

# **CURRICULUM GUIDE: WORLD RELIGIONS AND SPIRITUALITY**

## **A SIXTH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES UNIT**

*by Chris Quigley*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this unit, students are exposed to many of the world's major religions, as well as forms of spirituality that are not "organized" religions. It is of utmost importance to acknowledge upfront the sensitivity of the subject matter we are about to address, and to maintain, as the teacher, complete absence of opinion. The teacher should venture no further into a religion or form of spirituality than the facts: important people/animals/gods and their stories, holy or sacred texts, symbols, dates and tenets, things that are not controversial. The richness of the subject matter – the fact that it is held so dear and is so focal to so many of the students' lives – is exactly the same thing that, if not addressed carefully, can be inappropriate in a school setting. This may seem obvious to anyone working in a public school setting, but it still important to state upfront, and even more important to continually reflect upon as the unit progresses, making sure the role of teacher does not turn into the role of preacher.

Introducing students to and/or deepening their understanding of other cultures -- a main focus of the unit -- will happen through lecture, reading, and video. But what truly brings the unit to another level is the series of field trips to different places of worship. Sitting in a temple, synagogue, mosque, church, listening to a person who lives the spiritual life we are talking about in class and asking them questions – this experience adds an intangible value to the unit. The field trips give students a physical and visual reference, a place to put all the new information they are taking in. It takes the two dimensional ideas and concepts from class out into the real world. And, by having

students documenting the information gathered during the field trips, the unit also give them hands-on experience in primary research.

When the teaching part of the unit is done the students are charged with writing a research paper (see Appendix 2). Students will choose a religion and gather a variety of resources in order to complete the assignment. I do not limit students to the religions we discussed in class, instead allowing students to consider all religions. It is important to note, however, the questions the students are assigned are much more conducive to studying some religions than others. It is important to make sure a student chooses a religion to research that is accessible, that will have resources at an appropriate reading level.

### **ESSENTIAL QUESTION**

*What do various religions and other forms of spiritual belief have in common; how are they different?*

### **GOALS**

The goals of this unit can be separated into two categories: content goals and skill goals. These goals are defined in conjunction with the Washington State EALRS (see Appendix 1).

#### **Content goals:**

- Students will be able to compare and contrast aspects of various religions/forms of spirituality.
- Students will be able to categorize each religion/spirituality as animism, monotheism, polytheism, atheism, or henotheism and give rationales for the categorization.
- Students will be able to identify key components of religion/spirituality as appropriate (i.e. holy text(s), gods/goddesses, important characters).

- Students will understand difference between cyclical and linear views of life, death, and the afterlife, and will be able to categorize religions accordingly.
- Students will know where various religions/spiritualities originated and are practiced.
- Students will be able to identify a variety of religious symbols and what they represent.
- Students will be able to identify important people from various religions.
- Students will know which texts are held holy by different religions, and which religions do not have holy texts.
- Students will be able to summarize important stories from a variety of religions.
- Students will be able to identify core tenets of various religions.

**Skill goals:**

- Students will develop note-taking skills in a lecture setting, and adapt these skills for use during field trip presentations/interviews.
- Students will develop interviewing skills, including background research, formulation of open-ended questions and spontaneous follow-up questions, use of recording equipment, and making notes/transcripts/recordings/photographs available for future researchers.
- Students will learn, practice and develop a degree of mastery of a variety of note-taking methods, specifically for reading.
- Students will read a wide variety of non-fiction texts for information.
- Students will develop test-taking skills, being challenged with knowledge, comprehension, synthesis, analysis, and evaluative questions, all related to the content goals.
- Students will participate in the research process. This will include: choosing a topic, researching questions, locating source material, taking notes from source material, organizing notes, drafting, revising, editing and publishing.

## VOCABULARY

This unit is loaded with vocabulary, most of it very specific to the different religions: i.e. names of holy texts, names for God/names of gods/goddesses, different aspects of core tenets (karma, shahadah, commandment, etc.), and geography specific to religions, just for starters.

There is also vocabulary that will overlay onto many religions. These vocabulary words can be categorized as:

### 1. Overview vocabulary

- Religion
- Spirituality
- Philosophy

### 2. Classification vocabulary

- Animism
- Monotheism
- Polytheism
- Atheism
- Henotheism

### 3. General vocabulary

- Deity
- Ancestor
- Sacred
- Worship
- Trickster
- Pantheon
- Afterlife
- Sect

#### Definitions

In the important opening lessons of the unit, we set up our social studies notebooks, and begin to form objective, non-religion specific definitions of religion and spirituality.

The definitions are created using prior information students have about religion, using the *defining format* method outlined below. The conversations we have using the defining format will dictate how we, as a group, will talk about religion: academically, non-judgmentally. It will take about three sessions to appropriately discuss and create the definitions, and we will continue to add to (and perhaps subtract from) these definitions as the unit progresses.

When the definitions lessons are complete, a homework assignment on the definitions of the categories animism, monotheism, polytheism, and atheism is appropriate.

#### Defining Format

Question	Category	Characteristics	Examples	Non-Examples
What is a	Religion is a...	1. In most religions people	Christianity	Democracy

These vocabulary terms can be introduced individually, by group, all at once, or as they arise, depending on how the teacher wants to structure the unit.

## TIMELINE and LESSONS

### INTRODUCING WORLD RELIGIONS

This section outlines important people, events, concepts, stories and other information about the various religions. Some of these teaching points are obvious in their importance, and all are linked to facts and concepts that are taught in later units. However these overview descriptions of each religion are by no means comprehensive and are flexible. They can and should be tailored to what teachers may teach in future units, as well as what the teacher feels s/he can effectively, appropriately teach.

Additionally, there are a variety of ways to teach this content. I use lecture, reading (in class and homework), video and guest speaker. I have not been detailed with what mediums I use to teach specific content, for, as with the content, it will need to be tailored to the resources available to each teacher.

### Maps

Important to note before beginning specific religions/forms of spirituality is the use of **maps**. Before each group of religions (Native American, African religions, Hinduism, Abrahamic religions, Buddhism and Taoism) I spend two days on the geography of the area, mainly the political boundaries.

### Note-Taking Skills

Referring back to skill goals, this is also where the first note-taking method is introduced, the **keyword strategy**. The

---

**World Religions & Spirituality:** a sixth grade social

Keyword Strategy	
Keywords	Passage
Page 1. – Saul – Voice – Persecute – Blinded	<i>Saul was walking down the road when a light blinded him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say, "Why do you persecute me?" When he stood up, he could not</i>

keyword strategy will be the primary method of taking notes for homework assignments during the unit; different strategies will be introduced during note-taking for the field trip interviews and for the research paper. While difficult for some students at first, this strategy is excellent for getting main idea out of non-fiction text, even a text that may be above a particular student's reading level.

### **Native American Spirituality**

It is now time to begin teaching about specific religions/forms of spirituality! We start with perhaps the most difficult to define, **Native American** spirituality. The most important concept to stress here is that, while there are many similarities between the religions/spiritualities of the hundreds of Native cultures, there is no "Native religion." Each culture/society/tribe had/has its own belief system and forms of prayer, worship and thanksgiving. It is appropriate to introduce the Western concept of *animism* here. It is also up to the teacher to choose two cultures/tribes to focus on; in Seattle, I choose the Haida from Alaska and local Duwamish order to teach: importance of the drum, beliefs on ancestors, and relation to the natural world. It is certainly preferable to choose a culture/tribe local to your area, especially if you can arrange for a guest speaker or field trip, for only a tribal member can do justice to the content that needs to be covered. Most importantly, the guest lends a voice of authenticity to the learning, and begins to demystify the teacher as the sole container of knowledge, putting the teacher closer to the level of student, engaging in the learning and understanding of a culture different than one's own.

Other than the guest speaker, the best way for a non-Native teacher to enter into discussion of a Native culture is through story. Creation stories are the easiest for most students to relate to. Hero stories, especially trickster stories, are also extremely engaging and can offer points of entry into how the culture explains/interprets world events.

## **Africa**

From the Americas, we move to **Africa**, where again, the most important idea a teacher can convey is that as soon as someone says “African religions,” that person is on the wrong track. The diversity of culture and belief on the African continent cannot be overemphasized. There are a variety of cultures to choose from to illustrate this point, however the research on any of them can be difficult for a teacher to prepare him/herself. I choose to go to the country of Nigeria to show the diversity, beginning with the **Igbo** and their religion, O’Din’Ani (to further illustrate the diversity point, some Igbo (Ibo) do not call it a “religion” or call it O’Din’Ani, they just acknowledge it as the way of the Igbo). O’Din’Ani provides a good segue from the animism of Native American people, as it also has similar views on Nature and ancestors. O’Din’Ani also prepares us for the next categorical leap (polytheism) with its belief in a Supreme creator, lesser “gods” and a concept that is neither god nor spirit, instead loosely translated as a “supernatural force”.

For the jump to polytheism and to show the diversity of religious belief in Nigeria, I then introduce the **Yoruba** and their pantheon of gods, most responsible for a force of nature or a gifter/protector of something in nature (another similarity of the two is that they both have a supreme creator that is largely ignored). If not done already, it is very important to introduce the concept of a *trickster* here. This needs to be done because the trickster will often be interpreted as “evil”. It needs to be reinforced that the trickster, while at times doing bad, often deceptive, harmful things, the trickster is also capable of helping. The trickster needs to be seen as a lesson teacher, in some cultures the most important teacher of lessons. Also noteworthy in the Yoruba belief system is that humans can and do become gods.

## Hinduism

With the concept of polytheism introduced (and with it monotheism and atheism), we now move on to **India** and **Hinduism**. In Hinduism the polytheism is actually introduced with the Hindu belief in a supreme creator. However this supreme creator is so vast it is unknowable (much like the Igbo and Yoruba) so it splits itself into three main gods, as well as their consorts. This reinforces the polytheistic concept that different gods are in charge of different things, have different responsibilities. Using the quote “one can no more separate the Hindu gods from the supreme creator than one can separate the rays of the sun from the sun itself” is an excellent way to introduce this idea. This is also where I introduce the relatively new term *henotheism*– the belief that all gods are faces of one supreme creator.

This, with Hinduism, leads us to the concept of *samsara*, or, *reincarnation*. This is also where the concepts of *karma*, *dharma*, and *puja* are introduced. This is an important concept to teach because it provides such an easily understood, fundamental difference: reincarnation juxtaposed with the Heaven/Hell construct most students are familiar with.

Hinduism also will provide the first examples of holy texts. I usually spend more time on the idea of holy texts than the information they contain, but the Hindu epic of the *Ramayana* provides some narrative reading to augment the non-fiction reading the students are focusing on.

## Judaism

By previously juxtaposing the Hindu cyclical view of life/afterlife with the linear view of life/afterlife, we are ready to address three of the four main monotheistic religions:

**Judaism, Christianity** and **Islam** (I have not yet taught Sikhism, though I have taken students to a Sikh temple and have had students write research papers on Sikhism). It is

logical to begin with Judaism, as that is where these Abrahamic religions start. After beginning with the story of Abraham and his sons, there are a few important concepts to teach, the idea of a race of people also being a religion (which can be related to the Igbo) the concept of written rules to follow in order to be considered a religious Jew being the most important. The former can be difficult for some to understand, the latter something that many students will be able to easily understand, though the fact that there are 613 of them can be overwhelming!

The Jews' story of bondage in Egypt, Moses leading them out of slavery, and the wandering in the desert is also a great reference point for students and again provides a narrative piece to compliment the informational text they have been focusing on. The holy books of the Torah and the Talmud should also be introduced here, as they, especially the Torah, transition us to...

### **Christianity**

In all likelihood this will be the religion most students have at least some knowledge about. Largely I have taught Christianity as an extension of Judaism, doing this with two main points: Jesus was a Jew and the Old Testament is the Torah. Beginning with the story of Jesus' birth (similar to Moses as well as well as Cyrus the Great), relating that there is no record of his life from age twelve to about age 31, and the story of his final pilgrimage to Jerusalem. These parts of Jesus' life are taught in the context of his race and religion, so at this point it is also important to teach the concept that Jerusalem was occupied and controlled by the Romans. The idea that Jesus was not a Christian can be quite difficult for students to understand.

The fact that Jesus was a student of the Torah will help students understand this fact. This is also an entry point into the Bible. That the Bible is comprised approximately as such: 1/3 disciples of Jesus 2/3 Paul will underscore the similarity to Judaism and lead

us to teaching the character of Saul/Paul. Also taught here is the Council of Nicaea and the formation of the Christian Bible.

## **Islam**

Referring back to the story of Abraham, his son Jacob and grandson Ishmael, we move to Arabia and **Islam**. First we introduce the character of Mohammed. His story is framed by referring to Abraham and specifically his messages from God about rejecting the religion of idolatry (polytheism, animism). Also of great importance when teaching the story of Mohammed is that his communications with God form the holy text of Islam, the Qur'an.

Also of key importance when teaching Islam is the "Five Pillars" – Shahadah, Prayer, Zakat, Salah, and Hajj– the basic rules of Islam. These rules will provide a good starting point to a final compare/contrast of the three Abrahamic religions and can also segue into the spread of Islam in the ensuing one hundred years after Mohammed's death.

## **Buddhism**

The jump to the next religion does not have a neat segue. It is a good idea to introduce **Buddhism** with a map that starts just East of India and goes West to Japan, North, Mongolia and South, Indonesia. After this, beginning with the story of Prince Siddhartha Gautama is a good idea, especially noting that he lived his life in India/Nepal (many students will associate him with Southeast Asia or China). His story will lead to his teachings: the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

As previously stated, comparing and contrasting is a central goal of the unit. To this end, the Buddhist lack of a holy text, plus the cyclical view of life/afterlife (even using the Dharma Wheel to teach the Eightfold Path) offers a great opportunity to have students begin doing this comparing and contrasting independently.

It is also important to teach that some do not consider Buddhism a religion, instead a philosophy. This is even more appropriate for our final religion, **Taoism**. I like to introduce the Tao using the metaphor of life as a river, also introducing the concept of *wu-wei* in this analogy. I also have found that using the Yin Yang symbol is a good way of teaching the concept of balance. It is important to say here that these things -- the analogy, the symbol -- are not exclusive to the Tao. I explain this to the students as a preface to the extremely limited scope of the Taoist "holy book", the *Tao te Ching*. Having the students interpret some of the poems (I find 1, 24, 47, as accessible as any) a challenging, fun way to wrap up the unit.

### **Field Trips**

Early in the unit, you will want to start arranging your series of field trips to different places of worship. The idea here is to give students a real-life glimpse into the way the religion is practiced here in their own neighborhood. This is also an excellent opportunity to explore the very different ways in which different denominations express and practice the same religion - Catholics, Pentecostal Churches, Quakers, and Lutherans all practice Christianity, for example, but their practices and rituals - and even their beliefs - vary enormously. The same is true for different branches of Islam, Buddhism, etc.

The field trips also involve the students in documenting the religious diversity of their own community. This documentation can be as simple as taking notes and writing up each visit. It can involve taking photographs (with permission), or even recording the presentations with audio recorders or video cameras - again, with permission. The results of this documentation should be reviewed by the sources and made available to the public in some way: posted on a web site, published in a book for the local library, donated to a local historical society or museum. Thus the students are not only

collecting information and insights that will be useful for their research papers; they are also creating primary-source material for future researchers.

### **Setting Up the Field Trips**

Involve the students in identifying and selecting churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, etc. to visit – it is appropriate for students to help arrange visits to their own congregations, as long as they are part of a diverse series representing as many of the religions in the unit as possible. Some religious/spiritual groups may prefer to come to your class to give a presentation and be interviewed.

Have the students write a sample letter to potential hosts to set up a field trip. This should include: a description of the unit/project; details about the age & number of students involved and any scheduling requirements; a request for permission to document the visit and make the results public; and contact information for the teacher/class. If possible, have students make the first contact, either by e-mail, telephone, or mail. An adult will probably have to follow up to coordinate details and scheduling. (Scheduling can be a challenge. It is obviously best to schedule the field trips to coincide roughly with your in-class study of each religion, but don't worry if this isn't possible.)

### **Discuss/Practice Interviewing Skills**

Before the first field trip, go over the idea of an interview. Explain about primary and secondary research sources: someone who has experienced the religion or spirituality you are studying is a primary source. An interview is a way to find out about that person's experience or opinion. A recorded interview is a way to document that source for future researchers. As much as possible, follow basic oral history procedures: inform the interviewee that you are recording the conversation and will make the results public, with permission; write up the interview with as much detail as possible, or transcribe

your recording; give a copy to the interviewee for review/correction; make the edited copy available to the public at a research institution such as a library, museum, archive, or historical society. (See appendix for a sample interview release form.)

Have the students brainstorm questions – both general questions that will be asked at every field trip and specific questions for each religion. Talk about the difference between yes/no or factual questions (“Were you born a Catholic or did you convert?”) and open-ended questions that will get the person to share a fuller story. (“Tell us how you became a Catholic.”) Have the students practice using both prepared questions and follow-up questions by interviewing each other.

Assign a small group of students (3–4) as lead interviewers on each trip; rotate this duty so everyone gets a turn. These students are responsible for introducing themselves to the interviewee, making sure all the prepared questions get asked, coming up with follow-up questions, taking detailed notes, and writing up the interview.

### **Recording Equipment**

If you are using cameras, audio recorders, or video recorders, it’s best to have two students assigned to operate the equipment for each field trip. Have everyone practice using the equipment in class, and always test the recording equipment in the field before you start.

Digital cameras are fun for students, easy to use in the field, and relatively easy to borrow and/or buy. The resulting pictures are also readily shared for use in research papers, web site posts, and classroom displays. Be sure to ask permission before taking pictures!

Audio recordings are fabulous as oral history documentation, and inexpensive digital recorders are not hard to come by. But audio files are harder for interviewees to review, harder to share with the public, and harder to incorporate into student projects. Ideally audio files should be transcribed before they are reviewed, shared, or used, but this can be incredibly time consuming and/or expensive. Consult your local archive or museum for advice and/or assistance with this.

Video cameras are awesome and exciting for students, but making use of video footage later can be challenging unless you have the time, expertise, and software necessary for editing and sharing. Students also need guidance and practice in order to take effective video. After the first field trip, be sure to review the resulting footage in class so students can see the effects of wobbly cameras, frequent swinging between interviewer and questioner, and the overuse of zooming/panning. The best video footage is generally captured with a tripod, in long chunks. You can always excerpt these later. Reviewing and editing video footage takes a lot of time. Be prepared! (Note: rapidly evolving technology will no doubt render this advice obsolete, as students will soon be proficient at shooting and editing video well before they enter kindergarten...)

### **Field Trip Follow Up**

Have the students write a thank you note after each field trip. As soon as possible, have them write up their notes from the interview, print out photographs, and transcribe any recorded material they intend to use in their research papers and/or other public venue such as the school web site. Make sure the material is sent to the interviewee for review before it is made public. If possible, schedule an event to celebrate the project, share the results, and honor the interviewees.

## **RESEARCH PAPER**

With the classroom lessons and field trips wrapped up, it is now time to begin the research process. I begin this by naming a few more religions we did not have time to study: Shinto, Sikhism, Jainism, are the largest; Quaker, Rastafari and Wicca are others students have been interested in. I also let students choose which religion they would like to study. However, as one can see from the questions (see Appendix 2), this research project is more conducive to certain religions than others. I do not usually allow students to research the ancient religions of the Norse, Greeks/Romans– while the stories of the pantheon of the gods/goddesses are exciting and endless, they simply do not fit the template of the questions. The paper will be a four week project, roughly two weeks to research, one to draft, one to publish. Class for this month, from note taking strategies to outlining to turning notes into a structured paper, all revolves around the paper.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thank you for taking the time to look at this curricular outline of a unit on religions and spirituality. If anyone is interested in teaching this curriculum and needs resources, I have many, many reading assignments that I have created, plus resources to learn more about these religions; please contact me to get them.

In closing, there are two things I would like to restate. One, this unit is designed to feed into a second unit on Civilizations and Empire. From the teachings of Buddha spreading from India to China via the Silk Road to the Zoroastrian beliefs of Cyrus the Great dictating his treatment of the people he conquered, these cultures and their beliefs will be a constant touchstone for the rest of the year in social studies. I encourage anyone using all or part of this unit to look at the scope of his/her year-long (or perhaps two year) curriculum this way.

Two, this unit has been well thought out yet is continually under revision. While there are some things that must be taught in a study of religion, this unit is tailored to the knowledge of the teacher. One must have a passion for learning about these different ways of looking at spirit, god, life's purpose, and death in order to teach this unit and the facts surrounding them. With great humility, become a student of these views and beliefs, and you will have a richness, palpable joy, and seriousness in your class different from anything else.

## APPENDICES

1. Washington State Grade Level Standards (EALRS) addressed by this unit/project
2. Sample handout for Research Paper Assignment
3. Sample Release form for Field Trip Interviews

## Washington State Grade Level Standards, Relating to Religion/Spirituality Unit

### Reading

1. The student understands and uses different skills and strategies to read.
  - 1.1. Use word recognition skills and strategies to read and comprehend text.
  - 1.2. Use vocabulary (word meaning) strategies to comprehend text.
    - 1.2.1: Understand and apply dictionary skills and other reference skills
    - 1.2.2: Apply a variety of strategies to comprehend words and ideas in complex text.
  - 1.3. Build vocabulary through wide reading.
    - 1.3.1: Understand and apply new vocabulary.
    - 1.3.2: Understand and apply content/academic vocabulary critical to the meaning of text.
  - 1.4. Apply word recognition skills and strategies to read fluently.
    - 1.4.2: Apply fluency to enhance comprehension.
    - 1.4.3: Apply different reading rates to match text.
2. The student understands the meaning of what is read.
  - 2.1. Demonstrate evidence of reading comprehension.
    - 2.1.3: Apply comprehension monitoring strategies during and after reading: determine importance using theme, main ideas, and supporting details in grade-level informational/expository text.
    - 2.1.4: Apply comprehension monitoring strategies before, during, and after reading: use prior knowledge.
    - 2.1.5: Apply comprehension monitoring strategies before, during, and after reading: predict and infer.
    - 2.1.6: Apply comprehension monitoring strategies to understand nonfiction, informational, and task-oriented text: monitor for meaning, create mental images, and generate and answer questions.
    - 2.1.7: Apply comprehension monitoring strategies during and after reading: summarize grade-level informational/expository text.
  - 2.3. Expand comprehension by analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information and ideas in literary and informational text.
    - 2.3.1: Analyze informational/expository text and literary/narrative text for similarities and differences and cause and effect relationships.
    - 2.3.2: Analyze sources for information appropriate to a specific topic or for a specific purpose.
  - 2.4. Think critically and analyze author's use of language, style, purpose, and perspective in informational and literary text.
    - 2.4.1: Apply the skills of drawing conclusions, providing a response, and expressing insights about informational/expository text and literary/narrative text.
    - 2.4.5: Understand how to generalize/extend information beyond the text to another text or to a broader idea or concept.
    - 2.4.6: Analyze ideas and concepts in multiple texts.

2.4.7: Analyze the reasoning and ideas underlying an author's perspective, beliefs, and assumptions.

3. The student reads different materials for a variety of purposes.
  - 3.1. Read to learn new information.
    - 3.1.1: Analyze appropriateness of a variety of resources and use them to perform a specific task or investigate a topic.
  - 3.2. Read to perform a task.
    - 3.2.2: Apply understanding of a variety of functional documents.
  - 3.4: Read for literary/narrative experience in a variety of genres.
    - 3.4.2: Understand and analyze a variety of literary genres.
    - 3.4.3: Analyze literature from a variety of cultures or historical periods for relationships and recurring themes.
  
4. The student sets goals and evaluates progress to improve reading.
  - 4.1. Assess reading strengths and need for improvement.
    - 4.1.2: Evaluate reading progress and apply strategies for setting grade-level appropriate reading goals.
  - 4.2. Develop interests and share reading experiences.

### **Writing**

1. The student understands and uses a writing process.
  - 1.1. Prewrites to generate ideas and plan writing.
  - 1.2. Produces draft(s).
  - 1.3. Revises to improve text.
  - 1.4. Edits text, appropriate for grade level.
  - 1.5. Publishes text to share with audience.
  - 1.6. Adjusts writing process as necessary.
  
2. The student writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes.
  - 2.1. Adapts writing for a variety of audiences.
  - 2.2. Writes for different purposes.
  
3. The student writes clearly and effectively.
  - 3.1. Develops ideas and organizes writing.
  - 3.2. Uses appropriate style.
  - 3.3. Knows and applies writing conventions appropriate for the grade level.
  
4. The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of written work.
  - 4.1. Analyzes and evaluates others' and own writing.
  - 4.2. Sets goals for improvement.

## **Social Studies**

**1. CIVICS** The student understands and applies knowledge of government, law, politics, and the nation's fundamental documents to make decisions about local, national, and international issues and to demonstrate thoughtful, participatory citizenship.

1.2 Understands the purposes, organization, and function of governments, laws, and political systems.

1.2.3 Understands a variety of forms of government from the past or present.

**3. GEOGRAPHY** The student uses a spatial perspective to make reasoned decisions by applying the concepts of location, region, and movement and demonstrating knowledge of how geographic features and human cultures impact environments.

3.1 Understands the physical characteristics, cultural characteristics, and location of places, regions, and spatial patterns on the Earth's surface.

3.1.2 Identifies the location of places and regions in the world and understands their physical and cultural characteristics.

3.3 Understands the geographic context of global issues.

3.3.1 Understands that learning about the geography of the world helps us understand the global issue of sustainability.

**4. HISTORY** The student understands and applies knowledge of historical thinking, chronology, eras, turning points, major ideas, individuals, and themes in world history in order to evaluate how history shapes the present and future.

4.1 Understands historical chronology.

4.1.1 Analyzes different cultural measurements of time.

4.2 Understands and analyzes causal factors that have shaped major events in history.

4.2.1 Understands and analyzes how individuals and movements from ancient civilizations have shaped world history.

4.2.2 Understands and analyzes how cultures and cultural groups in ancient civilizations contributed to world history.

4.3 Understands that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations of historical events.

4.3.2 Analyzes multiple causal factors that shape major events in ancient history.

4.4 Uses history to understand the present and plan for the future.

**5. SOCIAL STUDIES SKILLS** The student understands and applies reasoning skills to conduct research, deliberate, form, and evaluate positions through the processes of reading, writing, and communicating.

5.1 Uses critical reasoning skills to analyze and evaluate positions.

5.1.2 Evaluates the significance of information used to support positions on an issue or event.

5.2 Uses inquiry-based research.

5.2.1 Creates and uses research questions to guide inquiry on an historical event.

- 5.2.2 Analyzes the validity, reliability, and credibility of information from a variety of primary and secondary sources while researching an issue or event.
- 5.4 Creates a product that uses social studies content to support a thesis and presents the product in an appropriate manner to a meaningful audience.
  - 5.4.1 Analyzes multiple factors, compares two groups, generalizes, and connects past to present to formulate a thesis in a paper or presentation.
  - 5.4.2 Understands and demonstrates the ethical responsibility one has in using and citing sources and the rules related to plagiarism and copyright.

## 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Religion Report

- Choose a Religion or a Spiritual Practice to research
- Find the answers to the following questions:
  1. When, how, where did it start? Where has it spread to?
  2. Is the religion or spirituality monotheistic, polytheistic, animist, henotheistic, atheist? Explain.
  3. What rules does the religion have; how does it say to “live a good life”?
  4. Tell about an important person from this religion or spirituality.
  5. Tell an important story from the religion or spirituality.
  6. Does it have any symbols? What do they mean?
  7. What does the religion or spirituality say about the afterlife?
  8. Describe one ceremony or ritual that occurs in this religion or spirituality.
  9. Include any other information important to the religion or spiritual practice.
- The following are the requirements for your paper:
  - For an “A”-** You need to answer the first 9 questions  
You need at least 5 sources  
You need one map  
You need two graphics  
You need a bibliography  
You need a cover page
  - For a “B” -** You need to answer 8 of the questions  
You need at least 4 sources  
You need one map  
You need one graphic  
You need a bibliography  
You need a cover page
  - For a “C” -** You need to answer 7 of the questions  
You need 3 sources  
You need 1 map or one graphic  
You need a bibliography  
You need a cover page

You will have four weeks to work on this paper- two weeks to do research and take notes, two weeks to draft and publish. You will have time to work on this in class, but **you will not be able to finish without working on it at home**. There will not be language arts or social studies homework while this paper is assigned; the paper is your homework, you should be working on it at home.