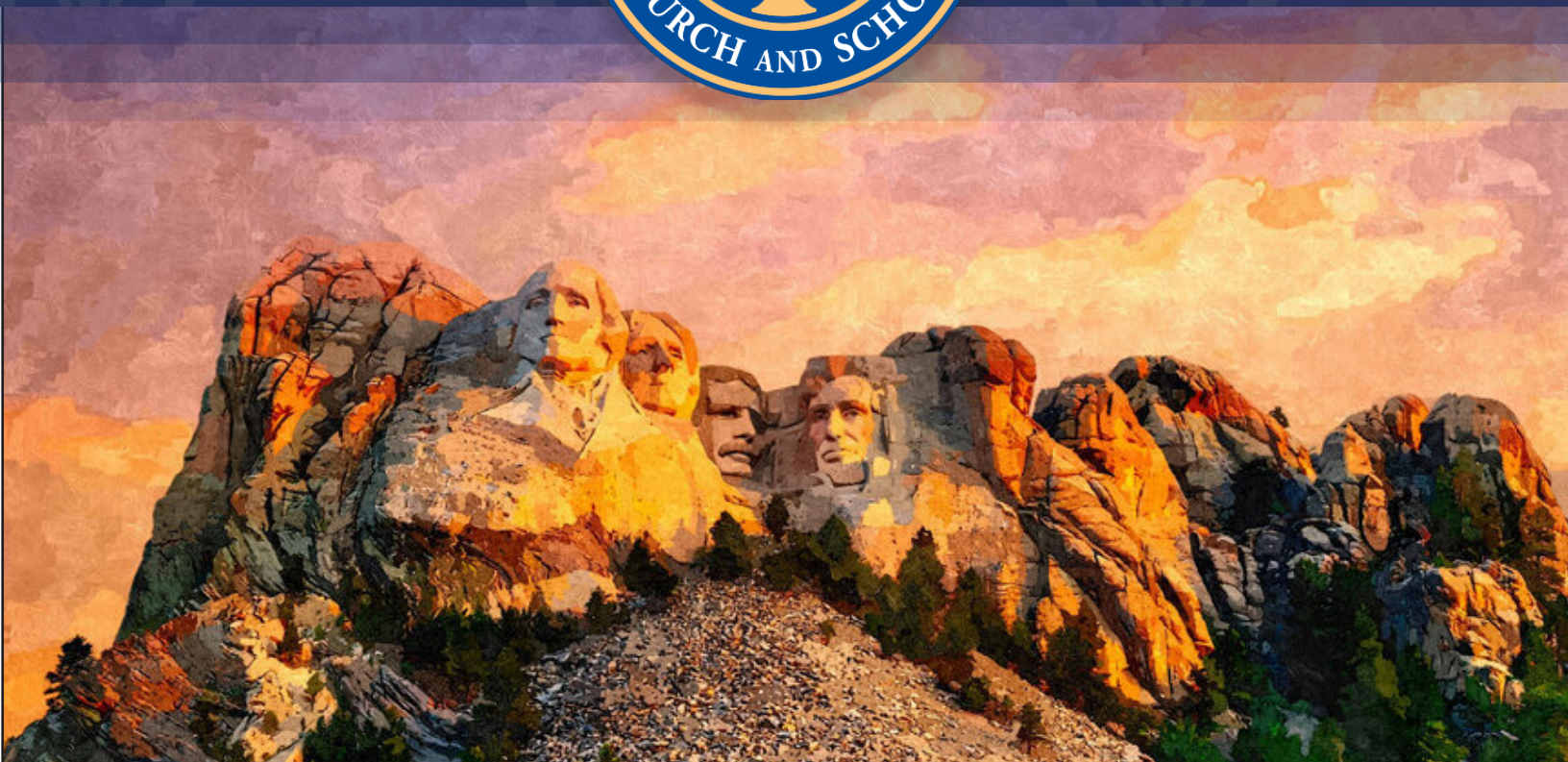
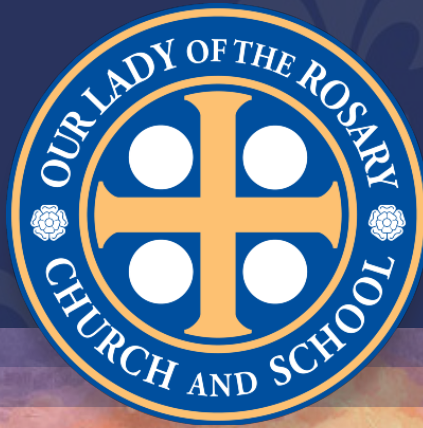


History Curriculum

Grade 08



Course Overview

Course Description



This course traces the birth of the American republic—from the first European encounters with the New World to the aftermath of the Civil War and the Reconstruction of a wounded nation. Students will examine the events, ideas, and individuals that gave shape to the American experiment: explorers and settlers, patriots and rebels, slaves and statesmen, prophets and presidents. With close attention to original sources, sacred truths, and the moral questions of history, the course invites students to see the American story not as a march of progress, but as a pilgrimage marked by conflict, courage, failure, and faith.

Why We Teach It...

We teach American History because to understand our nation, we must confront its soul. The United States was not formed by accident, but by men and women who believed in Providence, liberty, and law—and who often betrayed those beliefs in practice. To know this story rightly is to love what is noble, to grieve what is unjust, and to discern what is needed for renewal. We study the American founding not to glorify it, nor to condemn it, but to see it clearly—so that the next generation might govern in truth, rooted in the wisdom of the past and ordered toward the good.






Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

-  Narrate the major events in American history from the Age of Exploration through Reconstruction with clarity, coherence, and moral discernment.
-  Interpret primary sources—including speeches, letters, legal documents, and founding texts—with attention to historical context, rhetorical form, and philosophical significance.



Course Objectives | Continued...

-  Explain how religious, political, and cultural ideas shaped the founding and development of the United States.
-  Analyze the causes and consequences of major conflicts such as the American Revolution and the Civil War.
-  Discern the moral and theological dimensions of historical events, applying the light of Catholic teaching to questions of justice, authority, freedom, and human dignity.
-  Demonstrate excellence in written and spoken expression through essays, speeches, and Socratic discussions grounded in the classical tradition.
-  Cultivate a love for truth, goodness, and beauty by contemplating the noble, the tragic, and the heroic within the American story.

Source Material

The Story of the 13 Colonies and the Great Republic by H. A. Guerber
The Mayflower Compact (1620)
Columbus' Letters to Ferdinand and Isabella (1493)
Journal Entries from Roanoke, Plymouth, and Jamestown
The Declaration of Independence (1776)
Common Sense by Thomas Paine
British Parliamentary Acts (Sugar Act, Stamp Act, Tea Act, Declaratory Act)
The Articles of Confederation (1781)
The Constitution of the United States (1787)
The Fugitive Slave Act (1850)
Lincoln's Cooper Union Address (1860)
South Carolina Declaration of Secession (1860)
Lincoln's First and Second Inaugural Addresses
The Gettysburg Address (1863)
Speeches of Frederick Douglass
The Reconstruction Amendments (13th, 14th, and 15th)
Documents from the Library of Congress



Key Concepts

Age of Exploration	Natural Rights	The Constitution
Mercantilism	Taxation w/o Representation	Manifest Destiny
Columbian Exchange	Common Sense	Slavery and Sectionalism
Charter Colonies	Declaration of Independence	Moral Law vs. Positive Law
Covenant Community	Divine Providence	States' Rights
Mayflower Compact	Republican Virtue	Secession
Religious Toleration	Founding Documents	Union and Liberty
Colonial Identity	Articles of Confederation	Emancipation
French and Indian War	Federalism	Reconstruction
Proclamation of 1763	Separation of Powers	Ordered Liberty

Central Themes

The Measure of a Ideal Leader

History is a study of souls in power. The ideal leader is not merely effective, but virtuous—formed by truth, governed by reason, and ordered toward the common good. From kings and colonists to generals and presidents, this course asks not only what leaders did, but who they became.

Providence and the Founding

The American story is not a tale of chance, but of Providence. The rise of a new nation was shaped by divine mystery, human freedom, and the tension between fallen nature and eternal law.

Liberty and Its Limits

True freedom is not license, but the ability to choose the good. The American experiment wrestles with the meaning of liberty—where it begins, where it ends, and what it requires of the soul.



Assessments

Summative: 45 %

- Unit Exams
- Formal Essays
- Oral Presentations and Recitations
- Quizzes

Formative: 30 %

- Weekly Reading Responses
- Source Analysis (Documents, Speeches, Maps, Artifacts)
- Key Terms & Dates Quizzes
- Timelines & Graphic Organizers
- Participation in Seminars and Class Debates

Conscientiousness 25 %

- Homework
- Classwork
- Pop Quizzes
- Participation

Scope & Sequence

Unit 1 | The Age of Exploration

1 Week

Week 1

Overview

This unit explores the motivations of European powers in sailing beyond their borders and establishing contact with the Americas. Students will examine how the pursuit of wealth, religious zeal, and national glory launched an age of discovery—and how these encounters with the New World reshaped the course of history.

Central One Idea

Europe sought gold, glory, and God—and found a world both wondrous and wounded.

Key Terms & Figures

Age of Exploration; Christopher Columbus; Ferdinand and Isabella; Conquistadors; Treaty of Tordesillas; Columbian Exchange; Caravel; New World; Missionaries; God, Gold, and Glory

Key Dates

1492 – Columbus sails west from Spain

1493 – Columbus writes his first letter from the New World

1494 – Treaty of Tordesillas divides the New World

Great Question

What kind of leader sets out into the unknown—and why do others follow him?

Sources

The Story of the 13 Colonies and the Great Republic

Journal entries from Roanoke, Jamestown, and Plymouth

The Mayflower Compact



Week 2-4 Overview

This unit examines the early English attempts to establish permanent settlements in North America. Students will study the motivations behind colonization, the hardships faced by early settlers, and the role of religion and self-governance in shaping colonial identity. Special attention is given to Roanoke, Jamestown, and Plymouth as case studies in endurance, failure, and the birth of American civic life.

Central One Idea

The struggle to settle the New World revealed both the weakness of men and the strength of their convictions.

Key Terms & Figures

Roanoke; Jamestown; Plymouth; The Mayflower Compact; John Smith; Pocahontas; Separatists and Puritans; Starving Time; Self-Government; Colonial Hardships

Key Dates

1492 – Columbus sails west from Spain

1493 – Columbus writes his first letter from the New World

1494 – Treaty of Tordesillas divides the New World

Great Question

Can a leader preserve a people through suffering—and what gives him the right to lead?

Sources

The Story of the 13 Colonies and the Great Republic

Journal entries from Roanoke, Jamestown, and Plymouth

The Mayflower Compact



Week 5

Overview

This unit examines the formation of the original thirteen colonies and the distinct identities that arose from their geographic, religious, and economic foundations. Students will consider how regional differences in leadership, labor, and law shaped the cultural character of each colony and laid the groundwork for both cooperation and conflict in the years to come.

Central One Idea

The foundations of the American colonies reveal how leadership, law, and labor shape the soul of a people.

Key Terms

Thirteen Colonies; New England, Middle, and Southern Colonies; Mercantilism; Indentured Servitude; Colonial Assemblies; Religious Freedom; Quakers and Catholics; Plantation; Economy; Town Meetings; Colonial Charter

Key Dates

1492 – Columbus sails west from Spain

1493 – Columbus writes his first letter from the New World

1494 – Treaty of Tordesillas divides the New World

Great Questions

Can a leader unify diverse people without demanding they become the same?

Sources

The Story of the 13 Colonies and the Great Republic

Week 6

Overview

This unit examines the French and Indian War as both a global conflict and a local struggle that reshaped the American colonies. Students will explore how British and French imperial ambitions collided in North America, how Native nations navigated shifting alliances, and how colonial participation in the war gave rise to a new sense of identity and patriotism.

Central One Idea

The French and Indian War awakened in the colonies both loyalty to Britain and a longing to stand apart from it.

Key Terms & Figures

*French and Indian War; George Washington; Fort Duquesne
Albany Plan of Union; Treaty of Paris (1763); The Ohio River Valley; Native Alliances; British Debt; Colonial Militias; Proclamation of 1763*

Key Dates

1754 – Washington’s skirmish at Fort Necessity

1763 – Treaty of Paris ends the war

1763 – Proclamation Line established by King George III

Great Question

Can a leader be loyal to two masters—and what happens when their commands conflict?

Sources

The Story of the 13 Colonies and the Great Republic

The Treaty of Paris (1763)

The Proclamation of 1763



Week 7-9 Overview

This unit examines the growing tensions between the American colonies and the British Crown following the French and Indian War. Students will explore how British policies, taxes, and assertions of authority provoked resistance, and how colonial leaders began to rise—arguing, organizing, and envisioning a nation of self-rule.

Central One Idea

In times of unrest, leaders emerge who must choose between peace without justice—or risk for the sake of liberty.

Key Terms & Figures

Stamp Act; Sugar Act; Declaratory Act; Tea Act; Boston Massacre; Boston Tea Party; Sons of Liberty; Committees of Correspondence; Patrick Henry; Samuel Adams

Key Dates

1765 – Stamp Act passed

1770 – Boston Massacre occurs

1773 – Boston Tea Party protests taxation

Great Question

What gives a leader the courage to resist—and how does he know when the time is right?

Sources

The Story of the 13 Colonies and the Great Republic

Common Sense by Thomas Paine

British Legal Documents: Sugar Act, Stamp Act, Declaratory Act, Tea Act



Week 10-13 Overview

This unit examines the transformation from protest to war as the colonies took up arms against the British Empire. Students will follow the early battles of the American Revolution, the debates within the Second Continental Congress, and the leadership of figures who guided the colonies toward independence—especially through the writing and adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

Central One Idea

The decision to lead a people into revolution demands not only courage—but clarity of purpose and conviction in truth.

Key Terms & Figures

Lexington and Concord; Second Continental Congress; George Washington; Thomas Jefferson; John Adams; Olive Branch Petition; Continental Army; Battle of Bunker Hill; Declaration of Independence; Tyranny

Key Dates

April 1775 – Battles of Lexington and Concord

June 1775 – Washington appointed Commander-in-Chief

July 1776 – Declaration of Independence adopted

Great Question

When must a leader stop asking for peace—and start preparing for war?

Sources

The Story of the 13 Colonies and the Great Republic

Documents from the Library of Congress

The Declaration of Independence

Records from the Second Continental Congress



Week 14-17 Overview

This unit examines the creation of American government following independence. Students will explore the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation, the debates at the Constitutional Convention, and the establishment of a new political order rooted in natural law, checks and balances, and ordered liberty. Emphasis is placed on the vision of leadership embedded in the Constitution and the virtues required to preserve a republic.

Central One Idea

A just government depends not only on wise laws, but on virtuous leaders who wield power with restraint and reverence.

Key Terms & Figures

Articles of Confederation; Shays' Rebellion; Constitutional Convention; James Madison; Federalism; Checks and Balances; Three Branches of Government; The Constitution; The Bill of Rights; The Federalist Papers

Key Dates

1781 – Articles of Confederation ratified

1787 – Constitutional Convention held in Philadelphia

1789 – Constitution goes into effect

Great Question

What kind of leader can govern a free people—without becoming their master?

Sources

The Story of the 13 Colonies and the Great Republic

The Articles of Confederation

The Constitution of the United States



Week 18-19 Overview

This unit examines the growing tensions within the United States over slavery, expansion, and national identity. Students will study the moral and political divisions that deepened during the Antebellum Period, with particular attention to the leaders who either sought compromise or called the nation to conscience. The voices of both defenders and critics of slavery are weighed against natural law and the principles of the American founding.

Central One Idea

A nation cannot remain free when its leaders no longer agree on what freedom means.

Key Terms & Figures

Fugitive Slave Act; Louisiana Purchase; Missouri Compromise; Frederick Douglass; Abraham Lincoln; Cooper Union Address; Compromise of 1850; Underground Railroad; Abolitionism; Moral Law

Key Dates

1803 – Louisiana Purchase

1850 – Fugitive Slave Act passed

1860 – Lincoln delivers Cooper Union Address

Great Question

Can a leader preserve unity without betraying justice?

Sources

The Story of the 13 Colonies and the Great Republic

Fugitive Slave Act of 1850

The Louisiana Purchase

Lincoln's Cooper Union Address

Speeches by Frederick Douglass



Week 20

Overview

This unit examines the election of 1860 and the immediate events that led to the secession of Southern states. Students will explore the political crisis that followed Lincoln's election, the arguments for and against secession, and the failure of leadership to preserve the fragile unity of the republic. This moment marks the final unraveling of compromise and the descent into civil war.

Central One Idea

When leaders no longer share a common vision of justice, a nation will either divide—or be remade by fire.

Key Terms & Figures

Election of 1860; Abraham Lincoln; Stephen Douglas; Secession; South Carolina; Union vs. Confederacy; Jefferson Davis; States' Rights; Fire-Eaters; Constitutional Crisis

Key Dates

November 1860 – Lincoln elected President

December 1860 – South Carolina secedes from the Union

February 1861 – Confederate States of America formed

Great Question

What must a leader do when his nation begins to tear itself apart?

Sources

The Story of the 13 Colonies and the Great Republic

South Carolina Declaration of Secession

Campaign speeches and political writings from the Election of 1860



Week 21-25 Overview

This unit examines the American Civil War as both a military conflict and a moral trial. Students will follow the major battles, key leaders, and turning points of the war, studying how generals, presidents, soldiers, and freedmen shaped the outcome. The unit highlights both battlefield strategy and the deeper questions of human dignity, national identity, and sacrifice.

Central One Idea

In war, true leadership is revealed—not only in victory, but in the willingness to suffer for a cause greater than oneself.

Key Terms & Figures

Union Army; Confederate Army; Ulysses S. Grant; Robert E. Lee; Robert Smalls; Emancipation Proclamation; Gettysburg; Total War; Lincoln's Speeches; Military Correspondence

Key Dates

April 1861 – Attack on Fort Sumter

July 1863 – Battle of Gettysburg

April 1865 – Surrender at Appomattox

Great Question

Can a leader still lead when his country is bleeding?

Sources

The Story of the 13 Colonies and the Great Republic

Lincoln's Inaugural Addresses

The Gettysburg Address

Military letters and journals

Archaeological evidence from battlefields



Week 26-28 Overview

This unit examines the Reconstruction era and the national effort to heal the wounds of civil war. Students will study the political, social, and constitutional challenges of reuniting the states, rebuilding the South, and redefining the rights of newly freed citizens. The failures and successes of Reconstruction are viewed through the lens of leadership—both visionary and flawed.

Central One Idea

After war, a leader must do more than restore power—he must restore peace, dignity, and trust.

Key Terms & Figures

Reconstruction; Andrew Johnson; Radical Republicans; Freedmen’s Bureau; 13th Amendment; 14th Amendment; 15th Amendment; Black Codes; Carpetbaggers; Political Cartoons

Key Dates

1865 – 13th Amendment abolishes slavery

1868 – 14th Amendment guarantees citizenship

1870 – 15th Amendment secures voting rights

Great Question

What kind of leader can rebuild a broken people—and who will they become when he fails?

Sources

The Story of the 13 Colonies and the Great Republic

The Reconstruction Amendments

Political cartoons and commentary from the Reconstruction era



Course Catechism

This section is structured as a series of questions and answers—intended to cultivate wisdom, virtue, and a love of tradition in the soul of the reader. Drawing from classical education, Christian orthodoxy, and the accumulated insights of Western civilization, this catechism aims to form not only the mind but the moral imagination.



Each question is crafted to provoke contemplation, and each answer is more than mere information—it is a small liturgy of truth, designed to be memorized, internalized, and lived. In the tradition of ancient catechisms, this section assumes that learning is not just for passing tests, but for becoming someone.

Section I | Unit I

Q: In what year did Columbus sail from Spain?

A: *In 1492, Columbus sailed west seeking a new route to the Indies and encountered the Americas.*

Q: What three motives drove European exploration?

A: *Gold, glory, and God.*

Q: What was the Columbian Exchange?

A: *The widespread transfer of plants, animals, diseases, and peoples between the Old and New Worlds.*

Q: What treaty divided the New World between Spain and Portugal?

A: *The Treaty of Tordesillas (1494).*

Q: Who commissioned Columbus's first voyage?

A: *Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain.*



Section II | Unit II

Q: What happened to the Roanoke Colony?

A: *It mysteriously disappeared and became known as the “Lost Colony.”*

Q: What was the first permanent English settlement in America?

A: *Jamestown, founded in 1607.*

Q: What was the Mayflower Compact?

A: *A covenant of self-government signed by the Pilgrims in 1620.*

Q: Who led the survival of Jamestown during the “Starving Time”?

A: *Captain John Smith.*

Q: What group settled Plymouth Colony seeking religious freedom?

A: *The Separatist Pilgrims.*

Section III | Unit III

Q: How were the thirteen colonies grouped geographically?

A: *New England, Middle, and Southern colonies.*

Q: What economic theory governed colonial trade?

A: *Mercantilism.*

Q: What form of labor was common in the early colonies?

A: *Indentured servitude.*

Q: What document granted permission for a colony’s founding?

A: *A colonial charter.*

Q: Which law protected religious liberty in Maryland?

A: *The Maryland Toleration Act (1649).*



Section IV | Unit IV

Q: What global conflict reached the American colonies in 1754?

A: *The French and Indian War.*

Q: What territory sparked the war between Britain and France?

A: *The Ohio River Valley.*

Q: Who gained military experience during the French and Indian War?

A: *George Washington.*

Q: What document ended the war in 1763?

A: *The Treaty of Paris.*

Q: What did the Proclamation of 1763 forbid?

A: *Colonial settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains.*

Section V | Unit V

Q: What was the Stamp Act?

A: *A British tax on printed materials in the colonies (1765).*

Q: What group organized resistance to British taxation?

A: *The Sons of Liberty.*

Q: What incident occurred in Boston in 1770?

A: *The Boston Massacre.*

Q: Who authored Common Sense to persuade colonists toward independence?

A: *Thomas Paine.*

Q: What was the Boston Tea Party?

A: *A protest in which colonists dumped British tea into Boston Harbor (1773).*



Section VI | Unit VI

Q: When did the American Revolution begin?

A: *In April 1775 at Lexington and Concord.*

Q: Who led the Continental Army?

A: *George Washington.*

Q: What was the purpose of the Second Continental Congress?

A: *To coordinate colonial war efforts and declare independence.*

Q: Who authored the Declaration of Independence?

A: *Thomas Jefferson.*

Q: What did the Declaration of Independence proclaim?

A: *That all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with unalienable rights.*

Section VII | Unit VII

Q: What was the first constitution of the United States?

A: *The Articles of Confederation.*

Q: Why was the Constitutional Convention held in 1787?

A: *To revise the Articles and establish a stronger federal government.*

Q: Who is called the “Father of the Constitution”?

A: *James Madison.*

Q: What are the three branches of American government?

A: *Legislative, Executive, and Judicial.*

Q: What document guarantees the rights of American citizens?

A: *The Bill of Rights.*



Section VIII | Unit VIII

Q: What issue most divided the North and South in the 19th century?

A: *Slavery.*

Q: What was the Louisiana Purchase?

A: *The 1803 land deal that doubled the size of the United States.*

Q: What law required the return of escaped slaves?

A: *The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.*

Q: Who was Frederick Douglass?

A: *A former slave, orator, and leading abolitionist.*

Q: What address did Lincoln deliver in 1860 to defend the Union?

A: *The Cooper Union Address.*

Section IX | Unit IX

Q: Who was elected president in 1860?

A: *Abraham Lincoln.*

Q: What was South Carolina's response to Lincoln's election?

A: *It seceded from the Union in December 1860.*

Q: What document justified South Carolina's secession?

A: *The South Carolina Declaration of Secession.*

Q: Who became president of the Confederacy?

A: *Jefferson Davis.*

Q: What did the Southern states claim as their right?

A: *States' rights to govern and maintain slavery.*



Section X | Unit X

Q: What event began the Civil War?

A: *The Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861.*

Q: Who commanded the Union Army?

A: *Ulysses S. Grant.*

Q: Who commanded the Confederate Army?

A: *Robert E. Lee.*

Q: What speech did Lincoln give to honor the dead at Gettysburg?

A: *The Gettysburg Address (1863).*

Q: When did the Civil War end?

A: *April 1865, with Lee's surrender at Appomattox.*

Section XI | Unit XI

Q: What was Reconstruction?

A: *The period of rebuilding and reintegrating the Southern states after the Civil War.*

Q: What did the 13th Amendment do?

A: *It abolished slavery in the United States (1865).*

Q: What did the 14th Amendment guarantee?

A: *Citizenship and equal protection under the law (1868).*

Q: What did the 15th Amendment secure?

A: *Voting rights for African American men (1870).*

Q: What organization aided freed slaves during Reconstruction?

A: *The Freedmen's Bureau.*



Section XII | Dates to Live in the Heart

1492 – *Columbus Sails to the New World*
1607 – *Jamestown Founded*
1620 – *Mayflower Compact Signed*
1754 – *French and Indian War Begins*
1770 – *Boston Massacre*
1773 – *Boston Tea Party*
1776 – *Declaration of Independence*
1787 – *Constitutional Convention*
1803 – *Louisiana Purchase*
1812 – *War of 1812*
1850 – *Fugitive Slave Act Enacted*
1860 – *Lincoln Elected President*
1863 – *Battle of Gettysburg*
1865 – *Civil War Ends; 13th Amendment Passed*

Section XIII | Recitations

The Declaration of Independence (1776)

“We hold these truths...”

Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address (1865)

“With malice toward none...”

Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” (1852)

“This Fourth of July is yours, not mine...”

Week 1

Weekly Logos | Precision & Wonder

This week introduces students to the American story as a study in leadership—of explorers, founders, rebels, generals, and reformers. But not all leaders are good men. Students will begin to ask: What makes a leader worthy of loyalty? What gives a man the right to command others? And how do we judge the legacy of those who shaped our country—for better or worse?

What Are We Assessing? | The Facts

- Definition of a leader
- Overview of leadership in early American history
- Names of key figures from Units 1–3 (Columbus, John Smith, etc.)
- Basic chronology from 1492 to 1776

What Are We Assessing? | The Skills

- Identify and describe qualities of an ideal leader
- Trace how leadership decisions shaped major colonial outcomes
- Execute the exercise on criticality and practice its use
- Construct a simple timeline of major leaders and their actions

What Are We Assessing? | The Truths

To Lead Is to Be Remembered...

This truth unifies every element of the lesson:

- That history is shaped by the decisions of the few, for the good or ruin of the many
- That to lead is not just to act, but to bear responsibility before God and man
- That the true test of leadership is not popularity, but justice



Assessments | Suggested Types

- Short Essay: “What makes a man worth following?” (1–2 paragraphs)
- Discussion Seminar: Qualities of good vs. bad leaders in American history
- Timeline Exercise: Label key leaders from Units 1–3 with their actions
- Oral Recitation: Memorize and speak a leadership quote
- Exercise on Criticality: What is a leader?

Pacing | By Week

<i>Day</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Homework</i>
Monday	What is leadership? Why does it matter?	Reflect: “Who is the greatest leader I know — and why?”
Tuesday	Types of leaders: kings, captains, founders	Categorize leaders from history by role
Wednesday	Qualities of a good leader (classical & Christian)	Prepare a short description of a noble leader
Thursday	The leader in American memory: Columbus to Washington	Timeline review: Who led, and when?
Friday	EoC: “What does it mean to lead others?”	None



Teacher Tips

Begin with the soul: *Open the week by asking not what a leader does, but what kind of man he must be. Invite students to see leadership as a moral question before it is a political one.*

Use contrasting examples: *Present two leaders from early history (e.g., Columbus and a tribal chieftain, or John Smith and a Spanish conquistador). Ask: Who led better? Why? Let disagreement sharpen discernment.*

Draw on Scripture and Saints: *Anchor the discussion of leadership in timeless models: Moses, David, St. Louis IX, or Christ the Good Shepherd. Challenge students to compare civic and spiritual authority.*

Connect personal experience: *Have students reflect on leaders they've known—coaches, pastors, parents, teachers—and examine what made those individuals admirable or destructive.*

Return to the logos often: *This first week should establish the pattern of inquiry that will shape the year: we do not merely ask what happened, but who led, why it mattered, and whether it was just.*

End with reverence: *Remind students that to study great leaders is not to flatter the powerful, but to form the soul—to love virtue, hate tyranny, and prepare to lead rightly when the hour comes.*



Appendix

Essays In This Course...

Each of the three major essays in this course will follow the structure and spirit of our Classical Writing Curriculum at Our Lady of the Rosary. Students are expected to write with clarity, order, and persuasive force, employing the Classical Oration form:

- Exordium – The introduction that gains attention and builds ethos
- Narratio – Background/context, statement of facts/narration of events
- Divisio – Outline of major arguments
- Confirmatio – 3 Proofs & Sub-Proofs (body paragraphs)
- Refutatio – Address and refute opposing arguments
- Peroratio – The conclusion: moving the heart, restating the truth

Each essay must be a minimum of 2 full pages, with a cover page.

Prompt I | Expository

Explain how the Age of Exploration and early colonial settlements shaped the foundations of American identity.

Objective: Students will explain the major motivations behind European exploration and the difficulties faced by early English settlements. The essay should describe how exploration, religious conviction, hardship, and leadership contributed to the political and cultural beginnings of what would become the United States. Students should emphasize the role of leaders and institutions in forming early colonial identity.

Prompt II | Expository

Describe how the American Revolution and the U.S. Constitution changed ideas about leadership and government.

Objective: Students will describe the causes and consequences of the American Revolution, the failure of the Articles of Confederation, and the drafting of the Constitution. Emphasis should be placed on how these events and documents redefined the purpose of government and the responsibilities of leaders in a free republic. The essay should clearly explain key changes in political thought, authority, and civic responsibility.

Prompt III | Persuasive

Defend your favorite leader we discussed this year as the ideal type of a leader.

Objective: Students will craft a persuasive essay arguing whether American history is most faithfully understood through the study of its great men—explorers, founders, generals, reformers—or whether such a focus limits the truth of the nation’s story. The essay should engage with major events and figures studied throughout the course and offer a judgment rooted in historical evidence and moral reflection. Students must demonstrate clarity, structure, and rhetorical force while grappling with the moral, cultural, and spiritual legacy of American leadership.

