.

- Students **analyze and compare primary and secondary documents** (visual and/or text) to determine what the difference is between Americanization and globalization.
- Students **write a journal entry** connecting a current event on global interaction to the past. For example, World Trade Organization meeting protests can be compared to resistance to trade in China, Japan, or Europe in an earlier period.

Theme 2: Change and Continuity

Foundations

- Students **write a diary** of a merchant whose family has been involved in the silk and spice trade for generations. While traveling across the Indian Ocean, they discuss varying hazards encountered by land and sea and why the sea route began to take precedence.
- Students **use images to illustrate the concept** of *axial age* in Foundations and then argue whether we are currently in an *axial age*. For background, see Karl Jasper, *Axial Age* (1957), and D. Johnson and J. Johnson, *Human Drama* (2000).
- Students **read legal codes** and cases to explore the universality (or not) of certain crimes over time (i.e., theft, murder, adultery, incest). Examples of legal codes of that time are Hammurabi's Code, the Code of Justinian, and Qur'anic law.
- Students **read excerpts from literature** to look at family relations over time. Possibilities include *Tale of Genji*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Sundiata*, and *Hamlet*, among others.

1000 – 1450

- Students **use images** of religious significance (icons, paintings, sculptures) to show the spread of universal religions and resulting syncretism.
- Students **write resumes** for leaders across time to examine how the requirements for leadership have changed and how people ruled. Specific requirements for the resume could be education, honors, achievements, etc. Possible choices could include Pericles, Mansa Musa, Ashoka, Elizabeth I, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Montezuma, Suleiman, Akbar, Stalin, and Reagan, among others.

1450 – 1750

- Students **use geography** (maps and interpretation) to demonstrate why certain regions were harder hit by disease at certain times (isolation of Americas, Hawaii, Oceania as compared to Afro-Eurasian world).

- Students **take part in a simulation** that introduces the idea of free and unfree labor, where the latter could be peasant, serf, or slave labor.
- Students engage in an **inner-outer circle seminar** looking at scholars' statements on "when the West rose." Selections from works by Andre Gunder Frank, Kenneth Pomeranz, David Landes, James Blaut, and Paul Kennedy are possible sources. (For a discussion of "inner/outer circles," go to this address on the ThinkQuest Web site: <http://library.thinkquest.org/50084/resources/editoriallesson-innerouter.html>)

1750 – 1914

- Students **map new routes** and means of transportation.
- Students **use documents** to analyze the change in women's status comparatively (for example, in England, Japan, and Argentina through to the early twentieth century).
- Students **create a photo essay** looking at technological change in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Students should define technology and write limited captions for no more than 10 images.

1914 – Present

- Students **interpret charts** to look at the change in energy sources throughout the past 1,000 years or more, starting with human power and harnessing animal energy, then turning to fossil fuels and now increasingly to renewable sources.
- Students **debate** the question of progress in human history. Is there such a thing as progress? They might consider the question in such areas as technology, ecology, military, standard of living, health, and education.
- Students **interview** a relative, family friend, or community member about change in their lifetime, focusing on one of more of the themes. This oral history project might culminate in the writing of creative stories based on the interviews by students to be presented to their classmates.

Theme 3: Technology and Demography

Foundations

- **Research the role of migration and invasions** into settled areas (e.g., Greece, Egypt, Indus Valley, Yellow River Valley) and write letters describing what happened.

- Assess the impact of disease and changes in the environment on Maya, Axum, Han, and Roman societies and **create a visual depiction** of what happened (e.g., illustration, cartoon, flow chart, etc.).
- Students watch the PBS video, *Catastrophe*, based on the book by David Keys, to **develop media literacy** as they critique causality and examine diverse interpretations and source materials.

1000 – 1450

- Students **debate** why Song China did not have an industrial revolution given existing technologies and natural resources.
- Students **complete a mental map** of migration across the Eurasian steppes, indicating reasons for movement as well as results of interaction.
- Students **write newspaper stories** on the role of climate in movements of the Vikings (Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900.*)

1450 – 1750

- Students **create a commercial or advertisement** for a new type of weapon.
- Students follow the historical movement of an agricultural product, such as corn, potatoes, tomatoes, wheat, sugar, or chocolate, and **develop a graphic organizer** that illustrates this, or develop a **class matrix** showing information about all of them (Smithsonian, *Seeds of Change*).
- Students **“read” images** relating to the spread of disease and speculate in a **journal entry** why scapegoating occurred (McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*; and Watts, *Epidemics and History: Disease, Power and Imperialism*).

1750 – 1914

- Students **produce a public service announcement** to help educate the public about disease prevention at the turn of the twentieth century when public health knowledge has improved (Pacey, *Technology in World Civilization*).
- An Indian factory worker and activist **writes a letter** to the British Parliament documenting the effects of the textile industry on family life, economics, and social conditions.
- Students watch the video *World Population* (Zero Population Growth: www.zpg.org) and look at world history population graphs (human geography textbooks have good examples). Then they **engage in a Socratic discussion** about population growth and Malthusian theory.

1914 – Present

- Students **participate in a simulation** on the future of ocean resources, such as water and fish, among others, in which a variety of international perspectives are heard and proposals are made.
- Students **create a futures timeline** looking at the theme of conflict during this time. They should begin with 1914 and then, at the present date, diverge into two branches: a probable and a preferred timeline. Students look at recent trends to determine what is probable in the future and also record what they would like to see as the future trend.
- Students do independent research on areas of on-going deforestation and **write a proposal** on what should be done, taking into account the diverse interpretations of indigenous people, international organizations, local government, and other interested nations.

Theme 4: Systems of Social and Gender Structure

Foundations

- Students **create an illustrated dictionary** of key concepts in gender studies (patriarchy, concubine, etc.).
- Students **develop a graphic organizer** for the Han, Romans, and the Gupta, showing comparative social structure.
- In small groups, students **design a city or building** for the purpose of understanding the interrelationship of social structure and urbanization and how that relationship can be visualized through architecture.

1000 – 1450

- Students **compose a eulogy** for Zheng He written by eunuchs in light of their disregard for merchants, and another written from the perspective of an Arab Muslim. (Other students could write eulogies of Columbus by the Taino people and by Ferdinand and Isabella).
- Students **read primary sources** of Ibn Battuta's travels and write about the global influence of Islam on social and gender structures.
- Students **write a statement of welcome** or a creed for the city to illustrate the policy of tolerance in Córdoba under Islamic rule.

1450 – 1750

- Students **create a flow chart** for labor systems, identifying the products, showing the human and material resources, and showing the economics of the labor process.
- Students **write a dialogue** between individuals who would be likely to gather in a European salon, an Ottoman harem, a Chinese court, or a slave plantation. One or more could be selected to be read aloud as readers' theater.
- Students **write a poem, song, or short story** from the perspective of persons of mixed ancestry in the Americas, circa sixteenth century.

1750 – 1914

- Students will **write a letter to the editor** of a local paper from the point of view of a colonized individual. This could be part of a larger newspaper project.
- Students take on the point of view of an emancipated serf or slave and **write a letter** to a relative describing his or her new life.
- Students **read and compare case studies** of two nineteenth-century feminists, one Indian and the other British.

1914 – Present

- Students **write and illustrate a children's story** on issues of human rights. First, read a sample children's book to the class. Examples of good choices are Ken Mochizuki, *Baseball Saved Us* (about Japanese internment in the U.S.) and Toshi Maruki, *Hiroshima No Pika* (about the atomic bomb).
- Students **create a timeline** documenting changes in rights worldwide. One may wish to use the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (The entire text of the Declaration can be found on the United Nations Web site at: <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>.)
- Students **debate** in class on the topic of a global society looking at issues such as toxic waste dumping, consumerism, gambling, and ecotourism.

Theme 5: Cultural and Intellectual Developments

Foundations

- For review, students **design a graphic organizer** on world religions and their spread.

- Students **work in stations** to explore cultural and intellectual legacies of the Foundations period through visual and text sources. Include Greek approach to science; Hellenistic, Indian, and Chinese philosophical belief systems; and artistic and architectural developments.
- Students **use visual evidence** to compare monumental architecture and the values it conveys about a society. They could look at images of the city layouts or the ruins of Tikal (the Maya in Guatemala), Cordoba (Islamic Spain), or others. (See *National Geographic* magazine and Web sites.)

1000 – 1450

- Students **read literary excerpts** from *The Tale of Genji* to look at court life. (Authored by a Japanese woman, it was the first novel ever written.) Students respond in a **journal entry** from a point of view NOT expressed in the reading.
- Students **conduct an analysis of primary and secondary quotes**, looking at the impact of Islamic scholarship on Europe in the era after the Crusades of the twelfth century.
- **Debate** the importance of Asian crops, inventions, and intellectual ideas to the development of Europe. (See Lynda Shaffer, “Southernization,” *Journal of World History* 5: 1994.)

1450 – 1750

- Students **write a journal entry** comparing contemporary slavery and the Atlantic slave trade after reading excerpts from the slave narrative by Olaudah Equiano and an article on the modern slave trade (for example, *Teen People*, September 2001).
- Students **write a realistic trial document** from a hearing on witches in either Europe or the American colonies. Was witchcraft a more global phenomenon?
- After researching Mughal, Ming, and Russian patronage of the arts, students **write a proposal** to one of the governments for a project it would be most likely to fund.

1750 – 1914

- Students **write a rhetorical speech** to be delivered by French or Haitian intellectuals that will emphasize the role French intellectual thought played in the Haitian Revolution.
- Students **read autobiographical excerpts** from *A Black Woman’s Odyssey Through Russia and Jamaica: The Narrative of Nancy Prince* (Reprint edition Markus Wiener Publishers, 1989). Nancy Prince was a free African American woman before the Civil war whose experiences in Russia and the Caribbean provide an interesting perspective on religion, emancipation, and politics.

- Students **create a ten-image photo essay** on nineteenth-century leisure activities, including sports. The first image might look backward, and the last image might speculate on what is to come given changes in work regulations. (*Experiencing World History* has as one of its themes work and leisure.)

1914 – Present

- Students read an excerpt from Jung Chang, *Wild Swans*, that tells about experiences during the Chinese Cultural Revolution and then **create banners or placards** that might have been used by students at the time.
- Students **complete an independent research project** on globalization and the acceptance of or resistance to its influences in one or more places.
- Students **take part in a UNESCO simulation** where World Heritage sites are chosen. They research the threat to preservation of the site and then present an oral argument with supporting materials to the World Bank, showing how and why this historic site needs to be funded. (To view World Heritage sites, go to this address on the UNESCO Web site: www.unesco.org/whc/)

Theme 6: Changing Functions of States

Foundations

- Working in groups, students **create a chart** comparing types of political systems that they can add to throughout the year.
- Students take part in an **inner-outer circle seminar** on “Why urbanization?”
- Students **create a mental map** of new empires indicating with arrows international trade connections, the expansion of territory, the direction of intellectual exchanges, and other global connections.

1000 – 1450

- Students **interpret charts** of urban statistics and population to compare cities such as Samarkand, Timbuktu, Guangzhou, Cairo, and Venice.
- Students **read literature excerpts** (such as Katherine Patterson on Japan) and **look at architecture** (castles) and other sources to define feudalism, and **create a graphic organizer** comparing Japanese and European feudalism.
- Students **take part in a game** in which some students belong to “states” and others are “stateless.” The simulation is not historically specific. Through it, students get a sense of how the two groups need to interact and the advantages and disadvantages of each type of organization.

1450 – 1750

- **Comparative timeline** on the rise of Western dominance and continued Chinese growth.
- Students **create an extra-credit board game** (or computer game) about political entities of this period focusing on European monarchies (and absolutism in general), land-based Asian empires, and other states.
- Small groups of students each choose one of the following empires to **produce a time capsule**: Aztec, Benin, England, France, Inca, Kongo, Ming, Mongol, Mughal, Ottoman, Portugal, Qing, Russia, Songhay, Spain, or Tokugawa. Students should select five items that represent their empire and be prepared to compare the political, social, economic, and cultural differences.

1750 – 1914

- Students look at images relating to Latin American independence (pictures of Bolívar, Diego Rivera murals, encomienda workers) to **create headlines** only for newspaper articles.
- Working in groups, students research one of the revolutions (e.g., in China, France, Haiti, Mexico, or the United States) and **create an audio tour** for tourists highlighting the revolutionary events that took place in the city they are visiting. Students include a large map labeled with important events, a timeline, and the written script they record. Comparative references should be encouraged.
- Students **write a comparative case study** of leaders' resistance to colonialism: Samuel Adams (U.S.), Bolívar (South America), Gandhi (India and South Africa),

1914 - Present

- Students **role-play** multiple perspectives of nationalism from history and in current events.
- Students **create an editorial or a political cartoon** on decolonization.
- Students **debate** at what point internal affairs (for example, human rights, the environment, and genocide) become international issues that transcend national boundaries.