

*Parent's Guide to
History Homework Portfolios
and Assessments*

*Valley Oaks Charter School
2007-2008*

Introduction

In a home school setting, it is naturally assumed that families will pursue the study of history independently. Nevertheless, it seems unreasonable to issue a textbook at the beginning of the year and expect the student to master the required material without supervision. This handbook was written to clarify the school's expectations for independent work, and provide concrete guidance by giving specific examples.

First of all, parents and students should know that the history course work is based on the California State History-Social Science Content Standards. These State-mandated standards, in addition to the History-Social Science Framework, dictate the scope and sequence of the social studies courses at Valley Oaks. You can examine these documents at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/> or request paper copies from your resource teacher.

All too often, history course work is equated with memorization of dates, completion of worksheets, and fill-in-the-blank chapter reviews. This approach might work for a precious few, but certainly not all. Since this is a "parent choice" program, families have the option of designing their own daily assignments or following the suggestions given by the instructor of the weekly classes.

Parents may also opt to create their own alternative forms of testing, providing they discuss their plans and rationale with the course instructor in advance. It is certainly possible to alternate between these two approaches. The only set requirement for the social studies courses is that the State Standards are met.

Course grades in the social studies courses are determined by the evaluation of portfolios and essay tests. The portfolios contain the student's daily work for a given topic or period in history. Tests are the typical five-paragraph essay with which most students are familiar. Parents are expected to grade the portfolios and the essays before submitting same to the course instructor. The course instructor will also grade the student's work. Therefore, each assignment is graded twice: once by a parent and once by the teacher.

In the following pages, you will find samples of student assignments based on the eighth grade California State History-Social Science Content Standards. You may take these examples and adapt them to your high school level course work. Also included in this booklet are essay test writing guidelines, and grading rubrics for parents to use in evaluation their student's work.

Portfolio

Every student is required to create a portfolio. As stated in the introduction to this booklet, the portfolios contain the student's daily work for a given topic or period in history. Completed portfolios will be submitted at the end of each unit for review grading by the course instructor.

The course instructor makes three requirements of students enrolled in the course: (1) The student must address all the assigned State Standards, (2) the student must present evidence of having studied the material, and (3) the student must complete some sort of legitimate assessment that shows mastery of those Standards.

Each week the student will receive an assignment sheet. The assignment sheet will specify the State Standards that are to be covered that week. The document will also have recommended readings from the class text, and may also have suggested sources of supplementary readings, recommended films, and helpful websites. The students will also receive a portfolio reflection sheet every week. This reflection sheet will be discussed later in the evaluation section of this booklet.

The pages in the portfolio section of this booklet will give you examples of specific State Standards and some strategies that you may use in studying and mastering the materials described in these Standards. Remember that you may use whatever methods you deem appropriate in learning the material and compiling the portfolio. With a little creativity, one can break away from the traditional approach of reading the chapter and answering the review questions at the end of the chapter.

For example, using the California Eighth-Grade History-Social Studies Standard 8.10.2, we can see how one can use several different approaches to studying the same material. Standard 8.10.2 reads:

“Trace the boundaries constituting the North and the South, the geographical differences between the two regions, and the differences between agrarians and industrialists.”

The wording implies that there are three separate parts of the Standard:

- (1) “Trace the boundaries constituting the North and the South,”
- (2) “the geographical differences between the two regions,” and

(3) “differences between agrarians and industrialists.”

An easy and logical way to “trace the boundaries” would be to use an outline map like the one on the following page [Portfolio Example 1]. The student should be able to describe those boundaries in prose, as well as demonstrate those boundaries on a map.

The second part of the Standard, “..., the geographical differences between the two regions...” can be represented in several ways. After reading the assigned pages, and any other appropriate supplementary materials, the student could use any number of graphic organizers to record major points. Following the aforementioned outline map are examples how the subject matter of this Standard is addressed as a web chart [Portfolio Example 2], a pictogram [Portfolio Example 3] and a matrix [Portfolio Example 4]. The third and final part of Standard 8.10.2, “...differences between agrarians and industrialists” can be described using a T-chart [Portfolio Example 5].

Portfolio Example 6 shows twelve types of graphic organizers, four of which are used as examples in this section. As you can see by examining Portfolio Examples 2 through 6, there are many methods one can use to study, absorb, and present the information. You are not required to use the graphic organizers shown in Portfolio Example 6. You may use other ways to gather information, such as paraphrased chapter reviews, chapter outlines, film reviews, summaries of museum visits or any other legitimate method that helps you learn the material.

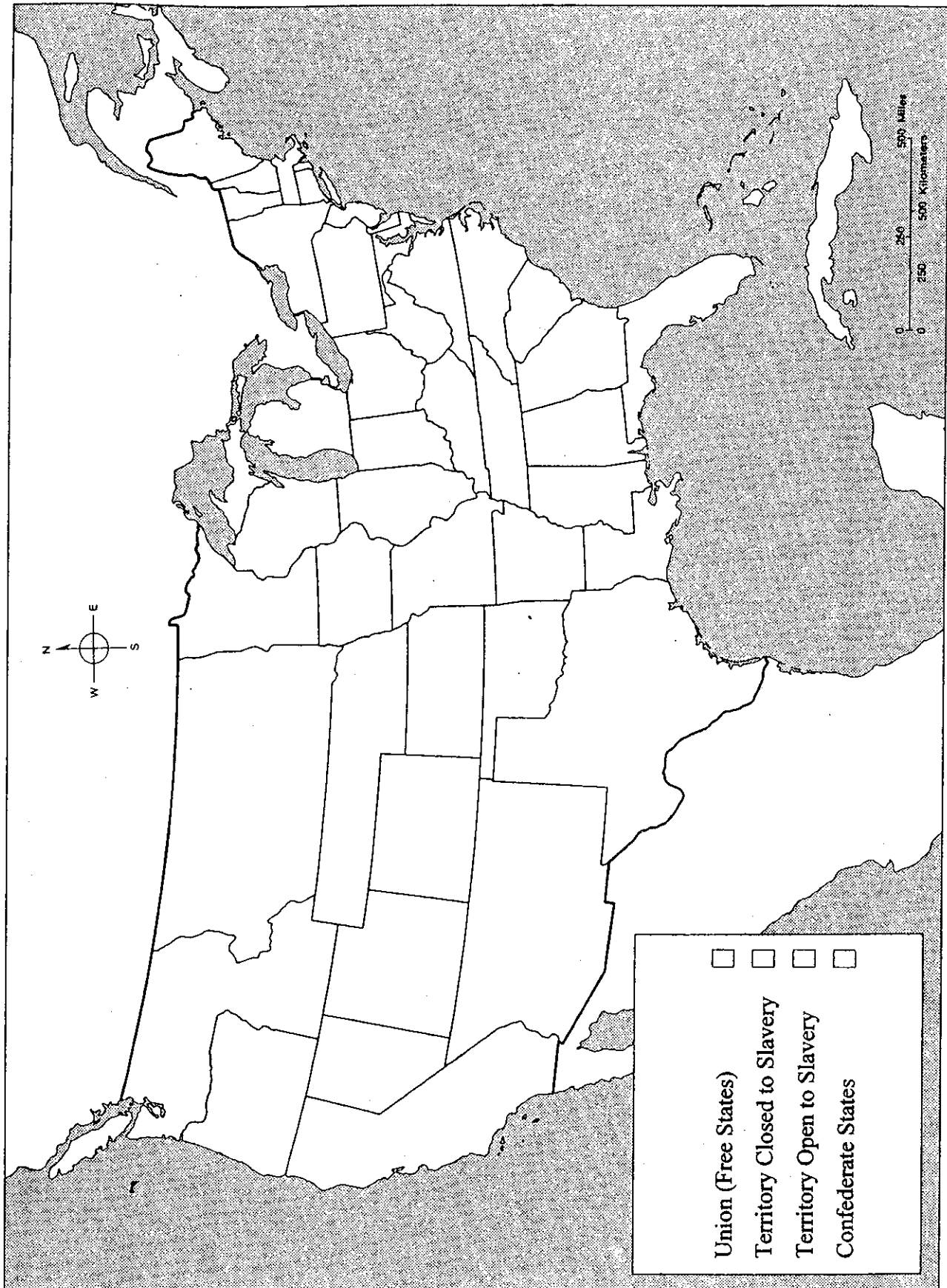
Remember, the purpose of the portfolio is to facilitate the student’s studies and to help the student gain command of the material. You are encouraged to be creative in your approach to the work and liberal in your inclusion of supplementary materials. Mastering the material is the primary goal. To approach the portfolio as busy work is a waste of time, defeats the object of education, and is an insult to the student’s intellect.

Portfolio Example 1

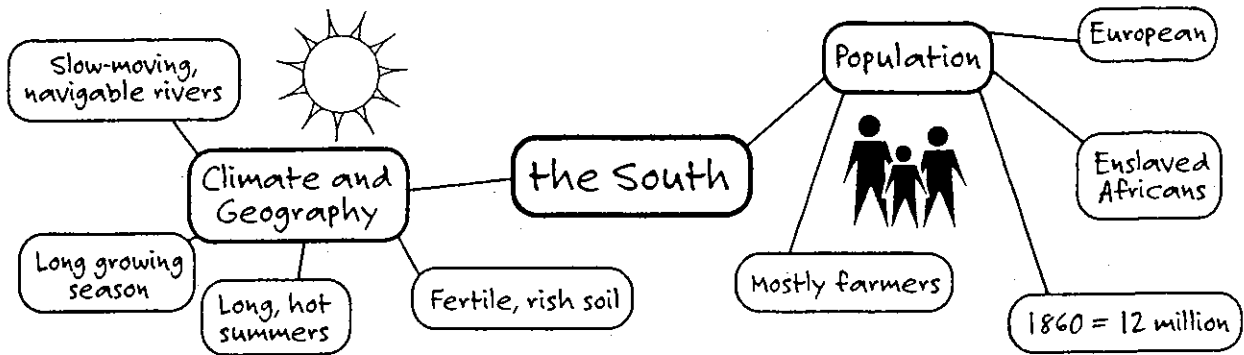
Name _____

Date _____

49 Choosing Sides



Portfolio Example 2

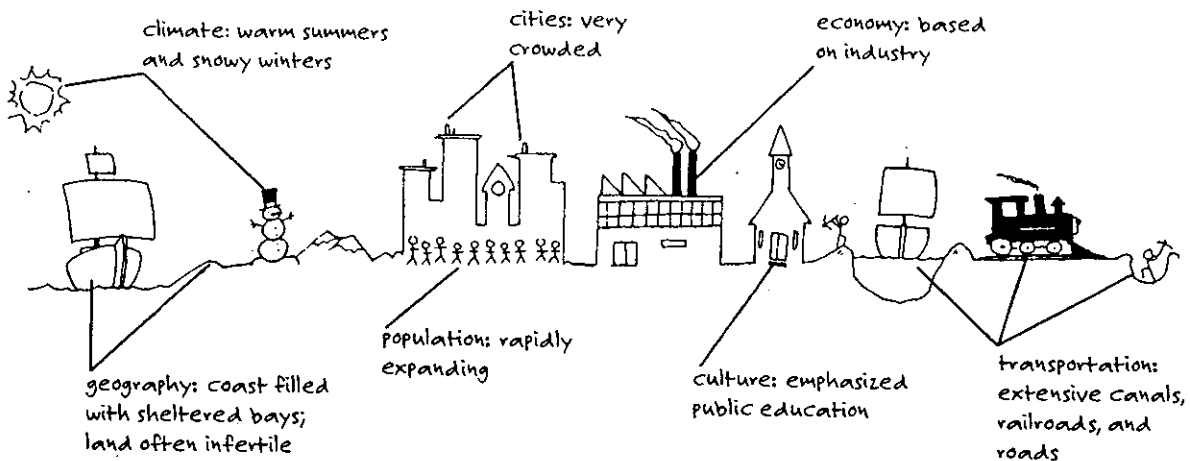


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Portfolio Example 3



Idea for Student Response: On the left side of their notebooks, have students create annotated diagrams that show the differences between the features of the North and the features of South. Students should use words and symbols to describe each region's climate, geography, population, cities, economy, culture, and forms of transportation. A completed diagram for the North might look like this:



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Portfolio Example 4

Comparing the Features of the North and the South

Directions: Complete the chart below for the region for which your group created a spoke diagram. Then, go to the area where your classmates hung the spoke diagrams of the region you did not study. Read the spoke diagrams the other groups made and record your findings on the chart below.

Feature	North	South
Climate and Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm summers, snowy winters • Rocky, hilly, not good for farming • Forests for timber • Bays, inlets on Atlantic coast • Rivers fast, shallow, hard to navigate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm summers, mild winters, much rain • Rich, fertile soil • Many broad, slow-moving, navigable rivers • Vast areas of excellent farmland
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid growth in early 1800's • Population of 31 million by 1860 • Most immigrants settle in North 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of 12 million in 1860 • About 3.5 million enslaved people in 1860 • Most in South were small farmers • Only one fourth of Southerners owned slaves
Cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers of trade and commerce • Hubs of manufacturing • More people moved into cities in early 1800's • Became cultural and educational centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people lived on farms in spread-out communities • Small towns developed along rivers and coasts • Only a few large cities developed as trading centers • Plantations largely self-sufficient, like small towns
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included a variety of industries • Based on manufacturing, not agriculture • Produced textiles, ships, iron, lumber • Industrial Revolution helped many industries • Lots of foreign trade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavily based on agriculture • Cash crops were cotton, tobacco, rice, sugar, and indigo • Agriculture supported by slave labor • Invention of cotton gin made cotton "king"
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New ideas flourished in the North • Organized religion important • Public education grew after 1830 • Cities became increasingly important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large plantation owners controlled much of Southern society • traditional and conservative • Family-centered
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better road developed • Canals provided cheaper transportation • More railroads laid, mostly in the North 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steamships used on rivers • Railroads expanded in the South, though not as greatly as in the North

Portfolio Example 5

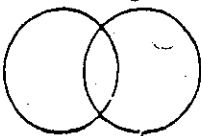

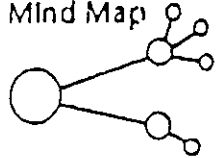
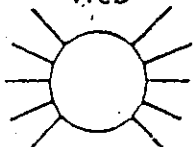
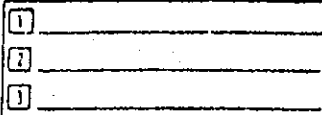
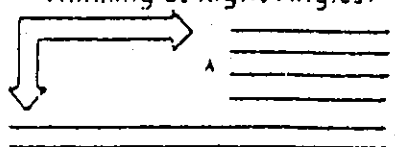
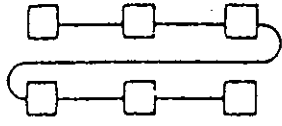

North

South

<p>The North was highly industrialized.</p> <p>New inventions and the availability of raw materials from the North and the South contributed to the North's growing prosperity.</p>	<p>The prosperity of the South depended upon the cotton crop.</p>
<p>Much of the industrial growth of the North was made possible by European immigrants.</p>	<p>Cultivation and harvest of cotton required a large work force that was primarily made up of black slaves.</p>
<p>There was a growing abolition movement in the North.</p>	<p>By 1850, slavery was supported (for economic reasons and racial attitudes) by all classes of Southerners even though 75% of all white Southerners lived on subsistence farms and owned no slaves.</p>
<p>The North had good east-west transportation networks: The Erie Canal and railroads.</p> <p>There was also substantial sea trade on the coast.</p>	<p>The South had few east-west transportation routes. The South had the Mississippi River and sea trade along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts</p>

Portfolio Example 6

Graphic Organizers Examples

<p>Venn Diagram p.112</p>  <p>Thinking Skill: Comparing & Contrasting</p>	<p>Matrix p.102</p>  <p>Thinking Skill: Classifying</p>										
<p>Mind Map p.174</p>  <p>Thinking Skill: Brainstorming</p>	<p>Web p.129</p>  <p>Thinking Skill: Analyzing Attributes</p>										
<p>Questions p.40</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="271 1149 630 1274"> <thead> <tr> <th>FAT?</th> <th>SKINNY?</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Thinking Skill: Hypothesizing</p>	FAT?	SKINNY?	1	1	2	2	3	3	<p>Ranking p.136</p>  <p>Thinking Skill: Prioritizing</p>		
FAT?	SKINNY?										
1	1										
2	2										
3	3										
<p>T-Chart p.48</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="311 1357 582 1491"> <thead> <tr> <th>Looks Like</th> <th>Sounds Like</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Thinking Skill: Visualizing</p>	Looks Like	Sounds Like			<p>P.M.I. p.104</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="742 1357 1093 1481"> <tbody> <tr> <td>P+</td> <td> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>M-</td> <td> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>I?</td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Thinking Skill: Evaluating</p>	P+		M-		I?	
Looks Like	Sounds Like										
P+											
M-											
I?											
<p>Thinking at Right Angles p.117</p>  <p>Thinking Skill: Associating Ideas</p>	<p>Bridging Snapshots p.194</p>  <p>Thinking Skill: Sequencing</p>										
<p>Fish Bone p.217</p>  <p>Thinking Skill: Analyzing</p>	<p>KWL p.32</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="710 1781 1109 1916"> <thead> <tr> <th>What we know</th> <th>What we want to find out</th> <th>What we learn</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Thinking Skill: Predicting/Evaluating</p>	What we know	What we want to find out	What we learn							
What we know	What we want to find out	What we learn									

Portfolio Assessment

The instructor will inform the student and parents when the portfolios are due. Several papers must be completed before the portfolio is submitted to the course instructor for grading. The first paper, the weekly Homework/Portfolio Reflection sheet, will be given to the student along with the weekly assignment. The student and parents are to fill out the weekly Homework/Portfolio Reflection sheet. The weekly reflection acts as a summary of the work completed for that week. Completing this reflection portion of the assignment is one way for parents to check the student's work for accuracy and thoroughness. For your reference, refer to Portfolio Example 7 on the following page which shows a completed weekly reflection sheet.

The portfolios will be graded twice: once by the parents and then again by the course instructor. At least one week before the portfolio is due for grading, the student will receive a blank Portfolio Evaluation. For students who are not able to attend a given class session, printable versions of the Homework/Portfolio Reflection sheet and the Portfolio Evaluation will be available on the course web site. Parents are to fill out the Portfolio Evaluation Sheet and give the portfolio a numerical grade. Portfolio Example 8 on the following pages provides a model of how the portfolio is to be graded and how it should be assembled.

Portfolio Example 7

United States History
 Week 21: Comparing the North and the South

Homework/Portfolio Reflection

Date Completed	State Standard	What we did to show that we understand this standard (paragraph, outline, graphic organizer, etc)
<p>February 5, 2008</p>	<p>8.10.2 Trace the boundaries constituting the North and the South, the geographical differences between the two regions, and the differences between agrarians and industrialists.</p>	<p><i>We completed the outline map that shows the different regions. The maps clearly show the slave and free territories.</i> [Portfolio Example 1]</p> <p><i>I took notes on the chapter readings and listed the main ideas in a web diagram.</i> [Portfolio Example 2]</p> <p><i>I noted the geographical differences between the North and South by creating an annotated diagram, [Portfolio Example 3] and by making a matrix. [Portfolio Example 4]</i></p> <p><i>I charted the difference between the industrial north and the agricultural south by writing a T-Chart. [Portfolio Example 5]</i></p>

Parent Signature _____

Portfolio Example 8

Name _____	Weeks 20-22
United States History Portfolio #9 Table of Contents Due: <u>6 February 2008</u>	

Date	Assignment: [Standard number / Week number / Description]	Standard completely covered	Most of Standard was covered	Major parts of standard not covered	Incomplete. Most parts of Standard not addressed	Not done
		50 points	40 points	30 points	20 points*	0 points
1/ 23	8.10.1 Week 20: State/ Federal Authority					0
1/ 30	8.10.2 Week 21: Comparing North and South	50				
2/2	8.2.3 Week 22: Constitutional issues			35		
2/6	8.2.4 Lincoln's Presidency	50				
		-				
-	Visual Appearance (30 – 50 points)	50				
-	Column Totals:	150		35		

TOTAL POINTS: 185 (250 points possible) <p style="text-align: right;">Parent Signature: x</p>
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[Parents, please check the portfolio for thoroughness.]

Parent Comments:

Portfolio Example 8

How do I assemble my portfolio?

U.S. History – Portfolio #9

Weeks 20-22

Follow the steps below and you will turn in a portfolio that should earn a good grade.

1. On the reverse side of this document, is the first portfolio evaluation sheet for this new semester. Use this sheet as a table of contents for your portfolio. This is your first page.
2. Put the completed “Homework/Portfolio Reflection” for Week 20.
3. Then add all the homework assignments relating to Week 20
4. Put the completed “Homework/Portfolio Reflection” for Week 21.
5. Then add all the homework assignments relating to Week 21.
6. Put the completed “Homework/Portfolio Reflection” for Week 22.
7. Then add all the homework assignments relating to Week 22. Place these documents in order, i.e. put the documents which relate to State Standard 8.2.3, before adding the work for 8.2.4.
8. Write the appropriate number of the State Standard on the upper right corner of each homework assignment.
9. When all the student work has been assembled in the correct order, parents will give a grade to the work completed in each area of the State Standards. Parents will also give a grade for overall visual appearance (neatness and organization). Use the rubric on the other side of this paper to give a numerical grade to the student’s work. Parents will add up the grades and put the total in the box that says, “TOTAL POINTS”.

Note: Per school policy, a student’s semester grade is determined by a combination of grades given by the parents and grades given by the course instructor. Parent portfolio grades will count for 10% of the student’s overall semester grade; teacher portfolio scores count for 40% of the student’s overall semester grade.

Essay Assessment

Major unit tests in this course are essays. Essays provide a more accurate and genuine assessment of student learning than some of the common methods of testing such as multiple choice, fill in the blanks and matching. Generally, the essay is written in response to a short thesis question. It does not matter to the instructor which side the student takes in an argument; it is important that the student state a point of view and defend that point of view using historical evidence. Take for example, the following question: “Did imperialism do more harm than good?” This is a question that, with a few minor modifications, could be asked in either the U.S. or the World History course. In order to answer the question, the student must narrow the focus of discussion by specifying time frames, geographic locations and even specific people. To write a persuasive essay, the student must also know the “pros and cons,” or the differing perspectives of an issue. Clearly this requires a depth of knowledge greater than that necessary for answering a series of multiple choice questions.

Test essays should be in the standard five-paragraph format that you have learned to use in your English courses. Of course, you may write more than five paragraphs, but five is the minimum. The standard format is as follows:

- 1st paragraph: Introduction. State your thesis and (at least) three major points you will discuss to prove that thesis.
- 2nd paragraph: 1st major point and supporting evidence.
- 3rd paragraph: 2nd major point and supporting evidence.
- 4th paragraph: 3rd major point and supporting evidence.
- 5th paragraph: Conclusion. Restate your thesis and briefly summarize your evidence.

Listed below are additional guidelines for writing papers:

Do:

- Use blue or black ink. If possible, use a word processor or typewriter. If using a word processor, use an easily readable, standard sized font. For example, 14 point. New Times Roman works quite well.

- Double-space your text.
- Use correct grammar.
- Use correct spellings.
- Use correct punctuation.
- Use logic (Avoid contradictions or non-sequiturs when defending your thesis.).
- Give clear examples after making a general statement.
- Use correct, factual information to support your thesis.
- Make sure that you understand the vocabulary that you are using.
- Use multiple sources of historical information.
- Cite your sources.

Do Not:

- Do not use slang.
- Do not use contractions.
[The language you use in history papers should be more formal than your everyday speech.]
- Do not copy information verbatim from your notes or texts. [All information should be paraphrased and in the proper context].
- Do not use first-person forms (I, we, my).

Note that the last item listed in the “Do” list was “Cite your sources.” This means that when you present historical evidence, you must tell the source of the information. These citations should appear at the end of the essay. It would take too much space to define the format for your citations. Please refer to *Writing Research Papers*, the supplementary text that you received from your English teacher. In Appendix C, found on page 82, you will find examples of proper citations.

As stated before, parents are expected to grade the portfolios. Likewise, parents are expected to grade all essay tests before the student submits them to the instructor. On the following page is Portfolio Example 9, which the parents will use to grade the essay tests. The essay is scored on seven different criteria. Each criterion is graded on a scale from 1 to 4. As you can see, a perfect paper would earn 28 points. This raw score is multiplied by 4 to get the 112 points possible.

History Essay Grading Rubric

Student Name _____ Title of Paper _____

Criteria

	4	3	2	1	Points
Position Statement	Position is clearly stated and consistently maintained. Clear references to the issue(s) are stated.	Position is clearly stated and consistently maintained. References to the issue(s) at hand are missing.	Position is stated, but is not maintained consistently throughout work.	Statement of position cannot be determined.	_____
Supporting Information	Evidence clearly supports the position; evidence is sufficient.	Evidence clearly supports the position; but there is not enough evidence.	Argument is supported by limited or false evidence.	Evidence is unrelated to argument.	_____
Organization	Structure of work is clearly developed.	Structure developed reasonably well, but lacks clarity.	Some attempt to structure the argument has been made, but the structure is poorly developed.	There is a total lack of structure.	_____
Tone Of Paper	Tone is consistent and enhances persuasiveness.	Tone enhances persuasiveness, but there are inconsistencies.	Tone does not contribute to persuasiveness.	Tone is inappropriate to purpose.	_____
Sentence Structure	Sentence structure is correct.	Sentence structure is generally correct. Some awkward sentences do appear.	Work contains structural weaknesses and grammatical errors.	Work pays little attention to proper sentence structure.	_____
Punctuation & Capitalization	Punctuation and capitalization are correct.	There is one error in punctuation and/or capitalization.	There are two or three errors in punctuation and/or capitalization.	There are four or more errors in punctuation and/or capitalization.	_____
Citations	Evidence is properly cited.	Source of some evidence is not credited.	Most evidence or data is not cited.	There are no citations.	_____
<p><i>p82 writing book where info. obtained</i></p>					TOTAL: _____

Total X 4 = _____
(112 points possible)

As stated in the introduction, the only immutable requirement for the social studies courses is that the State Standards are met. Nevertheless, for the portfolio to function as a genuine aid to learning the following criteria must be met as well. A quality portfolio will contain:

1. A Portfolio Reflection Sheet for every week of work represented in that portfolio.
2. Assignments with work that corresponds to the given Standards for the specified weeks.
3. Said work presented in an organized, logical fashion.
4. Work of a sufficient amount and quality to demonstrate that the student understands the assigned topic(s).
5. Parental assessment of the work.
6. A secure binding of some sort to keep the papers from getting scattered and lost (e.g. staples, three-ring binder, brads. Paper clips are not acceptable.).

The preceding pages were prepared to aid parents in the supervision of their student's history course work. Rest assured that assistance with the course does not end with this booklet. In the Tuesday class sessions, the students will receive a weekly assignment sheet. The assignment sheet will specify the Standards that are to be covered that week. In addition, the assignment sheet will include suggested readings for the week, and occasionally will have suggested films and web sites. There is also a course web site on which you can find weekly assignments, grading sheets, syllabi, useful web links and more course related information.

Should you ever have questions or need assistance with the course, contact the instructor, whose contact information is on the course syllabus, and the school's web site.