

**SEVENTH GRADE  
Social Studies - Civics  
Larry Mansch**

**Course Description:**

Civics is the study of the American system of government and how the individual participates and fulfills the role of citizen. 7<sup>th</sup> grade Civics is divided into the following themes, or units of study:

**Unit 1: *Foundations of American Citizenship***

**Unit 2: *The National Government***

**Unit 3: *Political Parties and Interest Groups***

**Unit 4: *State and Local Government***

**Unit 5: *The Individual, the Law, and the Internet***

**Unit 6: *The Economy and the Individual***

**Unit 7: *The Free Enterprise System***

**Course Objective:**

The student will learn the fundamentals of the American governmental, economic, and political systems, and gain an understanding of the individual roles citizens play in those systems. Students will also gain an appreciation of the purposes, principles and values that form the core of the American government and way of life.

**Learning Activities:**

Civics is a project-based course. We utilize our textbook to explore the basic themes of the American system of government, the political process, the economic system, and the various ways citizens fulfill their roles to make these systems work. We utilize primary documents extensively (Mayflower Compact; Declaration of Independence; Constitution; diaries, maps, and photographs, for example). We analyze key Supreme Court decisions that have shaped our society and continue to impact our lives. We discuss the American political process by monitoring political campaigns, issues, debates, public opinions, and election outcomes at local, state, and national levels. We always discuss these issues respectfully and objectively. Because good citizenship includes an ongoing awareness of current affairs, we regularly discuss the news. Each spring we conduct a Mock Trial exercise that allows the students to gain an appreciation of the judicial system by playing the roles of attorney, witness, and/or juror.

**Course Text:**

*Civics Today: Citizenship, Economics, & You* (Glencoe 2005)

**EIGHTH GRADE**  
**Social Studies – American History**  
**Larry Mansch**

**Course Description:**

Recognizing our historic roots helps us understand our world today. From the days of European exploration to the present, American History students will explore and consider the general themes of our developing nation.

These themes, divided into Units, include:

Unit 1: *Different Worlds Meet* (overview)

Unit 2: *Colonial Settlement*

Unit 3: *Creating a Nation*

Unit 4: *The New Republic*

Unit 5: *The Growing Nation*

Unit 6: *Civil War and Reconstruction*

Unit 7: *Reshaping the Nation*

Unit 8: *Reform, Expansion, and War*

Unit 9: *Turbulent Decades*

**Course Objective:**

The struggle for freedom is a work in progress. Historically, cultural, political, social, religious, and economic changes are the themes that have influenced and shaped every American generation, including our own. An appreciation of these themes will ensure that the American story of freedom, liberty, and independence will endure for future generations.

**Learning Activities:**

American History is a project-based course. In addition to our textbook, we utilize primary sources (maps, diaries, speeches, autobiographies, photographs, paintings, etc.) to transform Social Studies from a passive process to an active one. We study important leaders in American history (Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt, MLK Jr.), and artists/writers/philosophers (Winslow Homer, Woody Guthrie), and focus on the qualities that made them great. Occasionally we utilize segments of A&E Biography videos (such as Benjamin Franklin, Mark Twain, Amelia Earhart, etc.); documentaries (The Civil War, The West, The History of US); and feature films (Jeremiah Johnson, Pearl Harbor). Each student researches a National Historic Site and conducts a presentation before the class. In February we celebrate Black History Month with an in-depth study of the civil rights movement and the contributions of African Americans. In the spring 8<sup>th</sup> graders work on their final projects, a collaboration between American History, English, Math, Science, and Theology; last year the theme was American Discoveries of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. We celebrate Montana Heritage Days with an annual overnight trip and visits to important historical places in our state. Past visits have included the Little Bighorn Battlefield; the Grant-Kohrs Ranch; the National Bison Range; and the Conrad Mansion.

**Course Text:**

*The American Journey* (Glencoe McGraw-Hill 2005).  
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