

## Grade 4

### North American Geography, History, and Peoples

Students learn about North America (Canada, Mexico, and the United States) and its peoples from a geographic perspective, expanding map reading, mapmaking, and geographic reasoning skills. They explore guiding questions such as “*How have the geographic features of North America shaped its history?*” and “*What contributions have the various groups that have settled in North America made to the culture of each region?*” Each topic has a related supporting question. These questions are included as generative examples to help teachers and students develop their own questions suited to grade-level appropriate texts and experiences.

#### Grade 4 History and Social Science Topics North America: geography and map skills

##### Ancient civilizations of North America

##### Early European exploration of North America

##### The expansion of the United States over time and its regions today:

- The Northeast
- The Southeast
- The Midwest
- The Southwest
- The West

##### Literacy in History and Social Science

In studying these topics, students apply grades 3-5 [reading, writing, and speaking and listening skills](#), and learn vocabulary and concepts related to history and social science.

##### Looking Back, Looking Ahead: Connections to History and Social Science in Grades 3, 5, 6, and 7

*Third graders* learned about Massachusetts geography history, civics, and economics. *Fifth graders* will resume a chronological study of North American history from the Revolution through the Civil War and Reconstruction, and then study the 20<sup>th</sup> century movements for civil rights for all people. *Sixth and seventh graders* will study world geography and history.

#### Standards for History and Social Science Practice, Pre-K-12\*

1. Demonstrate civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions.
2. Develop focused questions or problem statements and conduct inquiries.
3. Organize information and data from multiple primary and secondary sources.
4. Analyze the purpose and point of view of each source; distinguish opinion from fact.
5. Evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of each source.
6. Argue or explain conclusions, using valid reasoning and evidence.
7. Determine next steps and take informed action, as appropriate.

\* A statement on civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions adopted by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in 2016 is included in the larger explanation of the practices, at the [beginning of the Standards](#) section.

## Grade 4 Content Standards

Building on knowledge from previous years, students should be able to:

### Topic 1. North America: geography and map skills

Supporting Question: *What are the physical features and nations of North America?*

1. On a physical map of North America, use cardinal directions, map scales, key/legend (symbols for mountains, rivers, deserts, lakes, cities), and title to locate and identify important physical features (e.g., Mississippi and Rio Grande Rivers, Great Lakes, Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, Gulf of Mexico, Hudson's Bay, Appalachian Mountains, Rocky Mountains, Sierra Madre, the Great Basin, Mojave, Sonoran, and Chihuahuan Deserts, the Yucatan Peninsula, the Caribbean Sea).

Clarification Statement: *Note that the grade 4 Earth and Space Science standards of the [Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Science and Technology/Engineering](#) address topics such as landforms, landscapes, erosion, volcanoes, earthquake epicenters, and oceans, and natural events such as blizzards, earthquakes, and floods.*

2. On a political map of North America, locate Canada and its provinces, Mexico and its states, the nations of the Caribbean, and the United States of America and its states; explain the meaning of the terms *continent, country, nation, county, state, province, and city*.
3. Research, analyze, and convey information about Canada **or** Mexico by consulting maps, atlases, encyclopedias, digital information and satellite images, photographs, or news articles; organizing materials, and making an oral or written presentation about topics such as the peoples, population size, languages, forms of government, major cities, environment, natural resources, industries, and national landmarks.

### Topic 2. Ancient civilizations of North America

Supporting Question: *How do archaeologists develop theories about ancient migrations?*

4. Evaluate competing theories about the origins of people in North America (e.g., theories that people migrated across a land bridge that connected present-day Siberia to Alaska or theories that they came by a maritime route) and evidence for dating the existence of early populations in North America to about 15,000 years ago.<sup>25</sup>
5. Using maps of historic Native Peoples' culture regions of North America and photographs, identify archaeological evidence of some of the characteristics of major civilizations of this period (e.g., stone tools, ceramics, mound-building, cliff dwellings).

Clarification statement: *Students should understand that the North American continent has been inhabited for thousands of years, and that large and highly organized ancient societies, such as the Inuit, Hopewell, Adena, Hohokam, Puebloan, Mississippian, Iroquois, Maya, Olmec, and Toltec, flourished long before Europeans arrived in North America.*

6. Explain how archaeologists conduct research (e.g., by participating in excavations, studying artifacts and organic remains, climate and astronomical data, and collaborating

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<sup>25</sup> Students might consult sites such as [National Park Service Bering Land Bridge site](#) for theories about early migration into North America.

with other scholars) to develop theories about migration, settlement patterns, and cultures in prehistoric periods.

7. Give examples of some archaeological sites of Native Peoples in North America that are preserved as national or state monuments, parks, or international heritage sites (e.g., Teotihuacan in Mexico, Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site in Illinois, Chaco Culture National Historic Park in New Mexico) and explain their importance in presenting a comprehensive history of Americans and American life.

### **Topic 3. Early European exploration and conquest**

Supporting Question: *What were the reasons for European voyages across the Atlantic Ocean?*

8. Explain how historians studying the European voyages to the Americas use archaeological evidence, maps, illustrations, and texts produced in Europe at the time, and that all of these materials are called *primary sources*.<sup>26</sup>
9. Explain who the Vikings were and describe evidence of their early encounters with Native Peoples along the North American Atlantic coast.
10. Trace on a map European explorations of North America and the Caribbean Islands in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (e.g., voyages of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, Jacques Cartier, Cristobal Colon [Christopher Columbus], Ferdinand Magellan, Juan Ponce De Leon, Amerigo Vespucci, Hernán Cortés), evaluate the reasons for the voyages, noting that they were part of an effort by European nations to expand their empires, find new routes for trade with Asia, new opportunities for colonization, and new natural resources; make a timeline of their landings and conquests.<sup>27</sup>

Clarification Statement: *Students studied New England explorers in grade 3.*

### **Topic 4. The expansion of the United States over time and its regions today**<sup>28</sup>

Supporting Question: *How has the environment shaped the development of each region?*

11. Describe how the construction of canals, roads, and railways in the 19<sup>th</sup> century helped the United States to expand westward.
12. Give examples of some of the ways the United States acquired new states (beyond the 13 original states) and additional territories between 1791 and 1898, including purchasing land called the Louisiana Territory from France, adding territory in the Southwest as a result of war with Mexico, settling a treaty with Britain to gain land called the Oregon Territory in the Northwest, purchasing Alaska from Russia, annexing Hawaii, and adding territories such as Puerto Rico as a result of a war with Spain.
13. Compare different reasons why men and women who lived in the Eastern part of the United States wanted to move West in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and describe aspects of pioneer life on the frontier (e.g., wagon train journeys on the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails, and

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<sup>26</sup> For example, students examine a variety of [maps from the 1500s](#) and draw conclusions about how maps of the period conveyed what was known about the world as a result of exploration.

<sup>27</sup> For the history of the United States holiday Columbus Day, in places celebrated as Indigenous Peoples' Day, see the Supplement, *Resources for History and Social Science*, Section III.

<sup>28</sup> The Framework follows the National Geographic Society's division of states into regions.

settlements in the western territories).

14. Explain that many different groups of people immigrated to the United States from other places voluntarily and some were brought to the United States against their will (as in the case of African slaves).
15. Show understanding that in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the people of the United States were deeply divided over the question of slavery and its expansion into newly settled parts of the West, which led to the Civil War from 1861 to 1865.

*Clarification Statement: This brief explanation of westward expansion sets the stage for studying regions and is intended to be very introductory. Students will learn more about the causes and consequences of the Civil War in grade 5 and will revisit the topics of sectional differences among states and the concept of Manifest Destiny in United States History I and II.*

### **The Northeast**

16. On a political map of the United States, locate the states in the Northeast (listed alphabetically: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont).
17. Using resources such as print and online atlases, topographical maps, or road maps, construct a map of the Northeast that shows important cities, state capitals, physical features (e.g., waterways and mountains), and that includes a title, scale, compass, and map key.
18. Explain the benefits in the 18<sup>th</sup> century of becoming a state in the United States (as opposed to a British colony) and, as a class, construct a timeline that shows when each of the states in the region was admitted into the United States (Connecticut-1788, Maine, originally part of Massachusetts-1788, as a separate state-1820, Massachusetts-1788, New Hampshire-1788, New Jersey-1787, New York-1788, Pennsylvania-1787, Rhode Island-1790, Vermont-1791).

*Creating this timeline is the beginning of making a cumulative timeline that will eventually include all the states.*

19. Develop questions, conduct research, and analyze how people have adapted to the environment of the Northeast, and how physical features and natural resources affected settlement patterns, the growth of major urban/suburban areas, industries or trade.
20. Describe the diverse cultural nature of the region, including contributions of Native Peoples (e.g., Wampanoag, Iroquois, Abenaki), Africans, Europeans (e.g., the early settlements of the Dutch in New York, French near Canada, Germans in Pennsylvania, the English in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont and New Hampshire, subsequent 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century immigration by groups such as Irish, Italian, Portuguese, and Eastern Europeans) and various other immigrant groups from other regions of the world in the later 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (e.g., Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Mexicans, Salvadorans, Colombians, Guatemalans, Brazilians, Haitians, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Chinese, Indians, and Somalis).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> For information on Native Peoples, see the section on Native Peoples of the Americas in the Resource Supplement to this Framework.

### **The Southeast**

21. On a political map of the United States, locate the states and the national capital city in the Southeast, and the U.S. territories in the Caribbean; add to the timeline the admission dates for states in the Southeast (listed alphabetically: Alabama-1819, Arkansas-1836, Delaware-1787, Florida-1845, Georgia-1788, Kentucky-1792, Louisiana-1812, Maryland-1788, Mississippi-1817, North Carolina-1789, South Carolina-1788, Tennessee-1796, Virginia-1788, West Virginia-1863); territories Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands.
22. Describe the diverse cultural nature of the region, including contributions of Native Peoples (e.g., Powhatan Chiefdom, Seminole, Cherokee, Creek), African Americans, Europeans (e.g., the early Spanish settlements in Florida) and immigrant groups from other regions of the world.
23. Explain how natural disasters, such as hurricanes and floods, have affected the region, and how government and citizens have responded to catastrophic natural events.
24. Describe the role of Washington, D.C. as the national capital, and give examples of its national cultural and civic resources (e.g., the White House, U.S. Capitol Building, Supreme Court, Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, cemeteries and monuments).
25. Using resources such as print and online atlases, or state websites, construct a map of a state in the Southeast region that provides information about physical features (e.g., waterways and mountains) and that includes a title, scale, compass, and map key.

### **The Midwest**

26. On a political map of the United States, locate the states in the Midwest; add to the timeline the admission dates for states in the Midwest (listed alphabetically: Illinois-1818, Indiana-1816, Iowa-1846, Kansas-1861, Michigan-1838, Minnesota-1858, Missouri-1821, Nebraska-1867, North Dakota-1889, Ohio-1803, South Dakota-1889, Wisconsin-1848).
27. Describe the diverse cultural nature of the region, including contributions of Native Peoples (e.g., Sioux, Mandan, Ojibwe/Chippewa), African Americans, Europeans and immigrant groups from other regions of the world.
28. Explain how natural disasters, such as tornadoes and drought, have affected the region, and how government and citizens have responded to catastrophic natural events.
29. Using resources such as print and online atlases, historical sources, or national or state websites, construct a map of a state in the Midwest region that provides information about physical features (e.g., waterways and mountains), natural resources and industries such as agriculture and that includes a title, scale, compass, and map key.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Southwest**

30. On a political map of the United States, locate the states in the Southwest; add to the timeline the admission dates for states in the Southwest (listed alphabetically, Arizona-1912, New Mexico-1912, Oklahoma-1907, and Texas-1845).
31. Explain that Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico were territories that formerly belonged to Mexico; that Texas declared independence from Mexico in 1836, and that Arizona and New Mexico were taken by the United States as a result of the Mexican-American War 1846-1848.

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<sup>30</sup> Students might consult current data from the [United States Census Bureau](https://www.census.gov/).

32. Describe the diverse cultural nature of the region, including contributions of Native Peoples (e.g., Pueblo, Navajo, Apache, Comanche), African Americans, Europeans (e.g., the Spanish in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico), Mexicans, and immigrant groups from other regions of the world settling in the region over time.
33. Explain how natural disasters, such as hurricanes and drought, have affected the region, and how government and citizens have responded to catastrophic natural events.
34. Using resources such as print and online atlases, historical sources, or state websites, construct a map of a state in the Southwest region that provides information about physical features (e.g., waterways and mountains), climate, settlements and movements of Native Peoples (including current reservation lands), European exploration and pioneer settlements of the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries and that includes a title, scale, compass, and map key.

### **The West**

35. On a political map of the United States, locate the states in the West and the U.S. territories in the Pacific Ocean; add to the timeline the admission dates for states in the Southwest (states listed alphabetically, Alaska-1959, California-1850, Colorado-1876, Hawaii-1959, Idaho-1890, Montana-1889, Nevada-1864, Oregon-1859, Utah-1896, Washington-1889, Wyoming-1890); territories: American Samoa, Guam, Midway Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, and Wake Island.
36. Explain that California, Colorado, and Utah were territories that belonged to Mexico and were taken by the United States as a result of the Mexican-American War 1846-1848.
37. Describe the diverse cultural nature of the region, including contributions of Native Peoples (e.g., Paiute, Coast Salish) African Americans, Europeans (e.g. the Spanish in California), the Mexicans, the Chinese, Japanese, and immigrant groups from other regions of the world over time.
38. Explain how disasters, such as drought and forest fires, have affected the region, and how government and citizens have responded to catastrophic events.
39. Using resources such as print and online atlases, or state websites, construct a map of a state in the West region that provides information about physical features (e.g., waterways and mountains), important landmarks, national parks, and historic sites and that includes a title, scale, compass, and map key.