

# A Historian's Adventure: A Project-Based World History Journey (1 Year)

**Course Philosophy:** This curriculum is designed to be an adventure, not a lecture. The student will act as a historian, an archaeologist, an artist, and an inventor. The focus is on understanding the "why" behind historical events through creative, hands-on projects. Assessment is based on the creation of a year-long "Historian's Portfolio" showcasing completed projects.

---

## Unit 1: The Historian's Toolkit & The Dawn of Civilization (6 Weeks)

**Core Questions:** What is "history" and how do we study it? Why did people stop wandering and start building cities? How did geography shape the first great civilizations?

**Materials Needed:** Internet access (for YouTube, virtual museum tours, research), large roll of paper for a timeline, art supplies (clay, paint, markers), cardboard boxes, library card, a journal (The Historian's Logbook).

### Lesson Activities:

- **Week 1: The Historian's Toolkit.**
  - **Activity:** Create your "Historian's Logbook." Decorate it. The first entry will define "primary source" vs. "secondary source." Find one example of each related to your own life (e.g., a birthday card vs. a story your parent tells about your birthday).
  - **Activity:** Begin the "Mega-Timeline." On a large roll of paper, mark out time from 4000 BCE to the present. This will be a year-long project. Add the Paleolithic and Neolithic Eras. Draw pictures of key developments like fire, tools, and agriculture.
- **Week 2: Mesopotamia - The Land Between Rivers.**
  - **Activity:** Watch videos on cuneiform. Using air-dry clay, create your own cuneiform tablet. You could write your name or a simple law, inspired by the Code of Hammurabi. Research one of Hammurabi's laws and write a logbook entry on whether you think it's fair.
- **Week 3: Ancient Egypt - The Gift of the Nile.**
  - **Activity:** Take a virtual tour of an Egyptian tomb or the British Museum's Egyptian exhibit online. Then, design a "sarcophagus" for a historical figure (or a fictional character) out of a shoebox. The decorations should reflect that person's life and accomplishments.
- **Week 4: Indus Valley & Ancient China.**
  - **Activity:** The Indus Valley civilization is famous for urban planning. Using graph paper or building blocks, design your own well-organized ancient city. Include features like a citadel, a great bath, and a grid system for streets. Write a short explanation of why your city is designed this way.
  - **Activity:** Research Chinese oracle bones. Write three "what if" questions about the future on a piece of paper, then decorate it to look like a historical artifact.
- **Weeks 5-6: Unit 1 Culminating Project.**
  - **Project: "Ancient Civilizations Museum Exhibit."** Choose one of the civilizations studied. Create a museum exhibit using a large cardboard box (a "diorama"). It must include:

1. A map showing the civilization's location and key geographical features.
  2. At least three "artifacts" you create (like your cuneiform tablet or a mini-ziggurat).
  3. A "museum label" for each artifact explaining what it is and why it was important.
  4. A short written or oral presentation explaining why this civilization was significant.
- **Assessment:** Project completion, clarity of labels, and understanding shown in the presentation. Add photos of the project to the Historian's Portfolio.

## Unit 2: The Classical World: Empires of Thought & Power (6 Weeks)

**Core Questions:** What is an empire? How do ideas like democracy and philosophy shape a society? What can architecture and engineering tell us about a culture's values?

**Materials Needed:** LEGOs or other building blocks, materials for a costume (old sheets, cardboard), ingredients for simple Greek/Roman cooking, access to podcasts (like "The History of Rome").

### Lesson Activities:

- **Week 1: Ancient Greece - Mind Over Matter.**
  - **Activity:** Learn about the three types of Greek columns (Doric, Ionic, Corinthian). Go on a "column hunt" in your town or online to find examples in modern architecture. Build a small Greek temple using LEGOs or cardboard, making sure to use one of the column styles correctly.
  - **Activity:** Hold a "Socratic Seminar." Read a short Aesop's fable. With a parent, discuss the moral of the story by only asking questions, never making statements.
- **Week 2: The Roman Republic & Empire.**
  - **Activity:** Roman engineering was legendary. Build a functional aqueduct using cardboard tubes, plastic wrap, and tape. Test it to see if you can get water to flow from a high point to a low point.
  - **Activity:** Research a famous Roman like Julius Caesar, Augustus, or Boudicca. Prepare a 2-minute persuasive speech from their perspective, arguing for a specific action (e.g., Caesar arguing to cross the Rubicon). Deliver it with gusto!
- **Week 3-4: Classical Asia - Persia, India, and China.**
  - **Activity:** Learn about the Persian Royal Road. Map it out. Then, design a "modern Royal Road" - a system for delivering a message or package across your country as quickly as possible. What technology would you use? What stations would you need?
  - **Activity:** Explore the achievements of the Mauryan Empire in India under Ashoka. Create a poster or infographic that highlights his pillars, which promoted peace and respect.
  - **Activity:** The Han Dynasty invented paper. Try making your own paper at home using recycled scraps and a screen.
- **Weeks 5-6: Unit 2 Culminating Project.**
  - **Project: "Historical Figure Dinner Party."**
    1. Choose 3-4 historical figures from the classical era (e.g., Socrates, Cleopatra, Emperor Qin Shi Huang, a Roman Centurion).
    2. Research their lives, personalities, and accomplishments.
    3. Create a seating chart and explain why you seated them that way (who would get along? who would argue?).
    4. Write a short script of a dinner conversation they might have about a topic like "What is the best way to rule?" or "What is the most important invention?"

5. **Extension:** Cook a simple, historically inspired meal for the "party."
- **Assessment:** Quality of research, creativity of the script, and thoughtful analysis of the historical figures' perspectives. Add the script and seating chart to the Historian's Portfolio.

## Unit 3: Crossroads of the World: The Post-Classical Era (6 Weeks)

**Core Questions:** What happens when empires fall? How does trade spread ideas, technologies, and beliefs? How did powerful kingdoms develop outside of Europe and Asia?

**Materials Needed:** Spices (cinnamon, cloves, pepper), fabric scraps, colored sand or salt, poster board, video editing software (optional).

### Lesson Activities:

- **Week 1: The Byzantine Empire & The Islamic Golden Age.**
  - **Activity:** Study Byzantine mosaics. Create your own "mosaic" using colored paper squares, beans, or beads to depict a scene from your own life.
  - **Activity:** The House of Wisdom in Baghdad was a center of learning. Choose one innovation from the Islamic Golden Age (e.g., algebra, advances in medicine, the astrolabe) and create a one-page "advertisement" for it, explaining how it works and why it's revolutionary.
- **Week 2-3: China's Golden Age (Tang/Song) & The Mongols.**
  - **Activity:** Learn about Tang and Song dynasty inventions like gunpowder, the compass, and printing. Create a "Cause and Effect" chart showing how one of these inventions changed the world.
  - **Activity:** The Mongol Empire was the largest contiguous land empire in history. Listen to a podcast or watch a documentary about Genghis Khan. Hold a debate: Was the Mongol Empire a force of brutal destruction or a source of connection and stability (the "Pax Mongolica")? Argue both sides in your logbook.
- **Week 4: The Americas & Africa.**
  - **Activity:** Explore the complex societies of the Maya, Aztec, and Inca. The Inca used "quipu" (knotted strings) to keep records. Create your own simple quipu to record information, like the number of books you've read this month or how many sunny days there were.
  - **Activity:** Research the great West African kingdoms of Ghana and Mali and their role in the salt and gold trade. Create a map of the trans-Saharan trade routes. Use spices and sand to illustrate what was traded and where.
- **Weeks 5-6: Unit 3 Culminating Project.**
  - **Project: "The Silk Road Travelogue."**
    1. Imagine you are a merchant, a missionary, or an explorer traveling the Silk Road (or a sea route in the Indian Ocean) around 1000 CE.
    2. Choose a starting point and an endpoint (e.g., Venice to Xi'an).
    3. Create a travelogue (a blog, a podcast series, or a scrapbook) with at least four entries from different points on your journey.
    4. In each entry, describe the goods you are trading, the people you meet, the ideas you encounter (like Buddhism or a new number system), and the dangers you face.
  - **Assessment:** Historical accuracy, creative storytelling, and demonstration of understanding of cultural exchange. Add the travelogue to the Historian's Portfolio.

## Unit 4: A World Reconnected (6 Weeks)

**Core Questions:** Why did Europe suddenly look outward? How can art reflect a change in thinking? How did the meeting of different worlds change the planet forever?

**Materials Needed:** Art supplies (paint, drawing paper), access to a high-quality art history website (e.g., Google Arts & Culture), world map, compass, potato.

### Lesson Activities:

- **Week 1: The Renaissance - A Rebirth of Ideas.**
  - **Activity:** Compare a piece of Medieval art with a piece of Renaissance art. In your logbook, list the differences you see (perspective, realism, subject matter). Try to recreate a small section of a Renaissance painting by a master like Leonardo da Vinci or Michelangelo.
  - **Activity:** Be an inventor like Leonardo! Design a new machine or improve an existing one. Draw a detailed diagram with labels explaining its function, just like in his notebooks.
- **Week 2: The Reformation.**
  - **Activity:** Martin Luther's 95 Theses, spread by the printing press, changed the world. Use a potato stamp or block printing to "mass produce" a short message. Then, write a list of "9.5 Theses" for your own home or community (e.g., "1. Bedtime should be 15 minutes later. 2. A pet should be acquired."). Explain the reasoning for your most important point.
- **Week 3: The Age of Exploration.**
  - **Activity:** Choose an explorer (like Columbus, Magellan, Zheng He, or Ibn Battuta). Map their route on a world map. Calculate the approximate distance they traveled. Write a logbook entry from the perspective of a sailor on their ship, describing the hopes and fears of the journey.
- **Week 4: The Columbian Exchange & Great Empires.**
  - **Activity:** Create a T-chart titled "The Columbian Exchange." On one side, list items that went from the Americas to the "Old World" (Europe, Asia, Africa). On the other, list items that went from the Old World to the Americas. Draw the items. Discuss which item you think had the biggest impact on history.
  - **Activity:** Briefly study the great "Gunpowder Empires" (Ottoman, Safavid, Mughal). Look at pictures of the Taj Mahal (Mughal) and the Blue Mosque (Ottoman). Compare and contrast their architectural styles.
- **Weeks 5-6: Unit 4 Culminating Project.**
  - **Project: "Create Your Own Board Game."**
    1. Design a board game called "Renaissance" or "Exploration."
    2. The goal could be to become a famous Renaissance artist, a successful explorer, or a powerful ruler.
    3. The game board could be a map of the world or a city like Florence.
    4. Game cards should include events, challenges, and opportunities based on real history (e.g., "The Plague strikes! Lose a turn," "You gain the patronage of the Medici family. Collect 50 florins," "Your compass breaks. Sail in the wrong direction.").
  - **Assessment:** Playability of the game, integration of historical concepts, and creativity. Add photos and the rules of your game to the Historian's Portfolio.

## Unit 5: Age of Revolutions (6 Weeks)

**Core Questions:** How can a new idea change the way a country is run? How did machines change the way people live and work? What is the difference between a nation and an empire?

**Materials Needed:** Ingredients for a simple assembly line (e.g., making sandwiches or decorating cookies), documentary films on revolutions, political cartoons, primary source documents (online).

### Lesson Activities:

- **Week 1: The Scientific Revolution & The Enlightenment.**
  - **Activity:** Conduct a simple experiment using the scientific method (e.g., test which brand of paper towel is most absorbent). Write up your hypothesis, method, results, and conclusion. This is the same process used by figures like Galileo and Newton.
  - **Activity:** Read simplified excerpts from Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke (natural rights) and Montesquieu (separation of powers). Then, write a "Declaration of Independence" for students, using their ideas.
- **Week 2-3: Political Revolutions (American & French).**
  - **Activity:** Compare the "Declaration of Independence" with the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen." Create a Venn diagram showing their similarities and differences.
  - **Activity:** Analyze two political cartoons from the era (one from the American Revolution, one from the French). Deconstruct the symbolism and explain the artist's point of view in your logbook.
- **Week 4: The Industrial Revolution.**
  - **Activity:** Simulate a factory assembly line. Time how long it takes to make one sandwich (or decorate one cookie) by yourself. Then, set up an assembly line with a parent (one person gets the bread, one adds filling, one cuts it). Time how long it takes to make 5 sandwiches. Discuss the pros and cons of this new way of working.
- **Weeks 5-6: Unit 5 Culminating Project.**
  - **Project: "The Revolutionary Gazette."**
    1. Create a 4-page newspaper from a specific year between 1776 and 1880.
    2. Your newspaper must include:
      - A headline story about a major event (e.g., "Storming the Bastille!").
      - An opinion piece/editorial arguing for a cause (e.g., "Why We Need a Steam Engine in Our Town").
      - An advertisement for a new invention.
      - A political cartoon you draw.
    3. The articles should reflect the language and perspectives of the time.
  - **Assessment:** Historical accuracy, variety of content, and creative adoption of the newspaper format. Add the newspaper to the Historian's Portfolio.

---

## Unit 6: The Modern World & Your Place in History (6 Weeks)

**Core Questions:** How did global conflicts in the 20th century reshape the world map? How is the world more connected today than ever before? What is my role in history?

**Materials Needed:** Access to news websites, family photos/interviews, poster board or digital presentation software, a small box for a time capsule.

## Lesson Activities:

- **Week 1: World War I & World War II.**

- **Activity:** Study trench warfare through photos and diagrams. Write a fictional diary entry from the perspective of a soldier in a trench.
- **Activity:** Explore WWII propaganda posters from different countries. Design your own poster for a cause you believe in (e.g., "Read More Books!" or "Protect the Environment!"), using similar persuasive techniques.

- **Week 2: The Cold War.**

- **Activity:** Learn about the Space Race between the USA and the USSR. Create a timeline showing the key milestones for each side.
- **Activity:** Watch a video about the fall of the Berlin Wall. Interview an older family member or friend who remembers the Cold War. Ask them what they thought and felt during that time. Write a summary of your interview.

- **Week 3: Decolonization & Globalization.**

- **Activity:** Choose a country that gained independence after WWII (e.g., India, Ghana, Kenya). Research its path to independence and create a simple "Fact File" about it.
- **Activity:** "The World in Your Room." Go around your room and find 10 items. Research where each item was made. Plot these locations on a world map to visualize globalization.

- **Weeks 4-6: Unit 6 & Year-End Culminating Project.**

- **Project: "My Place in History Time Capsule."**
  1. The final project connects the past to the present and future. Decorate a shoebox to be a time capsule.
  2. **Item 1 - The Past:** Choose the one project from your Historian's Portfolio that you feel is most important or that you learned the most from. Write a paragraph explaining why you chose it and what it taught you about history.
  3. **Item 2 - The Present:** Write a letter to a student 50 years in the future. Describe your daily life, the technology you use, the biggest news stories of the year, and your hopes for the future. Include a primary source from today (like a newspaper clipping or a photo).
  4. **Item 3 - The Future:** Based on everything you've learned, make three predictions about what the world will be like in 20 years. Explain your reasoning for each prediction, using historical trends as evidence.
  5. **Presentation:** Present your complete Historian's Portfolio and your Time Capsule, reflecting on what you've learned over the year.
- **Assessment:** Thoughtfulness of reflection, connection between past, present, and future, and the overall quality of the year-long Historian's Portfolio.