



### Grade 4 Overview: North American Geography, History, and Peoples

Fourth grade students learn about North America (Canada, Mexico, and the United States) and its peoples from a geographic perspective, expanding map reading, mapmaking, and geographic reasoning skills. They explore guiding questions such as “How have the geographic features of North America shaped its history?” and “What contributions have the various groups that have settled in North America made to the culture of each region?”

### Grade 4 Standards for History & Social Sciences

Topic	Description of Standards + Topic Covered
<p><b>Topic 1</b>  <b>North America:</b>  <b>geography and map skills</b></p>	<p><i>What are the physical features and nations of North America?</i>                      Fourth graders learn about North America (Canada, Mexico, and the United States) and its peoples from a geographic perspective. Students use map features to locate and identify important physical features of the United States, Mexico and Canada. Students explore the differences between the terms <i>continent, country, nation, county, state, province, and city</i>. They research, analyze, and convey information about Canada or Mexico by consulting resources such as maps, atlases, encyclopedias, digital information and satellite images, photographs, or news articles. Students are able to convey knowledge about peoples, population size, languages, forms of government, major cities, environment, natural resources, industries, and national landmarks around North America.</p>
<p><b>Topic 2</b>  <b>Ancient civilizations of North America</b></p>	<p><i>How do archeologists develop theories about ancient migrations?</i>                      Fourth graders learn about ancient civilizations on the continent and early European exploration as they expand map reading, mapmaking, and geographic reasoning skills introduced in grades 2 and 3. They evaluate competing theories about the origins of people in North America and evidence for dating the existence of early populations in North America to about 15,000 years ago. They identify archeological evidence of some of the characteristics of major civilizations of this period using maps of historic Native Peoples’ culture regions of North America and photographs, and explain how archeologists conduct research to develop theories about migration, settlement patterns, and cultures in prehistoric periods. They are able to give examples of some archeological sites of Native Peoples in North America that are preserved as national or state monuments, parks, or international heritage sites and explain their importance in presenting a comprehensive history of Americans and American life.</p>
<p><b>Topic 3</b>  <b>Early European exploration of North America</b></p>	<p><i>What were the reasons for European voyages across the Atlantic Ocean?</i>                      Fourth graders learn how historians studying the European voyages to the Americas use archeological evidence, maps, illustrations, and texts produced in Europe at the time, and that all of these materials are called primary sources. They explore who the Vikings were and describe evidence of their early encounters with Native Peoples along the North American Atlantic coast. They use map skills to trace European explorations of North America and the Caribbean Islands in the 15th and 16th centuries and evaluate the reasons for the voyages, noting that they were part of an effort by European nations to expand their empires, find new routes for trade with Asia, new opportunities for colonization, and new natural resources. Students connect these events and ideas by establishing a timeline for this time period.</p>
<p><b>Topic 4</b>  <b>The expansion of the United States over time and its regions today</b></p>	<p><i>How has the environment shaped the development of each region?</i>                      Fourth graders learn about the construction of canals, roads, and railways in the 19th century and how this effort helped the United States to expand westward. They look at examples of some of the ways the United States acquired new states (beyond the 13 original states) and additional territories between 1791 and 1898. Students compare different reasons why men and women who lived in the Eastern part of the United States wanted to move West in the 19th century, and describe aspects of pioneer life on the frontier. Students study the many different groups of people who immigrated to the United States from other places voluntarily and involuntarily. They learn about the deep divisions of the United States in the mid 19th century over the question of slavery and its expansion into newly settled parts of the West, which led to the Civil War from 1861 to 1865. Students learn about the unique characteristics of each of the regions of the current United States: The Northeast, The Southeast, The Midwest, The Southwest and The West.</p>



### [Grade 4 History & Social Sciences Standards](#)

#### Standards for History & Social Science Practice

1. Demonstrate civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions.
2. Develop focused questions or problem statements and conduct inquiries.
3. Organize information and data from multiple primary and secondary sources.
4. Analyze the purpose and point of view of each source; distinguish opinion from fact.
5. Evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of each source.
6. Argue or explain conclusions, using valid reasoning and evidence.
7. Determine next steps and take informed action, as appropriate.



#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE HISTORY & SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

**1** **Teach** students about the legacy of democratic government.

**2** **Incorporate** diverse perspectives & acknowledges that perceptions of events are affected by race, ethnicity, culture, religion, education, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, and personal experience.

**3** Every student **deserves** to study history & social science every year, from pre-K-12.

**4** **Teach** students to think historically.

**5** **Integrate** knowledge from many fields of study.

**6** **Build** students' capacities for research, reasoning, making logical arguments, & thinking for themselves.

**7** **Improve** reading Comprehension by increasing students' content knowledge

**8** **Incorporate** the study of current events and news/media literacy

**9** **Teach** students about using data analysis and digital tools as research and presentation techniques in the social sciences.

**10** **Develop** social and emotional skills.