

Social Studies Thematic Unit:  
Why Did People come to America?

## **Introduction**

### Goals and Aims

Individual thought seems to be lacking in our schools and it is vital that students develop the ability to think for themselves. It is my hope that this unit will assist me in helping students uncover and develop their own understanding about the Colonial Era in America where critical foundations to our nation were developed. I want to help students understand three themes that are important to this era. One is the intermingling of Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans. The second theme is the development of political and religious institutions and values. The third theme is the economic development of the colonies through agriculture and commerce.

This unit is designed to give my students a foundation that will assist them in answering the essential question, “Why did people come to America?” and develop a historical understanding of the world around them.

## **Rationale**

As Fourth Graders, I want my students to understand why Europeans were attracted to the Americas, and why they brought enslaved Africans. Not only why they brought slaves, but also how slavery reshaped European and African life in the Americas. It is also important for them to see how the Europeans struggled for control, and how political, religious and social institutions took hold with that struggle. Finally, the following unit will explain history in a pluralist perspective that will present the interpretive nature of History and its’ significant themes and questions.

## **Curriculum Framework**

### Standards in Historical Thinking

Standard 1: The student thinks chronologically:

Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Distinguish between past, present, and future time.
- E. Interpret data presented in timelines and create timelines.
- F. Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration and explain historical continuity and change.

Standard 2: The student comprehends a variety of historical sources:

Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Identify the author or source of the historical document or narrative and assess its credibility.
- B. Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage.
- C. Identify the central questions.
- D. Differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretation.

- E. Appreciate historical perspectives.
- F. Draw upon data in historical maps.
- H. Utilize visual, mathematical and quantitative data.
- I. Draw upon visual, literary, and musical sources.

Standard 3: The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation:

Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas.
- B. Consider multiple perspectives.
- C. Analyze cause-and-effect relationships.

Standard 4: The student conducts historical research:

Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Formulate historical questions.
- C. Interrogate historical data.
- D. Identify the gaps in the available records and marshal contextual knowledge and perspectives of the time and place.
- F. Support interpretations with historical evidence.

Standard 5: The student engages in historical issues-analysis and decision-making:

Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Identify issues and problems in the past.
- D. Evaluate alternative courses of action.
- E. Formulate a position or course of action on an issue.
- F. Evaluate the implementation of a decision.

### **Alaska Content Standards – Govn’t/Civics**

**A** A student should know and understand how societies define authority, rights, and responsibilities through a governmental process.

- 4. compare and contrast how different societies have governed themselves over time and in different places

**B** A student should understand the constitutional foundations of the American political system and the democratic ideals of this nation.

- 1. know that places have distinctive geographic characteristics;
- 6. make informed decisions about where to live, work, travel, and seek opportunities

**F** A student should understand the economies of the United States and the state and their relationships to the global economy

- 2. be aware that economic systems determine how resources are used to produce and distribute goods and services

### **Alaska Content Standards – History**

**A** A student should understand that history is a record of human experiences that links the past to the present and the future.

- 7. know that history is a bridge to understanding groups of people and an individual's

relationship to society

**B A student should understand historical themes through factual knowledge of time, places, ideas, institutions, cultures, people, and events.**

1. comprehend the forces of change and continuity that shape human history through the following persistent organizing themes:
  - human communities and their relationships with climate, subsistence base, resources, geography, and technology;
  - the origin and impact of ideologies, religions, and institutions upon human societies
2. understand the people and the political, geographic, economic, cultural, social, and environmental events that have shaped the history of the state, the United States, and the world

**C A student should develop the skills and processes of historical inquiry.**

1. use appropriate technology to access, retrieve, organize, and present historical information
2. use historical data from a variety of primary resources, including letters, diaries, oral accounts, archeological sites and artifacts, art, maps, photos, historical sites, documents, and secondary research materials, including almanacs, books, indices, and newspapers
3. apply thinking skills, including classifying, interpreting, analyzing, summarizing, synthesizing, and evaluating, to understand the historical record

### **Alaska Contents Standards - GEOGRAPHY**

**A A student should be able to make and use maps, globes, and graphs to gather, analyze, and report spatial (geographic) information.**

2. make maps, globes, and graphs;
5. evaluate the importance of the locations of human and physical features in interpreting geographic patterns

**D A student should understand and be able to interpret spatial (geographic) characteristics of human systems, including migration, movement, interactions of cultures, economic activities, settlement patterns, and political units in the state, nation, and world.**

1. know that the need for people to exchange goods, services, and ideas creates population centers, cultural interaction, and transportation and communication links;
2. explain how and why human networks, including networks for communications and for transportation of people and goods, are linked globally
3. interpret population characteristics and distributions
5. analyze how conflict and cooperation shape social, economic, and political use of space

**E A student should understand and be able to evaluate how humans and physical environments interact.**

1. understand how resources have been developed and used

**F** A student should be able to use geography to understand the world by interpreting the past, knowing the present, and preparing for the future.

1. analyze and evaluate the impact of physical and human geographical factors on major historical events;
5. examine the impacts of global changes on human activity

### **Alaska Performance Standards – Reading**

- 2.E.B.1 Infer meaning from text.
- 4b.E.B.2 Restate and summarize information or ideas from a text.
- 5.E.D.2 Locate evidence in the text and from related experiences to support understanding of a main idea.
- 6.E.C.2 Read and follow multi-step directions to complete a simple task.
- 9b.E.D.2 Express opinions about a text and support these opinions with textual evidence.
- 11.E.E.1 Connect cultural events, ideas, settings, and influences from one text to similar texts from other cultures.

### **Alaska Performance Standards – Writing**

- 3a.E.A.2 Use a variety of simple and complex sentence structures in written work.
- 6.E.A.7

### **Social Studies Knowledge, Skills, Dispositions:**

#### **1. Organizing and Using Information**

- A. Thinking Skills
  1. Classify information:
    - c. group data in categories according to appropriate criteria
  2. Interpret information:
    - c. draw inferences from factual material
  4. Summarize Information:
    - d. Form opinion based on critical examination of relevant information
  5. Synthesize Information:
    - c. Present visually a chart of information extracted from print

#### **2. Interpersonal Relationships & Social Participation**

- A. Personal Skills
  1. Communicate own beliefs, feelings, and convictions
  2. See things from the point of view of others
- B. Group Interaction Skills
  1. Serve as leader or follower

## **Instructional Framework**

### **Enduring Understandings:**

History helps us think about who we are.

History relies on interpretation of evidence.

History explores significant themes and questions, which influence our lives.

History is explained through narratives that are interpretive.  
History is controversial.

### **Essential Questions:**

Why did people come to America?  
What makes it historically important?

### **Expected Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of this unit, students will be able to:  
Compare and contrast historical information for relevance.  
Learn that people create stories about the past and tell those stories differently.  
Identify three reasons why Europeans came to America.  
Identify and articulate why slaves were brought to America.  
Compare and contrast two types of servitude in the New World.  
Create a graphic organizer of why people came to America.  
Explain how slavery shaped European and African life in America.  
Identify different types of propaganda.  
Students will know terms and circumstances of indentured servitude.  
Form an opinion about indentured servitude.

## **Assessment Framework**

We will be assessing for understanding throughout the unit. Most assessment will be informal and constructive in nature. Assessment will consist of teacher notes, observations, and work samples. These assessments are formative and will guide the teacher in curriculum decisions. A final historical response journal will be assessed by both student and teacher for newly understood historical ideas.

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