

# Overarching Essential Questions in Social Studies

(examples)

## **History/Historical Analysis and Interpretation**

- Why study history? • What can we learn from the past?
- How am I connected to those in the past? In what ways is the past about me?
- How do we know what *really* happened in the past?
- How can we know if we weren't there?
- Whom should we believe and why?
- Whose "story" is it?
- Is history the story told by the "winners"?
- Is history inevitably biased?
- How do people create their history?
- Does history make the man or does the man make history?
  - Who were the "winners" and who were the "losers" in \_\_\_\_\_? (*for any historical event*)
- Was anyone at fault? (*for examining any historical or literary event*)
- What causes change? What remains the same?
- What can we legitimately infer about the artifacts we find?
- What should we do when the primary sources disagree?
- How does the legacy of earlier groups and individuals influence subsequent generations?
- How do patterns of cause/effect manifest themselves in the chronology of history?
- How has the world changed and how might it change in the future?
- Are those who do not learn from history doomed to repeat it?

## **Civics/Government**

- Who should lead?

- What is power? What forms does it take? Who holds it? How is it gained, used, and justified?
- How are governments created, structured, maintained, and changed?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of government?
- How do the structures and functions of government interrelate?
- What would happen if we had no government?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of citizen's in a democracy?
- What kinds of things to "good" citizens do?
- What is civic participation and how can I be involved?
- What is the balance between rights and responsibilities?
- How do personal and civic responsibilities differ?
- What is the role of the citizen in the community and the nation, and as a member of the world community?
- Can an individual make a difference? How can I make a positive difference?
- How do citizens (both individually and collectively) influence government policy?
- What is power? What forms does it take?
- How do competing interest influence how power is distributed and exercised?
- How is power gained, used, and justified?
- How can abuse of power be avoided?
- When should society control individuals?
- Why do we have rules and laws? • What would happen if we didn't?
- Who should make the rules/laws?
- Is it ever o.k. to break the law?
- What are "inalienable rights"?
- How do governments balance the rights of individuals with the common good?
- Should the majority always rule?
- How can individual rights be protected within the context of majority rule?
- Should \_\_\_\_\_ be restricted/regulated? (e.g., immigration, alcohol/drugs, media, etc.) When? Who decides?
- How do different political systems vary in their toleration and encouragement of change?

## **Economics**

- Why do we have money?
- What is the difference between 'needs' and 'wants'?
- How does something acquire value? What is it worth?
- How much should it cost? Who decides?
- Who should produce goods and services?
- What impact does scarcity have on the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services?
- How does the free market system affect my life? ...our community?  
...our society? ...the world?
- Who should produce goods and services?
- How should government regulate business/economy?
- How should goods and services to be distributed?
- Why do people to work? • Should everyone be expected to work?
- What does it mean to "make a living"?
- What is the 'best' job for you?
- How does technological change influence people's lives? ... economic growth? ... society?
- What social, political and economic opportunities and problems arise from changes in technology?
- What role should the government play in providing economic security to individuals and groups? (example: social security)
- What goods and services should government provide? Who should pay for them? Who should benefit from them? Who should decide?
- How do different economic systems vary in their toleration and encouragement of change?

## **Geography**

- Why is "where" important?
- Why is/was \_\_\_\_\_ located there? (e.g., capitol, factory, battle, etc.)
- What patterns are reflected in the groupings of things?
- What do we mean by "region"?
- Why and how do landforms change? What effects do these changes have?

- What makes places unique and different?
- Is geography destiny?
- How does geography, climate and natural resources affect the way people live and work?
- How does where I live influence how I live?
- Why do people move?
- What story do maps and globes tell?
- How and why do maps and globes change?
- How do maps and globes reflect history, politics, and economics?

## **Culture**

- What does it mean to be “civilized”? What makes a civilization?
- How have civilizations evolved?
- Are modern civilizations more ‘civilized’ than ancient ones?
- Why should we be interested in/study other cultures?
- Who are the “heroes” and what do they reveal about a culture?
- How and why do we celebrate holidays? Who and what do we memorialize?
- What are the significant symbols and icons of civilizations/cultures?  
What function(s) do they serve?
- Do the arts reflect or shape culture?
  - What can we learn about a culture through its art forms?
- What happens when cultures collide?
- Why do people fight? Is conflict inevitable? ...desirable?
- What is worth fighting for? Is there such a thing as a “just” war?
- What is a revolution?
- What causes people to ‘revolt’?
- Are revolutions inevitable?
- How are all religions the same? Different?
- How does belief influence action?
- How and why do beliefs change?

