

History Unit: The Rise and Fall of Empires - A 9-Week Journey for H

Curriculum Focus: Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework, Class 6 History (Ancient Rome and the Middle Ages). This unit focuses on experiencing the shift in human consciousness from the external, law-driven world of Rome to the internal, faith-driven world of the Middle Ages through storytelling, hands-on projects, and creative expression.

Week 1: The Foundations of Rome - Legend and Reality

Materials Needed: Large sketchbook or high-quality paper for a "Main Lesson Book" (MLB), drawing pencils, coloured pencils, modelling clay, access to library books or online resources about the founding of Rome (Romulus and Remus, Aeneas).

- **Learning Objective:** H will be able to distinguish between myth and historical evidence by retelling the founding myths of Rome and identifying key geographical features that contributed to its rise.
- **Introduction (The Hook):** Begin by telling the story of Romulus and Remus, the twin boys raised by a she-wolf. Use vivid language. Ask, "Does this sound like a true story? Why do you think people told it? What does it tell us about the values of the people who would become Romans?"
- **Main Activity - Map and Myth:**
 1. Read or research the story of Aeneas fleeing Troy as another founding myth.
 2. In the Main Lesson Book, H will create a two-page spread. On the left page, draw a scene from the Romulus and Remus myth. On the right page, draw a simple map of Italy, marking the location of Rome, the Tiber River, and the "Seven Hills."
 3. Below the map, H will write a few sentences explaining why this location was a good place to build a city (e.g., defense from hills, water from the river, access to trade).
- **Creative Application - Clay City:** Using modelling clay, H will sculpt the seven hills of Rome and the path of the Tiber River. This tactile activity helps solidify the geographical understanding.
- **Weekly Reflection:** Discuss: What kind of people would create a city based on a story of strong, warring brothers? What can we guess about the Romans from their myths?

Week 2: The Roman Machine - Engineering and Innovation

Materials Needed: MLB, drawing supplies, recycled materials (cardboard tubes, plastic bottles, tape, glue), a shallow tray or bin, water, gravel/sand, small toy figures.

- **Learning Objective:** H will be able to explain the function and societal impact of at least two Roman engineering marvels by building a functional model of an aqueduct.
- **Introduction (The Hook):** Show pictures of Roman roads still in use today and the Pont du Gard aqueduct. Ask, "How is it possible that something built 2,000 years ago still exists and works? What kind of thinking and skills would that take?"
- **Main Activity - Build an Aqueduct:**
 1. Research how Roman aqueducts worked. Focus on the concept of using a steady, gentle slope and arches for support.
 2. Using recycled materials, H will design and build a model aqueduct in the shallow tray.

The goal is to transport water from one side of the tray to a small "city" (a cup or container) on the other.

3. Test the aqueduct. Does it leak? Is the slope correct? H will problem-solve and modify the design until it works. This is engineering in action!

- **MLB Entry:** H will create a diagram of their aqueduct in the MLB. They should label the parts and write a paragraph explaining why aqueducts were so important for the growth of Roman cities (e.g., fresh water for baths, sanitation, fountains). H can also draw and write about another Roman innovation, like their famous roads.
- **Weekly Reflection:** Discuss the Roman mindset. How did their focus on practical problem-solving and order shape their empire?

Week 3: All Roads Lead to Rome - Government, Law, and Daily Life

Materials Needed: MLB, drawing supplies, an old white sheet or large piece of fabric for a toga, cardboard for a "wax tablet," black paint, a wooden stick/dowel for a stylus, air-dry clay.

- **Learning Objective:** H will be able to describe the structure of Roman society by participating in a role-playing activity and creating artifacts from daily Roman life.
- **Introduction (The Hook):** Introduce the concept of "SPQR" (Senatus Populusque Romanus - The Senate and People of Rome). Explain that this idea of citizens having a voice was revolutionary.
- **Main Activity - A Day as a Roman:**
 1. **Role-play a Senator:** H will dress in a simple toga. Present a "problem" for the "Senate" to solve (e.g., "There is not enough grain to feed the city. Should we raise taxes to buy more from Egypt, or should we conquer new lands?"). H must prepare a short speech arguing for one side and present it.
 2. **Create a Wax Tablet:** Paint a piece of cardboard with a thin layer of black paint. Once dry, use a wooden stylus to scratch a message into it, just as a Roman student would.
 3. **Mint a Coin:** Research a famous Roman emperor (like Augustus or Julius Caesar). Design and sculpt a "Roman coin" out of air-dry clay, featuring the emperor's profile on one side and a symbol of their achievements on the other.
- **MLB Entry:** H will create a page about Roman Government and Society. They can draw a diagram of the social pyramid (Patricians, Plebeians, Slaves) and write about the role-playing experience. The "wax tablet" message can be transcribed or glued in.
- **Weekly Reflection:** How was life different for a rich senator versus a poor baker? Was Roman society fair? Why was law so important to them?

Week 4: The Cracks Appear - The Fall of the Empire

Materials Needed: MLB, drawing supplies, a large sheet of paper, markers, scissors.

- **Learning Objective:** H will be able to identify and explain multiple causes for the decline of the Roman Empire by creating a "Falling Wall" visual diagram.
- **Introduction (The Hook):** Start with a story of the "barbarian" invasions. Frame it not just as an attack, but as the culmination of many problems weakening Rome from the inside. Compare it to a building with a weak foundation.
- **Main Activity - The Falling Wall of Rome:**
 1. Draw a large Roman wall or building on the big sheet of paper.
 2. Research the key reasons for the fall of Rome (e.g., empire too large to govern,

economic problems, corrupt leaders, barbarian invasions, rise of a new religion).

3. For each reason, H will write it on a paper "brick."
 4. Discuss where each brick should go. Is one problem the "foundation"? Do some bricks push others out? H will glue the "bricks" onto the wall in a way that shows it crumbling, demonstrating cause and effect.
- **MLB Entry:** H will create a summary of the "Falling Wall" activity in their MLB. They can use a "mind map" or a cause-and-effect chart to illustrate the complex reasons for the decline.
 - **Weekly Reflection:** Was there one main reason Rome fell, or was it a combination? Could it have been saved? This is a great moment to transition to what came next.

Week 5: A New Light - The Rise of Monastic Life

Materials Needed: MLB, fine-tipped black pen, coloured inks or watercolours, gold paint, parchment-style paper, a stick or feather for a quill (optional).

- **Learning Objective:** H will be able to describe the role of monasteries in preserving knowledge during the "Dark Ages" by creating an illuminated manuscript page.
- **Introduction (The Hook):** After the chaos of Rome's fall, where did learning and order go? Tell the story of a monk in a remote monastery, spending his days in quiet prayer, farming, and copying books by hand. Emphasize the contrast between the loud, crumbling empire and the quiet, focused life of the monastery.
- **Main Activity - Create an Illuminated Manuscript:**
 1. Look at examples of illuminated manuscripts like the Book of Kells online. Notice the intricate borders, the gold leaf, and the beautiful first letter (the "versel").
 2. On the parchment-style paper, H will choose a short poem, a quote, or a personal motto to write out.
 3. H will design and create an illuminated version. They will draw a decorative border and a large, ornate first letter. They will then carefully write the text and embellish the page with coloured inks and gold paint.
- **MLB Entry:** H will mount their finished manuscript page in the MLB. On the opposite page, they will write about the daily life of a monk (a "horarium" or daily schedule) and explain why their work of copying books was so vital for history.
- **Weekly Reflection:** How is this way of life different from a Roman senator's? What values are important here (patience, devotion, knowledge) compared to Roman values (power, order, conquest)?

Week 6: The Age of Castles - Feudalism and the Life of a Knight

Materials Needed: MLB, cardboard boxes, craft rolls, glue, grey paint, modelling clay, materials for a heraldic shield (cardboard, paint, markers).

- **Learning Objective:** H will be able to explain the structure of feudal society and the defensive features of a castle by designing and building a model castle and a personal coat of arms.
- **Introduction (The Hook):** Read a story or poem about knights and castles, like a tale from King Arthur. Discuss the ideals of chivalry. What was a knight's job? Who did they protect and why?
- **Main Activity - Castle Design and Heraldry:**
 1. **Build a Castle:** Research the parts of a medieval castle (keep, bailey, curtain wall,

moat, gatehouse). Using cardboard boxes and other recycled materials, H will design and build a model castle, making sure to include key defensive features.

2. **Design a Coat of Arms:** Learn about the symbolism of heraldry (colours, animals, shapes). H will design a personal coat of arms on a cardboard shield that represents their own family, values, or interests. H must be able to explain the meaning of each symbol they chose.
 - **MLB Entry:** H will draw a cross-section of their castle, labelling all the parts and explaining their defensive purpose. They will also draw their coat of arms and write a description of its symbolism. A diagram of the feudal pyramid (King > Lord > Knight > Peasant) should be included.
 - **Weekly Reflection:** Was the feudal system fair? What would life have been like for a peasant living in the shadow of the castle H built?
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Week 7: The World Beyond Europe - The Golden Age of Islam

Materials Needed: MLB, drawing supplies, compass and ruler, coloured paper/tiles for mosaics, glue, access to online resources or books on Islamic art, science, and the city of Baghdad.

- **Learning Objective:** H will be able to identify key contributions of the Islamic Golden Age to world knowledge by creating a geometric art piece and researching a specific innovation.
 - **Introduction (The Hook):** Explain that while Europe was in the "Dark Ages," another part of the world was experiencing a vibrant period of learning and discovery. Show images of the beautiful architecture, art, and libraries of cities like Baghdad.
 - **Main Activity - Art and Innovation:**
 1. **Geometric Art:** Explore the principles of Islamic geometric patterns, which are based on repeating shapes and symmetry. Using a compass and ruler, H will create their own complex geometric design. This can be a drawing or a paper mosaic.
 2. **Innovation Investigation:** H will choose one area of innovation from the Islamic Golden Age to research (e.g., medicine, astronomy, mathematics/algebra, optics, libraries). They will prepare a short, one-page summary of their findings to add to their MLB.
 - **MLB Entry:** H will feature their geometric art in the MLB. They will also include their research on an innovation, perhaps with a drawing of an astrolabe or a diagram explaining a medical discovery.
 - **Weekly Reflection:** Why was this culture so focused on knowledge and beauty? How did their discoveries eventually influence Europe? This connects back to the preservation of ancient Greek and Roman texts in their libraries.
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Week 8: Journeys and Crossroads - Pilgrimages, Crusades, and Trade

Materials Needed: MLB, a large world map (physical or digital), different coloured strings or markers, spices (cinnamon, cloves, pepper), silk or satin fabric sample.

- **Learning Objective:** H will be able to explain the motivations and consequences of cultural interaction during the Middle Ages by mapping major historical journeys.
 - **Introduction (The Hook):** Use the sensory materials. Have H smell the spices and feel the silk. Ask, "Where did these come from? How did they get to Europe? People were willing to risk their lives to get them. Why?"
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- **Main Activity - Mapping the Medieval World:**

1. On the large world map, H will trace three different types of significant journeys from the period using different coloured strings/markers:
2. **A Religious Journey:** A Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem or a Muslim Hajj to Mecca.
3. **A Military Journey:** The route of one of the Crusades.
4. **A Trade Journey:** A section of the Silk Road from China to Constantinople.
5. For each route, H will create a small "legend" card explaining who was travelling, why they were travelling, and what goods or ideas they were carrying with them.

- **MLB Entry:** H will draw a simplified version of the map in their MLB. They will write a comparative paragraph answering: "What did these three journeys have in common? How were they different? What happened when these different groups of people met?"

- **Weekly Reflection:** Discuss the idea of "perspective." How would a Crusader, a Silk Road merchant, and a pilgrim describe the same city, like Jerusalem, differently?
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Week 9: Creating Your Museum - Final Project

Materials Needed: All projects from the previous weeks (clay city, aqueduct model, coin, manuscript page, castle, shield, geometric art), shoebox or display board, index cards, MLB.

- **Learning Objective:** H will synthesize and present their learning from the entire unit by curating a personal museum exhibit.
- **Introduction (The Hook):** Announce that H has been appointed the lead curator for a new museum exhibit: "From Rome to the Renaissance: A World in Transition." Their job is to tell the story of this period using the artifacts they have created.
- **Main Activity - Curate the Exhibit:**
 1. H will gather all the projects they have made over the past eight weeks.
 2. They will arrange them in chronological order on a table or in a large display box.
 3. For each "artifact," H will write a museum label on an index card. The label should include: a title (e.g., "Model of a Roman Aqueduct"), the date (e.g., "c. 1st Century AD"), and a short description explaining its significance and what it tells us about the people of that time.
 4. The Main Lesson Book will serve as the official "Exhibition Catalogue."
- **Final Presentation:** H will act as a museum tour guide, presenting their exhibit. They should be able to walk you through the story, explaining the transition from Roman engineering and law to the faith and feudalism of the Middle Ages, and the rich cultural exchanges that shaped the world.
- **Unit Reflection:** Have a final, relaxed conversation. What was the most interesting thing you learned? Which activity was your favorite? How are our lives today still influenced by the Romans or the events of the Middle Ages?