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Ancient Civilizations Opening Unit

*Mr. Donn and Maxie's Always Something You Can Use
Series*

Lin & Don Donn, Writers

Bill Williams, Editor
Dr. Aaron Willis, Project Coordinator
Jonathan English, Editorial Assistant

Social Studies School Service
10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802
Culver City, CA 90232
<http://socialstudies.com>
access@socialstudies.com
(800) 421-4246

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10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802
Culver City, CA 90232
United States of America

(310) 839-2436
(800) 421-4246

Fax: (800) 944-5432
Fax: (310) 839-2249

<http://socialstudies.com>
access@socialstudies.com

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Mr. Donn and Maxie's
Always Something You Can Use Series

Ancient Civilizations Opening Unit
Five Themes of Geography
Archaeology, Early Humans

Introduction

This book includes an Opening Unit for Ancient Civilizations with lessons for Five Themes of Geography, Archaeology, and Early Humans, a lesson plan for a substitute teacher, a Lesson for the Year in Review (Last Days of School), and an A-Z Writing Activities Quick Look Guide to use all year long.

Level/Length: Lessons are written with sixth graders in mind, but can easily be adapted for grades 5–9. Lessons are based on a 55-minute class period and can be adjusted to fit any time frame. Some lessons are longer than one class period. As written, the time frame needed to complete an Opening Unit for Ancient Civilizations that includes First Days of School, Five Themes of Geography, Archaeology, and Early Humans is 3–4 weeks.

Description: The Opening Unit is composed of mini-units, one each for Five Themes of Geography, Archaeology, and Early Humans. These units can be taught consecutively, selectively, or individually at any time throughout the year. Activities include Searching for Elvis, the Job of an Archaeologist, Dig in a Bag, Artifacts/Fossils/BCE, Artifact Trading and Moral Dilemmas, Grids and Maps, Sandbox Dig, Time Capsule, Upright Man, Handy Man, Neandertals, Cro-Magnon Man, Cave Art in the Classroom, and a Treasure Map (Island Map). Activities are varied and include classifying, abstracting, map work, reading, writing, speaking, researching, interpreting, presenting, and other higher level thinking activities.

Rationale: In view of the latest government guidelines on education with “no child left behind,” these lessons were developed to meet standards applicable in most states. Lessons are designed to address various learning styles and can be adapted for *all* students’ abilities.

Here’s wishing you the best year ever!
Lin & Don Donn

First Days of School

Preparation:

- Syllabus (for students)
- Letter Home (for parents)
- Decorate Your Room with Wall Displays: Travel posters of Mesopotamia, India, Egypt, Greece, Rome, China, map of the ancient world
- Decorate the entrance to your classroom with a sign over the door: Welcome to Ancient Times!

Time Frame: 2–3 days (55 minute periods)

Daily Question: No daily question for day one.

Day Two: What is a daily question?

Day Three: Name three school rules.

Open Class: Welcome to Ancient Times!

Introduce Ancient Civilizations

- Write on the overhead, chalkboard or whiteboard the phrase: ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS.
- Ask: Is anyone familiar with the spelling rule I before E except after C? (Wait for a show of hands.)
- Underline the word ANCIENT
- Say: The study of Ancient Civilizations may not always follow the rules with which you are familiar. This is a fun year. We have a great many fun and unusual things planned. To be able to do them, we cannot waste time.

Set Up for the Year:

- *Set Expectations*
- *Daily Question:* Explain what students are to do each day when they first arrive in the classroom.
- *Group Activities:* Talk about group activities. Groups will be changed all the time. Tell them that they will not always be able to work with their best friend. You will be assigning people to groups. (Mix them up—change the student mix and the number of people in a group. Use group sizes of 3, 5, and 2.)

- *Journals*: Direct students to set up their loose-leaf notebooks into six sections. Explain what purpose the journal serves and what is expected of them.
- *Syllabus*: Hand out syllabus. Go over it. Direct them to place their syllabus in the back of their journal.
- *Give them a letter to take home*. (Example of a Letter Home is included at the end of this section)
- *Seating Chart*: We allow students to “purchase” their choice of seating with ten A’s. Until they achieve ten A’s, they will sit where you assign them a seat. Once they have 10 A’s, they can select their choice of desk, excluding the teacher’s and excluding any seats that have already been purchased by other students.

Unless they own it, the person sitting in the seat selected by a tenAer must move. Students may not sell their seat at any time, but they may freely swap seats with someone else if both individuals “own” their seat. Swap requests must be presented in writing to the teacher for approval prior to swap. Both students must sign the swap request.

- *Complete any other housekeeping activities, such as distribution of textbooks if you have them, review of school rules, etc.*
-

OPENING DAYS OF SCHOOL
Example of a letter home

(date)
School Name
Address
Phone
Social Studies Teacher: (your name)

Dear Parents,

This year, in 6th-grade social studies, we will be studying six ancient civilizations: Ancient Mesopotamia, India, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and China.

Students will need to set up a loose-leaf notebook divided into six sections with dividers between the sections. They will also need a set of colored pencils or crayons.

Each of the units will have unique activities. There will be occasions throughout the year when friends and family will be invited into the classroom to share our education experience. We will be sending invitations home for these activities with as much lead-time as possible, as we do hope you will attend.

At any other time, if you would like to visit the class, please make arrangement through the office. If you need to reach me for any reason, please call the school and leave a message for (your name.) Please leave a day and evening number where you can be reached. I will return your call as soon as possible.

We look forward to a wonderful year! Thank you.

Sincerely,
(your name)

Five Themes of Geography

Introduction

It's a good idea to review the five themes of geography before you begin your study of ancient cultures. We dedicate about 5 days for this review. Then, throughout the year, whenever we have an open 5–10 minute period, we often fill that space with a geography activity based on one of the five themes.

This section includes one lesson plan for each of the five themes, along with a lesson plan for a substitute. Activities are varied and include map work, writing, reading, interpreting, presenting, and other higher level thinking activities.

If you have the time or need to expand your unit on Five Themes to a 2–3 week block of time, plus theme lessons throughout the year, there are many fine lesson plans on the web. Please see our online geography section for a list of good ones:

LINK: <http://members.aol.com/MrDonnLessons/LessonPlans.html>

Decorating Your Classroom

Decorate your classroom with maps, lots and lots of maps. It really doesn't matter what maps. Any map is fine. We keep a stack of maps in the student resource center (a table in the back of the room) as well as post them on the walls.

Word Wall: Every unit, no matter how small, needs a word wall. Have students post words that you learn during this unit and keep the word wall posted for several weeks. We suggest you use an outline map of the world as the word wall area for Five Themes of Geography.

Five Themes of Geography Lesson Plan Location

Section One: LOCATION

Time frame: 1 class period (55 minutes)

What are the five themes of geography?

What is the geographic theme “Location”?

Preparation:

- Daily Question. Use overhead or write question on the chalkboard or whiteboard.
- Activity: *Following a Map*—Arrange with another teacher to have a prize for the class ready when one of your students shows up with a map to get signed, sign the map, and send the student back to class along with the prize.
- Reproducibles:
Definitions: Five Themes of Geography

Daily Question: What are the five themes of geography?

Open Class: Say: “Most of you know what geography is. Because geography covers a lot of things, the study of geography is divided up into big sections. These sections or divisions are called The Five Themes of Geography. Let us see how many of you know the five themes.”

- Discuss with students their answers from the daily question. (5–10 minutes)
- Place on the overhead the prepared definitions of the five themes *Definitions: Five Themes of Geography*.
- Inform students that today they will be learning about the first theme of geography, “Location.”

Activity: Introduce “LOCATION”

- Using the overhead, cover all themes except for the theme of Location.
- Direct students to copy down the definition while you read. Write on the word wall any words that they may not know.
- Discuss examples of absolute and relative location. (Get some examples from the students.) Examples:
Absolute Location—An X marked on a map, longitude and latitude, a “you are here” on a mall map.
Relative Location—You telling a friend the shoe store is near the music store in the mall; near, next to, by, are some of the ways to give relative location.

Activity: Following a Map

Preparation: Before class begins, arrange with another teacher to be the end point. Ask that teacher to please sign the map if a student arrives with it, and send the student back to class with a prize.

- Ask students if they know where the music room is located in the school? (Choose any room in the school.)
- Divide your class into two groups. One group has said they know where it is. The other group does not know where it is.
- Using the overhead, have the students who know where it is give you instructions on how to get there from here. Based on those instructions, you or a student will draw a map on the overhead. You will probably have to help them a little with their directions. For example, students will need to give instructions on how to leave the room. If they make a glaring mistake on the route, do not correct them.
- Once the map is created, select one student and send him or her out to actually follow the map.

Say: It's important to follow the map accurately. If you hit a dead end, like a wall, come immediately back to the classroom. But, if the map is correct, a teacher is waiting at the other end to sign your map. Once you have a signature, come immediately back to class. Do you understand these instructions? (If the answer is yes, send your student on his or her way.)

Individual Activity: While one student is out following the map, direct the rest of your class to return to their seats, get out a piece of paper, and map their room at home, or map the classroom, their choice. Tell them to include the locations of windows, furniture, other items in the room, and to mark emergency escape routes and doorways. When the student returns, discuss if their goal was achieved. Did they arrive? If they could not follow the map, and a short time has elapsed, try it again. If they have been gone a while, simply announce that due to the poor quality of the map, the teacher at the other end will not be able to sign off on your map. Hopefully, the student you send out will arrive at the other end, get a signature on the map, and return with a prize.

Say: You can see why it's important to be as accurate as possible about location when creating a map.

If time permits, allow students to color their maps with crayons.

Close Class: That's all the time we have today. See you next time, right here, in this classroom, which can be found next to (whatever your classroom is next to).