WORLD HISTORY

inquirED

The Human Story
Early People and Ancient Civilizations

Inquiry Question: How can we use stories to improve how we live together?

Module 1: Launch the Inquiry

Students begin the Inquiry with an engaging, thought-provoking activity to hook them into the inquiry process. They are introduced to the Inquiry Question, and their initial Investigation Questions begin to surface. As they unpack this question, students explore how we can uncover stories of the past and what these reveal about how people have lived together throughout human history. No pre-teaching is required to start students on their inquiry.

Module Topics:

- Role of stories in understanding the past, present, and future
- Analyzing evidence to uncover and construct stories about the past
- How stories offer entry points into different perspectives and the experiences of others
- Defining characteristics of civilizations, including cities, infrastructure, art, architecture, and written language
- How examining historical evidence through artifacts can help uncover the story of early civilizations
- Role of historians in narratives told about the ancient world

Module 2: What does evidence reveal about the story of our origins?

Students explore how historians and archaeologists have analyzed evidence to tell the story of human origins. They are introduced to the importance of evidence in interpreting and reinterpreting the past because the understanding of human origins has shifted so dramatically in recent years. They apply similar skills of interpretation to explore their own stories as they begin to investigate how people have lived together over time.

Module Topics:

- Paleolithic art, technology, innovation, and way of life
- Collective learning and the importance of passing down knowledge from generation to generation
- How historians interpret and reinterpret stories using evidence
- How early humans used their environment to innovate solutions that helped them sustain and enrich their lives
- Critically evaluating stories related to early humans suggested or stated in sources, and considering the benefits and limitations of those sources
- How ancient humans migrated and interacted with one another, as told through artifacts

Module 3: What makes a turning point?

Students explore the critical shift from the Paleolithic Era to the Neolithic Era, also known as the Agricultural Revolution. They examine evidence from maps and artifacts and consider the historian's role in telling stories about significant change. By tracking the development of agriculture and the transition to settled living, students determine how the Agricultural Revolution changed the way humans live together, how it influenced human connection across the globe, and why it marks a turning point in the early human story.

Module Topics:
- Causes, course, and consequences of the Agricultural Revolution
- Differences between the Paleolithic Era and the Neolithic Era
- How the changing needs and behaviors of early humans led to food surplus, animal domestication, and the development of farming
- Agriculture in Mesopotamia, Nile River delta, Indus River valley, Yangtze River delta, Mesoamerica, and Supe River valley
- What constitutes a turning point in history and what we can learn from key events that sparked significant change
- How the Agricultural Revolution resulted in major shifts in way of life, including the emergence of social class

Module 4: Are civilizations more alike or more different?

Each ancient civilization was unique and yet had so much in common with other ancient civilizations and with contemporary society. In this module, students consider similarities and differences across the ancient world by investigating key features of the six earliest civilizations and exploring the characteristics that make a civilization. They compare ancient civilizations with each other and with modern civilization in order to understand how we can improve the ways in which we live together.

Module Topics:
- Development of cuneiform, irrigation, and bronze work in Mesopotamia
- How key characteristics of civilizations shape the lives of the people who live in them
- Rise of early civilizations across the globe as a result of food surplus, growing populations, and farming
- Relationship between the development of farming, cities, and job specialization
- How early civilizations used technology and natural landscapes around them to advance agricultural practices
- Key similarities and differences between ancient civilizations and the world today

Module 5: What challenges must growing cities prioritize?

As more humans began living in permanent settlements together, new obstacles arose that required them to modify the environment and develop new technologies to ensure survival. Ancient cities, just like those of today, were challenged to support their populations by developing ways to protect, feed, shelter, and organize people. In this module, students take up the role of urban geographers to explore the challenges that ancient and modern cities have faced. Using archaeological evidence from the ancient world and new knowledge about modern-day urbanization, they draw conclusions about the challenges that growing and future cities should prioritize.

Module Topics:

- How people interpret artifacts to create theories about ancient ways of life
- Urbanization and the patterns of growing cities, the challenges those cities face, and potential solutions
- Contemporary challenges with cities, including vulnerability to natural disasters and pollution, as well as managing infrastructure
- How urban geographers use evidence related to design, location, resource management, and protection of cities to ask questions about people and their needs
- Drawing connections between the challenges faced by both ancient and modern cities, and the strategies used to address them
- How studying cities of the past can help us understand timeless challenges of urbanization

Module 6: How do beliefs influence cultural practices?

A key feature of ancient civilizations was the development of distinct belief systems, which shaped many aspects of daily life for the people in these civilizations. In this module, students work toward developing an evidence-based conclusion about the ways in which beliefs influenced the cultural practices and behaviors of ancient peoples. They make comparisons between ancient belief systems, examine ancient art, and explore the characteristics of ancient religions as they investigate how our beliefs and practices can help us understand and improve how we live together.

Module Topics:

- How religious beliefs can help us see why certain cultural practices were important, what they meant to people, and how they influenced behavior
- How artifacts and cultural practices can help us infer the beliefs and priorities of ancient peoples
- Role of myth and stories in ancient belief systems
- Ancient religions as seen through rituals, celebrations, art, and architecture
- Belief systems and cultural practices of the ancient Olmec, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian civilizations
- Impacts of beliefs on social, economic, and political systems
- How artifacts allow us to understand and interpret the connections between beliefs and cultural practices

Module 7: How is the development of civilization linked to the evolution of writing?

Students delve deep into the relationship between writing and civilization. Through critical evaluation of evidence, they take a position on an intriguing question: Did developments in writing lead to changes in civilization, or was it the other way around? While arguments can be made for both claims, students grapple with the quantity and strength of evidence to form and argue their position.

Module Topics:

- Emergence of early record-keeping systems in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus River valley, China, and Mesoamerica
- Development of writing as a response to the changing needs of a society and how it created new challenges and opportunities

- Writing as a primary catalyst for key developments in ancient trade, culture, government, and literature
- Evolution of writing for the purpose of record keeping and commerce, as well as personal and cultural expression
- Hammurabi's code and the foundation of law
- Role of writing in spreading ideas, culture, and information

Module 8: Synthesize and Conclude

Students reflect on key learning from throughout the Inquiry to synthesize findings and draw conclusions as they prepare to take action. They consider the call to action in light of new learning and generate ideas about challenges and opportunities in their own context. Then, they work together to develop an Inquiry Challenge Statement that describes the action they will take, the product they will create, the people they will affect, and the goals they will work toward in the Action Module.

Module Topics:

- Synthesizing findings from the module to draw conclusions about how the stories of ancient peoples can inform the ways in which people live together today
- Reflecting on learning to identify challenges and opportunities in one's own context
- Generating, evaluating, and selecting ideas for action
- Setting goals and predicting possible outcomes in preparation for taking action
- Using a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions about how to address and act on civic problems in one's classroom and school

Module 9: Take Informed Action

Students shift focus in this module, using the conclusions and key findings from their investigation to impact the world beyond their classroom. The lessons guide students through the stages of the design process, including brainstorming and developing their ideas, creating a prototype, evaluating and improving their work based on feedback, and preparing to share the work publicly. Finally, they reflect on the knowledge and skills they developed during the Inquiry.

Module Topics:

- Drawing on disciplinary concepts to explain opportunities for addressing local, regional, or global problems
- Generating, evaluating, and implementing ideas to act on civic challenges in the school or wider community
- Using feedback to develop and iterate on a solution to a challenge
- Taking ownership of work in terms of quality, degree of challenge, revision, and completion
- Communicating conclusions and solutions that center around how we can improve the ways in which we live together