

GRADE 8 SOCIAL STUDIES: Ancient Civilizations Part 1 — Research

Summary of Learning Opportunity

My role in my district is as a learning coach, collaborating with my colleagues to share each other's good practices. I wanted to introduce the Learning Pathways in a way that wasn't too onerous, stressful and time consuming for the teachers or for their students. I realized that the Learning Pathways add value by adding cross-curricular connections to learning intentions, to help get teachers out of subject-specific silos. I worked with this Social Studies 8 teacher to demonstrate that emphasizing the Literacy competencies of Applying Understanding supported the Social Studies Curricular Competencies of Significance and using Social Studies inquiry processes.

In this task, students curated and extracted information using a variety of sources, then synthesized their research. This supported an inquiry to explore the significance of Ancient Rome to our modern lives and to compare and contrast it to another civilization of their choice. At the end of the activity, students reflected on how the Literacy skills of Applying Understanding helped support them with their inquiry process and with assessing significance.

Social
Studies 8

Learning Standards

- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions
- Assess the significance of people, places, events or developments at particular times and places (significance)
- Social, political and economic systems and structures

Literacy Connections

Instruction and Assessment

Competencies Developed, Practiced and/or Assessed

LITERACY: Applies
Understanding—Extracts
ideas and information

LITERACY: Applies
Understanding—Curates
texts

LITERACY: Applies
Understanding—
Synthesizes ideas and
information

1. The teacher introduced the inquiry task, for the students to explore the significance of Ancient Rome to modern society, and compare and contrast Rome with another civilization of their choice (i.e. Maya, China, Japan, Inca, etc.). The teacher selected three different sources (a video, a textbook and several fresco art pieces [primary source]) to start the inquiry. Students chose how and what information to document from the sources.

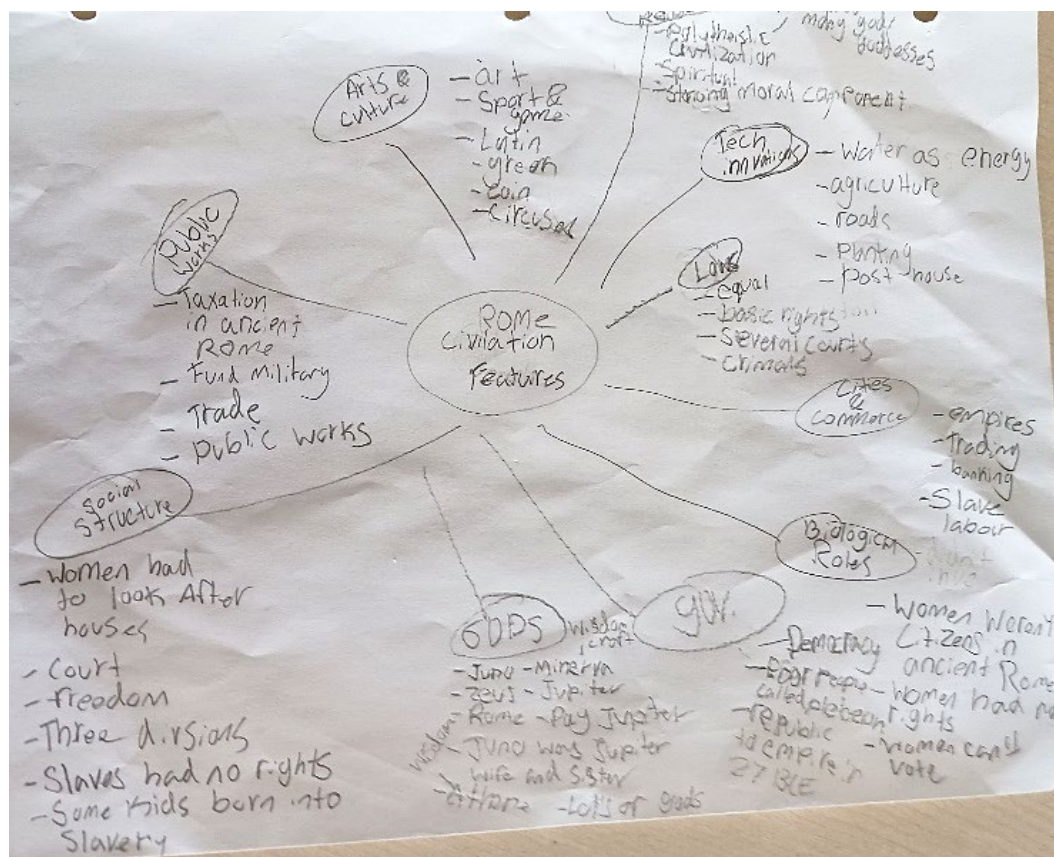
2. The students then used digital devices to conduct further research about another ancient civilization. They collaborated with each other to refine their web searches in order to better curate sources and extract more useful information.

3. We asked students to bring their research findings to a class discussion. The conversation naturally led to how students might summarize their research by making connections, creating themes to integrate ideas and making inferences and new ideas. We told the students that these thinking skills were a part of "synthesizing." Students used a graphic organizer of their choosing to synthesize their research.

Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions

Assess the significance of people, places, events or developments at particular times and places (significance)

Demonstrations of Student Learning, Teacher Assessment and Reflection



Teachers' Observations and Assessment

This student used additional web sources to collect and extract information. In the conversations we had with the student about their process, they mentioned that they used one of the sources to gather the main ideas/points and then the supplemental sources to fill in the details for rest of the web. We prompted them to go back and use the initial video to refine their web, verify the accuracy of and add to the information they extracted.

In our assessment, the student is **proficient** in the Social Studies inquiry process of gathering information. They were able to extract information from all three original sources and independently chose a resource to extract and gather evidence from. They organized their information in a detailed and comprehensive way.

Teachers' Reflection

Once the connection between the Literacy skills and the Social Studies competencies was made, the preamble and teaching for introducing the activity changed, as did the focus. Rather than just describing the activity directions and expectations, students understood how the literacy skills supported their thinking and had more in-depth products of learning. The literacy competency focus contextualized what they were doing beyond looking at sources and "taking notes."

I also believe the students' metacognitive and communication skills developed through this task because each learner needed to share in their oral reflections with us how they demonstrated how they curated sources, extracted ideas and information and synthesized their findings to meet the inquiry question. We were able to give students meaningful feedback about their use of resources to further enhance their learning products.

Teachers' Observations and Assessment

This student mentioned to the teacher that they had noticed overlaps in their research. The teacher offered this graphic organizer to help synthesize their findings.

In our assessment, the student is **developing in the Social Studies inquiry processes of interpreting and analyzing ideas** and **developing in their assessment of the significance** of people and culture of the ancient civilizations. They were able to organize their research findings by theme, making connections between multiple sources of information. They drew conclusions from their observations of similarities between the two ancient civilizations. In order to move towards proficient, this student should make more meaningful connections between the two ancient civilizations—for example, who makes decisions about law and government in Mayan culture? How was this similar or different to leadership in the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire?

Mayan	SIMILARITIES	Rome
<u>ARTS & CULTURE</u> • Most of the Sculptures were made of Stone	Mayan and Rome both had Sculpture from natural things	• Marble Sculptures
<u>CITIES & COMMERCE</u> • Poor and rich • Religious ceremonies	The Mayan had a rich people and the Rome had Emperors who were rich	• Empires • Slave labor • Trading
<u>ORGANIZED RELIGION</u> • worshipped many gods	Both civilizations had or worshipped many gods	• Had many gods

Mayan	SIMILARITIES	Rome
<u>CENTRAL GOVERNMENT</u> • Crimes • Court	I couldn't find any similarities	• Democracy • Went from Republic to empire
<u>KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER</u> • Books / stories	Both transfer knowledge through stories	• stories, poem
<u>PUBLIC WORKS</u> • Farmers, teachers, artists etc	Both had farmers	• Trade • Taxation • Farmers
<u>TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION</u> • astronomy tools • calendar	?	• Sewers
<u>SOCIAL STRUCTURE</u> emperor / empress	Poverty more worth less nobility	King / Queen