**Investigating History Grade 4: Pilot Scope and Sequence**

This scope and sequence reflects the **pilot** yearlong Investigating History curriculum for Grade 4. The curriculum comprises five units:

* [**Unit 1**](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1HrlH32R3AFxohmMyC1ZYrkoUq83I_lUR)**:** North American Geography
* [**Unit 2**](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1SLvDDf2gVtqRnQzMiwBUgZB_q-x5nwuN): Ancient American Civilizations
* **Unit 3:** European Exploration of North America
* [**Unit 4**](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1eB9Uax45TE-776BwvYDrHcm16wGkYtJJ)**:** Impacts of U.S. Expansion
* [**Unit 5**](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AoSNm40QWQ42y-GezOOR4V5x567plv4y): Regions of the United States

This pilot curriculum is available for educators’ review and reference in the 2025-26 school year. During this year, DESE will be making significant revisions to the curricular materials based on over 1,000 pieces of feedback from pilot teachers as well as external reviewers. These revisions, which will be incorporated into the final Grade 4 course published in Summer 2026, will include:

* Building in robust supports for multilingual learners
* Updating materials, maps, and sources to maximize grade-level appropriateness and usability
* Strengthening the consistency of routines and instructional strategies across all units and grade levels
* Ensuring that skills and content flow coherently into the Grades 5, 6, and 7 materials

**Given the importance of these revisions, DESE strongly recommends that schools and districts wait to fully adopt Investigating History for Grade 4 until the published course is available in the 2026-27 school year**. We encourage educators to use these pilot materials, which are presented as-is, to start familiarizing themselves with the instructional approach, try out lessons or clusters in their classroom, and begin planning for 2026-27 implementation.

Please contact InvestigatingHistory@mass.gov with any questions.

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| Grade 4, Unit 1 Pilot Scope and Sequence | Investigating History logo |

# North American Geography

***What can geography tell us about land and people?***

**Grade-Level Content Standards**

* **4.T1.1:** On a physical map of North America, use cardinal directions, map scales, key/legend (symbols for mountains, rivers, deserts, lakes, cities), and title to locate and identify important physical features.
* **4.T1.2:** On a political map of North America, locate Canada and its provinces, Mexico and its states, the nations of the Caribbean, and the United States of America and its states; explain the meaning of the terms *continent, country, nation, county, state, province, and city.*
* **4.T1.3:** Research, analyze, and convey information about Canada or Mexico by consulting maps, atlases, encyclopedias, digital information and satellite images, photographs, or news articles; organizing materials, and making an oral or written presentation about topics such as the peoples, population size, languages, forms of government, major cities, environment, natural resources, industries, and national landmarks.
* **4.T4b.5:** Using resources such as print and online atlases, or state websites, construct a map of a state in the Southeast region.
* **4.T4c.4:** Using resources such as print and online atlases, historical sources, or national or state websites, construct a map of a state in the Midwest region.
* **4.T4d.5:** Using resources, construct a map of a state in the Southwest region.
* **4.T4e.5:** Using resources such as print and online atlases, or state websites, construct a map of a state in the West region.

**Grade-Specific Practice Standards**

* **PS 2.** Develop supporting questions that lead to the generation of new questions and contribute to the inquiry process.
* **PS 6:** Identify evidence from multiple sources in response to questions.

*Lessons in this unit are also aligned to grade-level literacy standards to support reading, writing, speaking, and listening.*

**Learning Progression** *(*[*pilot lesson plans and materials available here*](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1Jowfzzap0MX4Y9RWgUFNlPAhtCAQ67AL)*)*

**Physical Maps** | 6 Lessons

### *What can maps tell us about the land?*

1. Students will be able to brainstorm, classify, and prioritize questions about the geography of North America.
2. Students will be able to ask questions about land features of North America.
3. Students will be able to identify and describe common landforms and bodies of water found in North America using evidence from images.
4. Students will be able to find evidence about the land on a physical map.
5. Students will be able to identify important landforms and bodies of water on maps of North America using cardinal and intermediate directions.
6. Students will be able to make a claim supported by evidence about what maps can tell us about the land.

**Political Maps** | 6 Lessons

### *What can maps tell us about people?*

1. Students will be able to ask questions about features seen on a political map of North America to launch the cluster supporting question
2. Students will be able to locate boundaries of countries, states, provinces, counties, and territories by labeling maps.
3. Students will be able to add important features of a state to an outline map to create a political map.
4. Students will be able to explain the meaning of the term *nation* using evidence from maps of the Navajo Nation.
5. Students will be able to prioritize questions and discuss evidence showing what maps can tell us about people.
6. Students will be able to identify  evidence from a map to explain what the map says about people.

**Mexico and Canada** | 8 Lessons

### *How can we use geography to tell others about Mexico and Canada?*

1. Students will be able to ask questions stimulated by a population map of Mexico and Canada to launch the cluster supporting question.
2. Students will be able to research information about the geography of Mexico and document what they learn on a graphic organizer.
3. Students will be able to research information about the geography of Canada and document what they learn on a graphic organizer.
4. Students will be able to research information about the geography of Canada and document what they learn on a graphic organizer.
5. Students will be able to research information about Mexico or Canada to contribute to a written report.
6. Students will be able to use their research to produce a slide deck presentation with text and images.
7. Students will be able to give an oral presentation about their research project on Mexico or Canada.
8. Students will be able to present a report on either Mexico or Canada, and listen actively when it is their turn to provide feedback to someone else.

**Summative Assessment** | 1 Day

The assessment begins with a map of North America that students use as a source to answer one question each about physical maps, political maps, and Mexico and Canada. Students return to the questions they have been posing throughout the unit.  They consider the questions in terms of their value in contributing to the inquiry process.  How helpful has each question been in generating ideas that will eventually answer the unit essential question?  Students discuss the questions in each category before choosing one from each cluster, explaining why it is important, and answering it using information learned in the unit.  These combined responses answer the question, *What can geography tell us about land and people?*

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| Grade 4, Unit 2 Pilot Scope and Sequence | Investigating History logo |

# Ancient American Civilizations

***How do we know that first peoples flourished in North America?***

**Grade-Level Content Standards**

* **4.T2.1**. Evaluate competing theories about the origins of people in North America (e.g., theories that people migrated across a land bridge that connected present-day Siberia to Alaska or theories that they came by a maritime route) and evidence for dating the existence of early populations in North America to about 15,000 years ago.
* **4.T.2.2:** Using maps of historic Native Peoples’ culture regions of North America and photographs, identify archaeological evidence of some of the characteristics of major civilizations of this period (e.g., stone tools, ceramics, mound-building, cliff dwellings). **3.T3.3:** Explain how any one of the explorers described the native Peoples and the new lands, and compare an early 17th century map of New England with a current one.
* **4.T2.3:** Explain how archaeologists conduct research (e.g., by participating in excavations, studying artifacts and organic remains, climate and astronomical data, and collaborating with other scholars) to develop theories about migration, settlement patterns, and cultures in prehistoric periods.
* **4.T2.4**. Give examples of some archaeological sites of Native Peoples in North America that are preserved as national or state monuments, parks, or international heritage sites (e.g, Teotihuacan in Mexico, Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site in Illinois, Chaco Culture National Historical Park in New Mexico) and explain their importance in presenting a comprehensive history of Americans and American life.

**Grade-Specific Practice Standards**

* **PS 3:** Analyze primary and secondary sources to determine main ideas and key details.
* **PS 6:** Identify evidence from multiple sources in response to compelling questions; use evidence from sources to develop a claim about the past.

*Lessons in this unit are also aligned to grade-level literacy standards to support reading, writing, speaking, and listening.*

**Learning Progression** *(*[*pilot lesson plans and materials available here*](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1SLvDDf2gVtqRnQzMiwBUgZB_q-x5nwuN)*)*

**The Arrival of First Peoples in North America** | 6 Lessons

### *How did people first arrive in North America?*

1. Students will be able to connect to prior knowledge and curiosity by asking questions about a series of images.
2. Students will be able to ask questions about evidence showing migration patterns of early humans.
3. Students will be able to analyze evidence to determine which migration theory it more strongly supports.
4. Students will be able to evaluate competing theories of human migration using evidence from sources.
5. Students will be able to explain to others which migration theory they think is supported by the most evidence.
6. Students will be able to make a claim supported by evidence about a migration theory.

**Artifacts of Ancient Cultures** | 6 Lessons

***What can evidence tell us about ancient complex societies?***

1. Students will be able to analyze pictures of ancient artifacts, then generate creative questions to extend their thinking.
2. Students will be able to explain the methods and significance of archaeology presented in a video.
3. Students will be able to consider Indigenous knowledge as additional evidence in understanding migration of first peoples across North America.
4. Students will be able to compare the complexity of ancient societies in North America using criteria found on cards in a deck.
5. Students will be able to develop a claim explaining what different types of evidence tell us about ancient cultures and civilizations.
6. Students will be able to use archaeological evidence to explain how ancient people lived together in organized groups.

**Preservation of Archaological Sites** | 6 Lessons

### *Why is it important to preserve archaeological sites of first peoples?*

1. Students will be able to demonstrate the concept of a stratigraphic profile by creating a model of an archaeological site.
2. Students will be able to explain what archaeologists know about the ancient civilization of Teotihuacan and how it is being preserved.
3. Students will be able to discuss why archaeological sites should be preserved using examples from Cahokia Mounds.
4. Students will be able to explain Indigenous connections to Mesa Verde and the importance of preserving this archaeological site.
5. Students will be able to explain Indigenous connections to Mesa Verde and the importance of preserving this archaeological site.
6. Students will be able to use a model to explain why it is important to preserve archaeological sites of first peoples.

**Summative Assessment** | 1 Day

Students begin by reviewing the definition of flourish with a quick discussion of criteria that would exist in a society to exemplify that term.  Using an outline map of North America, they draw lines showing the two primary migration theories of how first peoples arrived in North America.  Students choose one complex society that they studied in this unit, label them on the map, and provide evidence on a poster that shows how each complex society flourished at its peak.

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| Grade 4, Unit 3 Pilot Scope and Sequence | Investigating History logo |

**European Exploration of North America**

***How and why did Europeans explore North America?***

**Grade-Level Content Standards**

* **4.T3.1:** Explain how historians studying the European voyages to the Americas use archaeological evidence, maps, illustrations, and texts produced in Europe at the time and that all of these materials are called primary sources.
* **4.T.3.2:**  Explain who the Vikings were and describe evidence of their early encounters with Native Peoples along the North American Atlantic coast.
* **4.T.3.3:** Trace on a map European explorations of North America and the Caribbean Islands in the 15th and 16th centuries (e.g., voyages of Vasco Nun͂es de Balboa, Jacques Cartier, Cristobal Colon [Christopher Columbus], Ferdinand Magellan, Juan Ponce De Leon, Amerigo Vespucci, Hernán Cortés), 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; make a timeline of their landings and conquests.

**Grade-Specific Practice Standards**

* **PS 2:** Develop supporting questions that lead to the generation of new questions and contribute to the inquiry process.
* **PS 3:** Analyze primary and secondary sources to determine main ideas and key details.
* **PS 4:** Identify the purpose of a source using information about the source type, maker, and intended audience.

*Lessons in this unit are also aligned to grade-level literacy standards to support reading, writing, speaking, and listening.*

***Based on educator feedback, Unit 3 will be revised before the 2025-26 school year, so a lesson-by-lesson scope is not yet available.***

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| Grade 4, Unit 4 Pilot Scope and Sequence | Investigating History logo |

# Impacts of U.S. Expansion

***How did the growth of the United States affect different groups of people?***

**Grade-Level Content Standards**

* **4.T4.1:** Describe how the construction of canals, roads, and railways in the 19th century helped the United States to expand westward.
* **4.T4.2:** Give examples of some of the ways the United States acquired new states (beyond the 13 original states) and additional territories between 1791 and 1898, including purchasing land called the Louisiana Territory from France, adding territory in the Southwest as a result of war with Mexico, settling a treaty with Britain to gain land called the Oregon Territory in the Northwest, purchasing Alaska from Russia, annexing Hawaii, and adding territories such as Puerto Rico as a result of a war with Spain.
* **4.T4.3:** 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 (e.g., wagon train journeys on the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails, and settlements in the western territories).
* **4.T4.4:** Explain that many different groups of people immigrated to the United States from other places voluntarily and some were brought to the United States against their will (as in the case of people of Africa).
* **4.T4.5:** Show understanding that in the middle of the 19th century, the people of the United States were deeply divided 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.
* **4.T4a.3:** Explain the benefits in the 18th century of becoming a state in the United States (as opposed to a British colony) and, as a class, construct a timeline that shows when each of the states in the region was admitted into the United States.
* **4.T4b.1:** Add to the timeline the admission dates for states in the Southeast.
* **4.T4c.1:** Add to the timeline the admission dates for states in the Midwest.
* **4.T4d.1:** Add to the timeline the admission dates for states in the Southwest.
* **4.T4d.2:** Explain that Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico were territories that formerly belonged to Mexico; that Texas declared independence from Mexico in 1836, and that Arizona and New Mexico were taken by the United States as a result of the Mexican-American War 1846-1848.
* **4.T4d.5:** Construct a map of a state in the Southwest region that provides information about pioneer settlements of the 17th-19th centuries and that includes a title, scale, compass, and map key.
* **4.T4e.1**: Add to the timeline the admission dates for states in the Southwest.
* **4.T4e.2:** Explain that California, Colorado, and Utah were territories that belonged to Mexico and were taken by the United States as a result of the Mexican-American War 1846-1848.
* **4.T4e.5:** Use resources such as print and online atlases and historical sources that provide information about physical features (e.g. waterways and mountains), climate, settlements and movement of Native peoples, European exploration and pioneer settlements of the 17th-19th centuries.

**Grade-Specific Practice Standards**

* **PS 3:** Determine the main idea of a primary or secondary source and explain how it is supported by key details.
* **PS 5:** Identify information about a historical source, including the maker, date, and/or place of origin, and examine its intended audience.
* **PS 6:** Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.
* **PS 7:** Explain different strategies and approaches students and others could take in working alone and together to address local, regional, and global problems.

*Lessons in this unit are also aligned to grade-level literacy standards to support reading, writing, speaking, and listening.*

**Learning Progression** *(*[*pilot lesson plans and materials available here*](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1eB9Uax45TE-776BwvYDrHcm16wGkYtJJ)*)*

**Expanding the Nation** | 8 Lessons

### *How did the United States grow, and who did it affect?*

1. Students will be able to generate questions about Westward Expansion and its effect on Indigenous people by comparing two maps.
2. Students will be able to observe patterns of change in states and territories in an animated map and ask questions about how the patterns would affect people in North America.
3. Students will be able to foresee conflict between colonists and Indigenous people by evaluating  connections between key vocabulary words.
4. Students will be able to analyze maps and a primary source to describe how territories become states.
5. Students will be able to show four ways the United States acquired territory by classifying states into categories.
6. Students will be able to explain why adding new states to the United States was a source of conflict by comparing points of view.
7. Students will be able to explain why adding new states to the United States was a source of conflict by comparing points of view .
8. Students will be able to summarize knowledge on how the US acquired territory and who was impacted using context from a timeline.

**Moving West** | 7 Lessons

***Why did so many people move west?***

1. Students will be able to generate questions about Manifest Destiny based on their observations of a painting.
2. Students will be able to understand the impact of the Santa Fe Trail on the growth of the Southwest by analyzing primary sources and creating a map.
3. Students will be able to discuss the effects of the Mexican-American War using evidence from multiple sources.
4. Students will be able to explain some push and pull factors leading to the Great Western Migration.
5. Students will be able to describe the importance of the Transcontinental Railroad to Westward Expansion by identifying information from a historical source.
6. Students will be able to make a claim about Manifest Destiny supported by evidence.
7. Students will be able to use evidence to make a claim about why people moved west and who it affected.
8. Students will be able to summarize new learning about conflict in Massachusetts during Revolutionary times by citing evidence from multiple sources in response to compelling questions.

**The Injustices of Expansion** | 6 Lessons

### *Who was harmed by U.S. expansion?*

1. Students will be able to generate questions about who was harmed by U.S. expansion by discussing an illustration of buffalo hunting in the 1800s.
2. Students will be able to compare and contrast the different ways that Indigenous people and the U.S. government view land using evidence from a map.
3. Students will be able to describe the experience of Exodusters by interpreting evidence from three poems.
4. Students will be able to explain community-based methods of managing land and water resources by closely reading a map.
5. Students will be able to evaluate how patterns of harm contributed to injustice during U.S. expansion.
6. Students will be able to make a claim about a group that was harmed during Westward Expansion and support the claim with evidence

**Summative Assessment** | 2 Days

In Part 1 of the summative assessment, students create a photo essay using images from throughout the unit. They answer the question, “How did the growth of the United States affect different groups of people?” by sorting a collection of photos into a sequence and writing captions that together answer the unit essential question. Students are also assessed on the social studies practice of examining the intended audience of a primary source.

As a civics-related activity, students then think about what justice and action could look like by examining the painting *Reversing Manifest Destiny*. They use the Social Justice Standards from *Learning for Justice* to brainstorm a project that applies civic action

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| Grade 4, Unit 5 Pilot Scope and Sequence | Investigating History logo |

**Regions of the United States**

***How can regions help us understand the diversity of land and people in the United States?***

**Grade-Level Content Standards**

* **4.T4.4:** Explain that many different groups of people immigrated to the United States voluntarily and some were brought to the United States against their will (as is the case of the people of Africa).
* **4.T4a.4, 4.T4b.2, 4.T4c.2, 4.T4d.3, 4.T4e.3:** Develop questions, conduct research, and analyze how people have adapted to the environment of regions of the United States, and how physical features and natural resources affected settlement patterns, the growth of major urban/suburban areas, industries, or trade.
* **4.T4a.5, 4.T4b.2, 4.T4c.2, 4.T4d.3, 4.T4e.3:** Describe the diverse cultural nature of the regions, including contributions of Native peoples.
* **4.T4b.3:** Explain how natural disasters, such as hurricanes and floods, have affected the region, and how government and citizens have responded to catastrophic natural events.
* **4.T4e.4:** Explain how disasters, such as drought and forest fires, have affected the region, and how government and citizens have responded to catastrophic events.

**Grade-Specific Practice Standards**

* **PS 3:** Summarize information on a topic by integrating information from two sources.
* **PS 6:** Identify evidence from multiple sources in response to a question.
* **PS 7:** Explain challenges people have faced, and opportunities they have created, in addressing local, regional, and global problems at various times and places.

*Lessons in this unit are also aligned to grade-level literacy standards to support reading, writing, speaking, and listening.*

**Learning Progression** *(*[*pilot lesson plans and materials available here*](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AoSNm40QWQ42y-GezOOR4V5x567plv4y)*)*

**Physical Geography of U.S. Regions** | 9 Lessons

### *How can we use physical geography to form regions?*

1. Students will be able to ask questions about the purpose of regions by comparing three maps that show different types of regions.
2. Students will be able to ask questions about patterns they observe when comparing a land cover map with a topographic map.
3. Students will be able to understand the connection between land cover and traditional Indigenous housing by explaining how Indigenous people use natural materials in a region to build homes.
4. Students will be able to analyze the effect of climate on the kinds of land cover in an area by synthesizing information from two maps.
5. Students will be able to analyze the benefits of two solutions to the problem of storm surge from hurricanes.
6. Students will be able to explain how people can work together to prevent the most harmful effects of wildfires.
7. Students will be able to identify regional patterns of natural resources using evidence from a map.
8. Students will be able to collaborate on sorting states into regions using aspects of physical geography by integrating multiple sources.
9. Students will be able to create a regional map of the United States using physical geography and support their choices with evidence from multiple sources.

**Human Geography of U.S. Regions** | 6 Lessons

***How can we use human geography to form regions?***

1. Students will be able to ask and share questions about human geography using a questioning protocol.
2. Students will be able to explain why the upper Midwest is a manufacturing region using information about natural resources and human resources.
3. Students will be able to identify features of agricultural regions and explain sustainable farming practices to others.
4. Students will be able to explain why industries form in regions where a natural resource is plentiful.
5. Students will be able to use information from multiple sources to sort states into regions that reflect both physical and human geography.
6. Students will be able to use physical and human geography to create a regional map of the United States and support their choices with reasons based on information from multiple sources.

**Culture of U.S. Regions** | 7 Lessons

### *How have diverse cultures influenced regions in the United States?*

1. Students will be able to identify examples of cultural traditions in the United States by responding to a read-aloud.
2. Students will be able to predict the effect of settlement patterns on the culture of a region.
3. Students will be able to explain the influence an immigrant group has had on the cuisine of a region by analyzing an article.
4. Students will be able to describe the cultural influences found in quilt designs from around the country through collaborative discussions with others.
5. Students will be able to describe how regional music is influenced by the people that settled there.
6. Students will be able to form opinions on the importance of culture and diversity using information from multiple sources.
7. Students will be able to write opinions on the importance of culture and diversity supported by evidence from multiple sources.

**Summative Assessment** | 1 Day

This summative assessment pulls together the research students have done throughout the unit on physical geography, human geography, and culture. To answer the essential question, students are asked to explain how regions solve the problem of understanding the diversity of land and people in the United States.  Students integrate the regions they developed at the end of Cluster 2 with their knowledge of cultural influence. Because people move, students do not sort cultural groups into regions.  Instead, they explain the cultural groups that are prevalent in the regions they created at the end of Cluster 2. They make the case for why their arrangement of states into regions should be adopted by the Department of Education for all fourth graders across the country to learn.