Grade 8 Social Studies: Year-Long Overview

To be productive members of society, students must be critical consumers of information they read, hear, and observe and communicate effectively about their ideas. They need to gain knowledge from a wide array of sources and examine and evaluate that information to develop and express an informed opinion, using information gained from the sources and their background knowledge. Students must also make connections between what they learn about the past and the present to understand how and why events happen and people act in certain ways.

To accomplish this, students must:

1. Use sources regularly to learn content.
2. Make connections among people, events, and ideas across time and place.
3. Express informed opinions using evidence from sources and outside knowledge.

Teachers must create instructional opportunities that delve deeply into **content** and guide students in developing and supporting **claims** about social studies concepts.

In grade 8, students explore the economic, political, and social changes that have formed Louisiana’s identity as they learn about Louisiana’s geography, colonial Louisiana, Antebellum period, Civil War and Reconstruction Era, Jim Crow Louisiana, Civil Rights Era and modern day Louisiana. The **key themes** in grade 8 highlight the connections among the **Gle’s** that students should make as they develop and express informed opinions about the grade 8 claims.

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<td>How does physical geography impact a state’s cultural and economic identity?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louisiana: Settlement and Colonial Legacy</td>
<td>What is the legacy of settlement and colonization on an area’s identity?</td>
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<tr>
<td>19th Century Louisiana: A State in Conflict</td>
<td>What is the legacy of conflict and resolution on a state’s identity?</td>
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<td>Louisiana: An Identity in Transition</td>
<td>What is the impact of populism and power on a state’s identity?</td>
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<td>20th Century Louisiana: A Changing Identity</td>
<td>How do economic, social, and political changes of the 20th century redefine a state’s identity?</td>
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<td>Louisiana’s Identity: A Modern State</td>
<td>What is the role of government and economics in defining a state’s identity?</td>
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Grade 8 Social Studies: How to Navigate This Document

The grade 8 scope and sequence document is divided into 6 units. Each unit has an overview, instruction which includes topics and tasks, and a unit assessment. Click on a link below to access the content.

Unit One: Louisiana’s Identity: This is Louisiana
- Unit One Overview
- Unit One Instruction
  - Topic One: Louisiana’s Natural Resources
  - Topic Two: Coastal Erosion
  - Topic Three: Louisiana’s Cultural Geography
- Unit One Assessment

Unit Two: Louisiana: Settlement and Colonial Legacy
- Unit Two Overview
- Unit Two Instruction
  - Topic One: Native American Settlement
  - Topic Two: European Exploration and Settlement
  - Topic Three: Louisiana Purchase
- Unit Two Assessment

Unit Three: 19th Century Louisiana: A State in Conflict
- Unit Three Overview
- Unit Three Instruction
  - Topic One: Statehood and Battle of New Orleans
  - Topic Two: Antebellum Period
  - Topic Three: Civil War in Louisiana
  - Topic Four: Reconstruction
  - Topic Five: Jim Crow Louisiana
- Unit Three Assessment

Unit Four: Louisiana: An Identity in Transition
- Unit Four Overview
- Unit Four Instruction
  - Topic One: Populism and the Flood of 1927
  - Topic Two: Huey Long
- Unit Four Assessment

Unit Five: 20th Century Louisiana: A Changing Identity
- Unit Five Overview
- Unit Five Instruction
  - Topic One: World War II

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- **Topic Two: Civil Rights**
- **Unit Five Assessment**

**Unit Six: Louisiana’s Identity: A Modern State**
- **Unit Six Overview**
- **Unit Six Instruction**
  - **Topic One: Louisiana’s Government**
  - **Topic Two: Louisiana’s Economy**
- **Unit Six Assessment**
Unit Two Overview

Description: Students learn how European settlement and colonization of Louisiana has shaped Louisiana's identity and effected its multicultural society.

Suggested Timeline: 7 - 8 weeks

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Topics (GLEs):
1. Native American Settlement (8.1.1, 8.2.1, 8.2.2, 8.3.3, 8.4.1)
2. European Exploration and Settlement (8.1.1, 8.1.2, 8.2.2, 8.2.3, 8.2.4, 8.2.5, 8.3.3, 8.4.1, 8.4.2, 8.7.1, 8.10.4)
3. Louisiana Purchase (8.1.1, 8.2.2, 8.2.5, 8.7.1)

Unit Assessment: Students write an essay in response to the following question: What is the legacy of settlement and colonization on an area's identity?
Unit Two Instruction

Topic One: Native American Settlement (8.1.1, 8.2.1, 8.2.2, 8.3.3, 8.4.1)

Connections to the unit claim: Students examine the economic, historical, and cultural legacy left by the Native Americans of Poverty Point.

Suggested Timeline: 4 class periods

Use this sample task:
- Poverty Point

To explore these key questions:
- How did the Mississippi River help Poverty Point flourish economically and culturally?
- What is the legacy of Native American settlement on Louisiana's identity?

That students answer through this assessment:
- Students analyze the video Mystery in Louisiana - Poverty Point using the Mystery in Louisiana-Poverty Point Evidence Chart. Collect these for a grade.
- Students use their Mystery in Louisiana-Poverty Point Evidence Chart covering Mystery in Louisiana - Poverty Point and engage in a class discussions about how hunter-gatherers were able to build a permanent settlement at Poverty Point. Use a discussion tracker to keep track of students’ contributions to the discussion and use this information to assign a grade to students. (ELA/Literacy Standards: SL.8.1a-d, SL.8.3, SL.8.6)
- Students analyze the video Origins of Cities - Poverty Point, using the Origins of Cities: Poverty Point Evidence Chart. Collect these for a grade.
- Students analyze sources about Poverty Point and complete the handout: T-Chart: Aspects of Poverty Point’s Identity. Collect these for a grade.
- Students use their Aspects of Poverty Point’s Identity and engage in a class discussions about the economic, cultural, and geographic legacy of Poverty Point. Use a discussion tracker to keep track of students’ contributions to the discussion and use this information to assign a grade to students. (ELA/Literacy Standards: SL.8.1a-d, SL.8.3, SL.8.6)
Grade 8 Instructional Task: Poverty Point
Unit Two: Louisiana: Settlement and Colonial Legacy, Topic One: Native American Settlement

Description: Students examine how Poverty Point was built by hunter gatherers and how it flourished as a culture and economic center in north Louisiana because it proximity to the Mississippi River.

Suggested Timeline: 4 class periods

Materials: Location Map of Poverty Point, Mystery in Louisiana -Poverty Point, Mystery in Louisiana-Poverty Point Evidence Chart (blank and completed), discussion tracker, conversation stems, Origins of Cities: Poverty Point Evidence Chart (blank and completed), Origins of Cities - Poverty Point, Geographic/Historical Characteristics, Cultural Characteristics, Economic Characteristics, Aspects of Poverty Point’s Identity Graphic Organizer (blank and completed).

Instructional Process:
1. Say “In the previous unit we analyzed how Louisiana’s physical geography has shaped Louisiana’s cultural geography. In this unit we will focus on specific historic and prehistoric periods in Louisiana to investigate the legacy of settlement on an area’s identity. We will begin by exploring prehistoric, the time before writing, settlements by investigating the Poverty Point Culture located in North Louisiana.”
2. Project or provide students with a copy of the Location Map of Poverty Point.
3. Conduct a brief discussion about the role physical geography played in the location of Poverty Point. Possible questions:
   a. What makes Poverty Point’s location important?
   b. Why do you believe Poverty Point was located adjacent to the Mississippi River?
   c. Based on your knowledge of how physical geography shapes an area’s cultural geography, what do you believe was the basis for Poverty Point’s economy?
4. Say “As we further research Poverty Point we will be able to see if your predictions about Poverty Point were correct.”
5. Provide students with a copy of the Mystery in Louisiana-Poverty Point Evidence Chart.
6. Depending on access, have the students view Mystery in Louisiana -Poverty Point in pairs or project for the entire class. Instruct the students to view the video in its entirety once, then identify the claim the video is making with a shoulder partner.
7. Instruct students to view the video again, to locate evidence that the video uses to support the claim and use their Mystery in Louisiana-Poverty Point Evidence Chart to support the claim that Poverty Point was a complex society.
8. Conduct a discussion about how a hunter-gatherer society could build a permanent city as large as Poverty Point. Encourage students to use the conversation stems during the discussion and provide evidence from the video Mystery in Louisiana -Poverty Point to support their answers. Possible questions:
   a. What is a hunter-gatherer?
   b. Why were most hunter-gatherers not able to settle in cities?
   c. Why are hunter-gatherer societies usually not considered complex?
   d. What makes Poverty Point different from most hunter-gatherer societies?
   e. How do we know Mound A only took 30 - 90 days to build?
f. Native Americans at Poverty Point did not have a writing system, how do archaeologists know so much about Poverty Point?

g. Would you consider Poverty Point culture a complex society? Why or Why not?

9. After the discussion say “Poverty Point’s placement next to the Mississippi River made it an ideal location for trade and commerce which enabled the city to survive and thrive. We will now examine what made Poverty Point a marvel of the ancient world.”

10. Provide students with the Origins of Cities: Poverty Point Evidence Chart. As the students watch the following video, have them locate evidence that supports the author’s claim.

11. Project Origins of Cities - Poverty Point and view as a class to give students an overview of the legacy left behind by Poverty Point.

12. Conduct a brief discussion about Poverty Point being a major Native American trading center. Possible questions:

   a. Why do most societies need agriculture to settle into urban societies?
   b. Why did Poverty Point Native Americans not need agriculture to survive as an urban center?
   c. How do archaeologists know Poverty Point was a major trade center?
   d. What aspect of Poverty Point’s location make it ideal for a trade center?

13. Divide the class into three groups using an established classroom routine.

14. Set up three stations around the room: Geographic/Historical Characteristics of Poverty Point, Cultural Characteristics of Poverty Point, and Economic Characteristics of Poverty Point.

15. At each station place one of the following documents:

   a. Geographic/Historical Characteristics (Station 1)
   b. Cultural Characteristics (Station 2)
   c. Economic Characteristics (Station 3)

16. Provide students with a copy of Aspects of Poverty Point’s Identity graphic organizer. Direct students to read each set of documents as a group and discuss how each characteristics has shaped Poverty Point’s identity. Direct students to locate and record evidence in the documents that supports the claim about Poverty Point’s identity using their Aspects of Poverty Point’s Identity graphic organizer. Rotate groups from station to station.

17. Conduct a discussion about the cultural, economic, historical, and geographical legacy of Poverty Point. Encourage students to use the conversation stems during the discussion and provide evidence from their handout, Aspects of Poverty Point’s Identity Graphic Organizer and outside knowledge to support their answers. Possible questions:

   a. How do archaeologists know the legacy of Poverty Point?
   b. What do you believe the earthworks at Poverty Point were intended to be used for? What evidence allowed you to come to that conclusion?
   c. Explain how Poverty Point was able to have a complex culture while not being able to grow their own crops.
   d. How did the area’s physical geography affect Poverty Point?
   e. How was the Mississippi River an important aspect of daily life at Poverty Point?
   f. How did Poverty Point’s physical geography affect its cultural geography?
   g. If you were a Native American living at Poverty Point, what are some ways you would get food to survive?
   h. How did Poverty Point shape Louisiana’s identity?

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i. From the information you gathered about Poverty Point, why will Europeans desire to colonize Louisiana in the 17th Century?
Location of Poverty Point

This work from the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism is used with permission. The original work is available at http://www.crt.state.la.us/dataprojects/archaeology/povertypoint/assets/poverty-point-pdf-1.03.pdf.
Mystery in Louisiana: Poverty Point - Evidence Chart

Claim: ____________________________

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<th>Evidence</th>
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**Origins of Cities: Poverty Point - Evidence Chart**

**Claim:** Poverty Point was a major Native American Trading Center

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Aspects of Poverty Point's Identity Graphic Organizer

Poverty Point's Identity: Poverty Point was an advanced civilization even though it was created by hunter-gatherers.

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<th>Cultural Characteristics</th>
<th>Economic Characteristics</th>
<th>Geographic/Historical Characteristics</th>
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Poverty Point became a World Heritage Site in 2014. That honor goes only to the most exceptional places around the world. Built by American Indians 3,400 years ago, Poverty Point is unlike any other site. Its design, with multiple mounds and C-shaped ditches, is not found anywhere else. In its time, it had the largest earthenworks in the Western Hemisphere. Many people lived, worked, and held special events at this huge site over hundreds of years. This has led some to call it North America’s first city.

www.crt.state.la.us/cultural-development/archaeology/discover-archaeology/poverty-point/

Archaeologists have found out that this community achieved things once thought impossible in its day and age. For example, it was at the heart of a huge trade network, the largest in North America at that time. The trade and site design are more unusual because the people did not grow crops or raise animals for food. No other hunting and gathering society made mounds at this scale anywhere else in the world. Now it is your turn to discover more about this one-of-a-kind site!
Time and Place

Poverty Point was built between 1700 B.C. and 1100 B.C. There was a lot going on around the rest of the world at this time. In Egypt, Queen Nefertiti and the boy pharaoh, Tutankhamen, ruled. In Britain, Stonehenge was being finished. In China, the Shang Dynasty was flourishing. In Mexico, the Olmec were rising to power. In India, the Rig Veda, the oldest of Hinduism's sacred books, was being written.

At the same time, most American Indians north of Mexico lived in small, mobile bands of hunters and gatherers. Things were different at Poverty Point. Although the people were hunters and gatherers, they lived year-round in a large community. They built earthworks and made tools and decorative objects with rocks and minerals brought from afar. Nearby sites, and even some more distant ones, from the same time period as Poverty Point reveal a strong cultural influence coming from Poverty Point.
American Indians made the site's first mounds around 1700 B.C., during the Late Archaic period. This started an earthwork tradition at the site that lasted for about 600 years. That amounts to what we would think of today as nearly 25 generations.

In that time, people moved nearly 2 million cubic yards of earth to make the site. Assuming a large dump truck can haul 52 cubic yards of earth, it would have taken about 38,462 dump truck loads of dirt to make Poverty Point!

Early on, archaeologists were not sure how Poverty Point fit into Southeastern prehistory. Now, archaeologists know that the site is simply extraordinary for the Late Archaic period. The site serves as proof that mound building in the eastern United States did not just develop from simple to more complex. The timeline below shows how the size and design of Poverty Point compares with other important mound sites in the United States. The brown shapes are mounds and the green ones are ridges.
Like any big settlement, people likely came to the site for different reasons. Some came to exchange goods and news or to meet people. Others were attracted by the site's natural resources. Still others came to create the site's mounds and ridges or to take part in ceremonies. Most probably had deep family ties in the area.

Whatever their reasons, those who took part in life at the site would have been transformed by their time there. They were in touch with people, things, and ideas from faraway lands. They also witnessed what people could achieve when they worked together.

1. Mound B is the oldest earthwork at Poverty Point. The mound even predates the site's most unique features, its C-shaped earthen ridges. At this time, people were living in the area on which they later built the ridges.

2. American Indians built Mound E, shortly after finishing Mound B. They also started building the site's ridges. In the northwest part of the plaza, people started using the space where they would soon build Mound C.

3. By the time people built Mound C, trade and ceremony at the site were well under way. Upkeep of the site would have been an ongoing task.

4. American Indians built Mound A around 1350 B.C., making the mound in three stages. Mound A was the largest of the site's mounds, requiring millions of baskets of dirt to make.

5. American Indians built Mound F sometime around 1200 B.C. It was the last mound built at the site during the Late Archaic period.

6. American Indians built Mound D around A.D. 700. It was nearly 2,000 years since the last mound was built at the site. The people who built Mound D were probably the descendants of the earlier earthwork builders.
Food

One reason people built the site where they did was because food was so abundant nearby. Natural wetlands, grasslands, woods and rivers surround the site. These areas offered people a rich and varied diet.

Archaeologists have found charred pieces of different kinds of plant foods at the site. Among other things, people gathered persimmons, pawpaws, muscadine grapes, and nuts such as pecans and black walnuts. They probably used many different kinds of herbs, too.

The soils at Poverty Point do not preserve bone well. As a result, archaeologists have not found many animal bones at the site. Those they have found show that people ate deer and lots of small animals like fish, squirrel and turtle. Overall, researchers have found more fish bones at the site than any other kind of bone. They probably used bones to make tools, but archaeologists have only found a few of them.

Plummet, teardrop-shaped stone weights found at the site, may have been important fishing gear. People could have used lines or weights on fishing hooks. Net fishing would allow even small groups of people to catch lots of fish. Photo by Janny Etcher.
Ceremonial Life

Archaeologists know people lived at the site, but did it have a ceremonial use, too? The site’s mounds, plaza and ridges offer researchers clues about ceremonial life at Poverty Point.

Many people probably assume the mounds were used for burials, but this is not true. Archaeologists have not found any prehistoric graves at the site. What they have found within some of the mounds are the remains of fire pits and possible postholes. These could be the remains of buildings or ceremonies that people held on the mounds.

Sometimes, clues can be where you least expect them. Though it is flat and even, the plaza offers one of the best looks at ceremonial life at the site. Here, under the plaza’s surface, are hundreds of big postholes. American Indians once placed posts in big circles in the plaza, with some circles measuring more than 200 feet across. Some of those posts were over 2 feet in diameter.

Archaeologists have not found any objects at the site that were clearly used just for ceremonies. Yet, they have had a hard time interpreting some of the things they have found, and ceremonial use cannot be ruled out. The best example of this may be the small, clay figurines archaeologists have found at the site, mostly on the earthen ridges.

The figurines show a range of body shapes. Some look like seated, pregnant women and others are slender. Most of the figurines were made without arms or legs, and the majority are missing their heads. Archaeologists have found clay heads around the site, but the number of bodies is far greater.

Poverty Point figurines could be statues of ancestors, magical charms, or even toys. Why is it so hard to tell what the figurines are meant to be? Archaeologists largely rely on patterns and context to understand the past. The figurines come in a variety of forms and have not been found with other things that give clues to their use. This makes it hard for archaeologists to interpret them.

Many of the ring-shaped features (near right) that archaeologists have found in the plaza seem to overlap. This might mean that the posts were not meant to be permanent. People seem to have pulled up posts from the ground rather than letting them rot in place.

Map credit: R. Besig Clay and Michael Hargrave

© Jenny Elkerbe
A New Way of Life

People living at the site would have been able to get almost anything they needed through trade, including nets. In fact, there were some things the site offered that could not be found anywhere else at the time. This was because the scale of Poverty Point was unmatched in its day.

In the Late Archaic period, most people lived in small groups. These people would have known the members of their group very well. This was not quite the case at Poverty Point. At its peak, hundreds of people lived at the site, maybe more. Poverty Point was not just a big settlement; it was a new kind of community. The people who lived and worked at Poverty Point were part of something bigger than themselves.

The amount of work needed to build the site is hard to imagine. Even harder to envision is the kind of commitment, from one generation to the next, that made the site the wonder that it is today. That commitment is part of what makes Poverty Point one-of-a-kind.

The site would have been a destination for some and a home for others. Some families could have lived there for generations. It makes sense that those families would have had a special connection to the earthworks. Yet, there is no evidence that any persons or families were privileged. Instead, people seem to have lived with one another as equals. Life at Poverty Point was a group effort that surely changed the people living there as much as the land itself.
Artifacts

Archaeologists have an interesting way of looking at the world. When they see a bow, head or stone spear point they do not just see an object, they see a piece of a story and the choices people made. The things archaeologists find are the data they work with to learn about people in the past. Take a look at some of the things found at Poverty Point — things made with purpose, skill, and maybe even affection.

Atlatl Weights and Gorgets

The atlatl, or spearthrower, is an ancient tool that gave thrown spears extra power and speed. A hunter held an atlatl shaped like an oversized crochet needle in his throwing hand. He inserted the hooked end into a shallow socket in the end of the spear. He cast the spear at the target with a smooth, gliding motion, while the atlatl remained in his hand. Attaching weight to the atlatl helped make it an effective tool. American Indians made atlatl weights in many shapes and sizes.

Archaeologists have also found many flat, oblong stone artifacts at Poverty Point that they call gorgets. Gorgets are ornamental or wearable art. They, too, came in a range of shapes and sizes.

Sometimes it is hard to tell whether an object is an atlatl weight or a gorget. Both may be plain or decorated and nicely finished. They both may have holes drilled into them for attachment or repair, to bind damaged ones together and keep them intact.