

Quest to Learn School for digital kids

6th Grade – Being, Space and Place (ELA/Social Studies)

Unit title: Spartan Private Investigators

Length: 10 Weeks

Background

In the first trimester of *Being, Space and Place* students focus on the essential question “what are the qualities and elements of a system?” through the exploration of human and physical geography and the development of early civilizations. During the second trimester students focus on the essential question, “How do the relationships between elements in a system order the system?” as they investigate social, political and economic systems within a single ancient civilization.

The Spartan Private Investigators Mission (Spartan P.I) takes place during the third trimester and focuses on the essential question “How can a system function within a larger system?” During the course of study, students are presented with an international conflict. They must use what they learned in the previous trimesters to consider the wants and needs of different civilizations that have come into conflict. Through a study of conflict resolution they must weigh the risks and benefits of three possible solutions and come to an attainable resolution for the international community. The essential question explored is, “How can a system function within a larger system?”

Unit Summary

Aligned to the 6th grade-overarching theme of “Beginnings,” this mission asks students to travel back in time to the birth of the world’s first democracy in Ancient Greece and study the time period when Sparta is faced with making a policy decision about how to deal with the actions of Athens. They will explore cultural differences between Sparta and Athens and consider the role that geography plays in the development of societies and their relationships to each other. They will also consider specific historical events affecting city-states in Ancient Greece prior to 432. B.C. as they weigh the advantages and disadvantages of three resolution strategies (war, diplomacy, or neutrality). Throughout the Mission, students are working to create and deliver a policy brief to the political leadership of Sparta (the Council of Elders) stating which resolution strategy is best, using evidence to support their ideas. In order to help them construct their argument students are immersed in different digital simulations to explore possible ramifications of different resolutions. The final presentation (in front of the Council of Elders) requires them to collaborate with other students, to gather evidence from multiple sources, and consider several points of view.

STAGE 1: DESIRED RESULTS

Established Goals:

NYS Learning Standards for Social Studies/Scope and Sequence:

- Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.
- Students will develop an understanding of differing views on power, governments, and human rights across time and place.

NYS Learning Standards for English Language Arts:

- As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas, discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language to acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information.
- Students will use oral and written language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use the social communications of others to enrich their understanding of people and their views.

Enduring Understandings: Students will understand that ...

1. Societies interact with each other through a variety of hierarchical systems.
2. Complexity comes from the interaction of multiple elements.

Essential Questions:

1. How can a system function within a larger system?
2. How does conflict arise and how is it resolved for a system (Sparta) within a larger system (Ancient Greece)?
3. How do the actions of one society impact other societies?

SKILLS Students will be able to...

Social Studies

- Interpret, analyze and evaluate different forms of evidence and determine which pieces are most convincing.
- Apply evidence to support a theory of action (war, neutrality, or diplomacy), and understand how the choice of action affects systems

ELA

- Write and deliver a persuasive oral report in the format of a policy brief.
- Use the writing process to develop and revise their writing.
- Read, respond to, critique and discuss a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts.

Digital Media

- Select an appropriate tool for research and presentation

KNOWLEDGE Students will know...

- Specific historic events that help us understand why Athens and Sparta developed uniquely different cultures within the same area during the same time period. (e.g., Messenian Wars, Peisistratos grants rights to the poor, Thermopylae, Salamis, etc.)
- The advantages and disadvantages of all the 3 resolution strategies (War, Diplomacy, Neutrality).
- How to synthesize key information about the daily life, social and political organization, culture, religious beliefs, economic systems, use of land and resources, development of science and technology of Ancient Greece.

STAGE 2: ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

Performance Tasks:
Identity defense (oral presentation): At the end of stage I, students must present themselves as “real” Spartans by role-playing and answering questions in character on the history and culture of Sparta, as well as give details about their identities (e.g., where they live, what they eat, religious beliefs, etc)

Culminating assessment (oral presentation): Throughout stage II and III of the unit students must develop a policy brief and make a presentation to the Council of Elders, recommending a specific policy decision. This presentation will require students to use key vocabulary and content of the unit, use the maps they created as evidence, and argue convincingly through the presentation of evidence and persuasive speaking. Students present, collaborate, and revise this work several times.

Other Evidence:
Daily Journal
Test
Notes
Evidence Cards
Deciphering of oracles (vocabulary)
Participation in class discussions
Self assessments
Podcasts
Maps
Simulations

STAGE 3: LEARNING ACTIVITIES

I. Spartans in Disguise (3 weeks total)
This stage introduces students the geography and history of Sparta, role-playing, organizing research, and the three resolution strategies. On the first day of the unit students are visited by Pythia, the high Priestess of Apollo, who asks students to develop identities as Spartans so they can travel back in time to solve a pressing problem in Ancient Greece between Sparta and Athens. Pythia communicates to the students through oracles (riddles) that are embedded with key vocabulary. Her messages are delivered to students via the pathways of light that students developed in the previous trimester in *The Way Things Work* (see application part 5c). Pythia’s oracles present challenges to students, which require them to gather, document, and synthesize information on the culture, history, and politics of Sparta. They use this information to develop believable identities as Spartans. Throughout this stage students will read a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts in reading groups and in their independent reading. They will complete daily writing exercises in their reading/writing journal online. The culminating assessment for this stage is an “identity defense” in front of Pythia, where students must show their understanding of Sparta.

II. Weighing the Options (4 weeks total)
Throughout this stage students gather evidence and create a stack of evidence cards that will be used to create a brief for the Council of Elders explaining which policy option is the best solution. They have traveled back in time to Sparta in order to investigate Sparta’s needs and wants, as well as those of Athens, Megara, and other surrounding city-states. Pythia continues to present oracles which guide students in building an inventory of skills and understandings around conflict resolution and persuasive arguments in order to construct their policy briefs. They learn about different types of evidence and how to determine which pieces of evidence are most convincing; the elements of a persuasive argument; tools of conflict resolution; and strategies for examining an issue from multiple perspectives. Once complete, students will individually create video podcasts of their arguments, which they will upload to a site. Part of fulfilling this assignment is being able to find the site and complete the podcast from a

technical standpoint. All students will be required to visit the site and give feedback to each other.

III. Making Recommendations (3 weeks total)

At the end of 2, the Council of Elders presents a new challenge to students: They must form groups to combine their evidence to make more persuasive, evidence-rich arguments. In groups they will create a persuasive argument for the Council of Elders, which includes a variety of strong evidence and thoughtful analysis to persuade the Council. They also need to use a map in their defense to show the connection between their selected policy option and the geography of Ancient Greece. Throughout this stage students will use the writing process to develop, revise, and publish their persuasive writing pieces.

LESSON PLAN: Territorial Conflict (2 days)

Background to lesson: This lesson occurs on the second and third day of the Spartan P.I. unit. On the first day of the unit, students learn that their mission is to go back in time to solve a pressing problem in ancient Greece, and they receive background information on the situation. On the second day of the unit, they come into the class and find a floor map with geographical features of Ancient Greece. This map is the size of the classroom, and students can move inside and around it. This lesson has been designed to last over the course of three hours of class time (2 days).

Essential Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What geographical features are considered desirable or problematic for a society? • What are different ways that conflicts are resolved when groups have different needs and wants?
Learning Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will find the best place to locate their time-traveler portal, based on their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different geographical/cultural regions. Students must select a piece of land based on its geographical features and be able to articulate the reasons why the land is valuable or not. • Students will have a developing understanding of three different resolution strategies. Through active participation in a game, students will test out how different resolution strategies yield different results depending on needs, wants, risks, and benefits.
Lesson Objective	<p>Students will be able to...</p> <p><u>Social Studies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read a map of Ancient Greece with its unique geographical features (e.g., the five-fingered Peloponnese, Attica and the island of Crete). • Read a map and determine longitude and latitude and where the fertile land is located. • Explain their choices for their chosen location for their time-traveler portal. • Understand the potential risks and benefits of three resolution strategies. <p><u>Digital Media</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Google Earth as a research tool. <p><u>ELA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record a written reflection on the value of geographical features for a society. • Develop questions for a short text as a strategy for reading comprehension.
Digital Platform	Google Earth
Lesson Steps	<p>1. GEOGRAPHY GAME: <i>This step of the lesson scaffolds student understanding of the core concepts of the unit through an interactive game.</i> Students arrive to class and find a floor map with the geographical features of Ancient Greece. After identifying the orientation and geographical features of the map (North/South/East/West as well as key geography), students participate in a game where they must work with a team to occupy what they consider to be the most desirable land in Ancient Greece. After playing one round of the game, the teacher leads the class in a discussion of students' choices and strategies for territorial selection. Teacher lists on chart paper (becomes a resource to use throughout the unit). Students then play the second level of the game where they are to claim land through attack, alliance, or</p>

	<p>remaining neutral. Once all plots have been claimed, teacher leads students in a discussion of their choices and the final outcome of the map. Then teacher ask students to consider the motivation for choosing different resolution strategies and the results that the strategies yielded.</p> <p>2. WRITING: <i>This step of the lesson scaffolds student understanding through meta-cognitive thinking, which the teacher models.</i> The teacher models written reflection on the activity, commenting on the advantages and disadvantages of geographical features and each resolution strategy. The teacher makes a connection to her own thinking about how this connects to the challenge posed in reaching a resolution strategy for Sparta and Athens. Students are given time to write their responses as the teacher circulates to conference with the students and do “think-alouds” with students who are having difficulty.</p> <p>3. LONGITUDE AND LATTITUDE: <i>In this step of the lesson the teacher focuses on a mathematical skill (plotting points on a graph) and a geography concept (longitude and latitude) as well as a technological skill (using Google Earth).</i> Teacher leads mini-lesson on longitude and latitude. This is a review, since students have learned this earlier in the year. Students locate the position where they wish to place their portals by plotting coordinates and then use Google Earth to mark their portals.</p> <p>4. READING STRATEGY: <i>In this step of the lesson the teacher summarizes the lesson by tying together the main concepts and skills of the lesson, and models a reading comprehension strategy that students will practice and extend for homework.</i> Teacher introduces a short text (Greek myth) to introduce students to the beliefs of Spartans. This is important because students must understand the lives of Spartans in order to “blend in” to Spartan society as they conduct their research. Teacher conducts mini-lesson on reading strategy: questioning a text, and then gives students choice in text (leveled readings), which are a variety of Greek myths. Students practice in small groups and individually, then finish for homework.</p>
Differentiation	<p>Each step of the lesson allows for differentiation of instruction.</p> <p>Step 1: Engages multiple learning styles</p> <p>Step 2: Engages meta-cognition/ Teacher works with individual students</p> <p>Step 3: Scaffolds with visual tool (Google Earth)</p> <p>Step 4: Teacher modeling; leveled readings; guided practice</p>