

VCE Unit 1 and 2 History – Overview of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority Study Design 2022 - 2026

ANCIENT HISTORY

UNIT 1: ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

In this unit students investigate the emergence of early societies in Ancient Mesopotamia. The lands between the rivers Tigris and the Euphrates have been described as the ‘cradle of civilisation’. Although this view is now contested in ancient history and archaeology, the study of Ancient Mesopotamia provides important insights about the growth of cities and the development of civilisations.

Area of Study 1 – Discovering civilisation

- *What is civilisation?*
- *How did the first cities develop?*
- *How do we know about these civilisations?*

Key Knowledge

- the features of civilisation as understood by historians and archaeologists, the significance of the concept of civilisation, and reasons that contributed to the development of the earliest settled societies in various parts of the world
- the physical environment and how its geography and features contributed to the development of early societies and Mesopotamia, such as the topography, the rivers Tigris and Euphrates and the climate, and its relationship to the growth of urban settlements, and the need to construct canals
- the different types of sources that provide evidence of the features of early societies, such as art, iconography, writing, tools, building complexes and archaeological sites
- methods used by archaeologists to determine the age of objects, as well as relative and absolute dating such as the study of the death pits
- the principal theories about the development of agriculture
- the impact and consequences of the development of agriculture, such as its impact on the distribution and redistribution of resources and the ensuing rise of societies with complex hierarchies and social stratification, early life, farming and domestication of animals, the beginning of royal cities and culture, and specialisation of crafts and trades
- the development of writing, its use in trade and managing revenue, and the importance of written sources to historical inquiry
- the social, political and cultural features of Ancient Mesopotamia as reflected in the material record and The Epic of Gilgamesh, such as the evolution of the city-state, the role of priest-kings, and the assembly
- political institutions and developments during the period, such as the reign of Sargon of Akkad, his rise to power, the establishment and growth of the Akkadian Empire, and his later reign, and the Third Dynasty of Ur
- the representation of Sargon in ancient sources, such as The Epic of the King of Battle and The Chronicle of Kings.

Area of Study 2 – Ancient empires

- *What were the features of the First Babylonian Dynasty and Assyrian Empire?*
- *What is the significance of the Laws of Hammurabi and what they reveal about the way in which Babylonian society was organised?*
- *What were the social, political and cultural continuities and changes between the First Babylonian Dynasty and the Assyrian Empire?*

Key Knowledge

- the rise of the First Babylonian Dynasty, such as the expansion of and change in the empire under Hammurabi and the development of Babylon as a centre of power, how the expression of power changed, and the decline of its rule, culminating in the sacking of Babylon (1595 BCE)
- the social, political and cultural features of Assyria, such as the correspondence between Shamshi-Adad and his sons, the Hammurabi's law codes, and the sacking of Babylon (1595 BCE) by the Hittites
- the relationship between the archaeological site of Mari and its social, political, economic and cultural context, including the cuneiform tablets discovered there
- the rise of the Assyrian Empire, such as political changes during the reigns of Assurnasirpal II and Tiglath-pileser III
- the reigns of the Assyrian kings, such as the conquest of Judah, building at Nineveh and its role as the centre of Assyrian power and how the expression of power changed
- the significant features of the city of Nineveh and the role these features had on everyday life, such as geographical location, architectural features, palaces of Assurnasirpal, rebuilding and architectural expansion under Sennacherib, temples of Nabu and Ishtar, irrigation and aqueducts, the Royal Library of Ashurbanipal, gardens, gates and walls, and the findings from the excavations of these archaeological site
- the causes and consequences of the demise of Assyria, such as civil wars between rival claimants for the throne, attacks by former vassals, and the debates over the sacking and destruction of Nineveh
- changes and developments in education, palace architecture, astronomy, the measurement of time and medicine.

UNIT 2: ANCIENT EGYPT

In this unit students investigate features of the Old Kingdom Egypt and the representation of power in Middle Kingdom Egypt and the Second Intermediate Period. They analyse the conditions that gave rise to a civilisation that endured for approximately three thousand years.

Area of Study 1 – Egypt: The double crown

- *How did civilisation develop in Ancient Egypt?*
- *What were the significant features of Ancient Egypt?*
- *What was the significance of the king in Old Kingdom Egypt?*
- *What do primary sources reveal about power and authority, beliefs, values and attitudes in Ancient Egypt?*

Key Knowledge

- the physical environment and its influence in the development of civilisation in Egypt, such as geographic location, natural features and resources, with special reference to the Nile Delta and its relationship to the growth and patterns of urban settlements, agriculture, trade and commerce and transport
- the regions of Predynastic Egypt, reasons for the expansion of Upper Egypt and the significance of the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt
- the significance of Narmer as the first king of Egypt, such as the Narmer Palette as a source of evidence for understanding ideas about the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt
- the organisation of power in the Old Kingdom Egypt and the first Intermediate Period, such as the absolute and theocratic nature of Egyptian kingship and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, the bureaucracy and the role of nomarchs (provincial governors) and the capital of Memphis
- cultural beliefs and practices and their expression of authority, such as cults of Re and Osiris, Egyptian beliefs concerning the afterlife, features of funerary practices and customs, royal tombs and tombs of the nobility, science, literature, art and architecture
- the significance of excavations and archaeological discoveries in understanding the historical context of Old Kingdom Egypt and the first Intermediate Period, such as architecture, temples, statues and paintings
- the significance of Egyptian architecture and its relationship to the authority of the king, such as the pyramids of Djoser and Meidum, the Pyramid Texts, pyramid fields at Dashur and the complex of Dynasty VI at Giza, cemeteries of Saqqara, Giza and Dahshur
- the causes and consequences of the demise and collapse of centralised power in the Old Kingdom.

Area of Study 2 – Middle Kingdom Egypt: Power and propaganda

- *How did the rulers of the Middle Kingdom use their power?*
- *How did the rulers of the Middle Kingdom present their power as authority?*
- *What challenges did the rulers of the Middle Kingdom face?*
- *To what extent did Ancient Egypt change during the Middle Kingdom?*

Key Knowledge

- political developments in the reign of Mentuhotep II, such as the reunification of Egypt and the centralisation of government, increasing the power of Thebes, declining powers of the nomarchs (provincial governors) in contrast to the increasing influence of royal court officials, centralisation of power, assertion of royal authority through the posts of Governor of Upper Egypt and Governor of Lower Egypt and a program of self-deification that emphasised the divine nature of the ruler
- the importance of cross-cultural trade to the Middle Kingdom Egypt in bringing Egypt into the Mediterranean world, such as the expansion of trade and building
- the subjugation of Nubia by the Middle Kingdom Egypt through military campaigns and building works and fortresses
- the representation of the political and religious power of the king, such as the self-deification program, the introduction of co-regency and the significance of the Sed festival, funerary architecture at Deir-el-Bahri, and artistic works
- the significance of excavations and archaeological discoveries at Deir-el-Bahri in understanding the historical context of Middle Kingdom Egypt
- the representation of royal power and propaganda and everyday life in literary works of Middle Kingdom Egypt, such as The Prophecy of Nefertiti, The Story of Sinuhe, Lay of the Harper, and Instructions of King Amenemhet
- the changes in religious beliefs and practices and the role of Pharaoh during the reigns of Senwosret II, Senwosret III, and Amenemhat III, such as change of capital cities, the rise of cults of Amun and Osiris and representation in architecture, tombs and their grave goods, relief decoration, literature and statues
- the late Middle Kingdom's shift in power from the king to nomarchs that led to the Second Intermediate period
- the emergence of the Hyksos and their transformation into the Fifteenth Dynasty and the representation of their authority, such as their foreign origins, assimilation into Egyptian culture, rise of the Hyksos kings to power in Lower Egypt, development of a professional army, introduction of innovations in weaponry, the horse chariot, methods of crop irrigation, metalworking in bronze, and the impact of the Hyksos on Egyptian isolationism
- the defeat of the Hyksos by the Seventeenth Dynasty (Upper Egypt), such as its presentations in texts such as the Autobiography of Ahmos and Tale of Apepi and Seqenenre, and the reasons for Theban vilification of the Hyksos.

EMPIRES

UNIT 1 and 2: EMPIRES

In Units 1 and 2 Empires, students investigate the foundations and features of empires and the significant global changes they brought to the wider world in the early modern period. Empires at their core were expansionist, dominating trade and political influence in their regional or global contexts. A range of key factors arising from the social, political, economic, cultural, religious, environmental and technological features of Empires played a role in the ambition and quest for power, prestige and influence over rival and competing states.

In developing a course, teachers select two empires to be studied, one empire for Unit 1 and one empire for Unit 2. The empire selected for Area of Study 1, Unit 1 must be selected for Area of Study 2, Unit 1. The empire selected for Area of Study 1, Unit 2 must be selected for Area of Study 2, Unit 2. Select two empires from the following eleven options:

Ottoman Empire (1299–1699)

Mughal Empire (1526–1758)

Venetian Empire (1300–1797)

Russian Empire (1552–1894)

Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)

Dutch Empire (1543–1795)

Portuguese Empire (1415–1822)

British Empire (1583–1788)

Spanish Empire (1492–1713)

French Empire (1605–1774)

Qing Dynasty (1644–1911)

Area of Study 1 – The rise of empires

- *What were the foundations and features of the empire?*
- *What were the significant events and motivating forces that led to the rise of the empire?*
- *How did individuals, ideas and technologies contribute to the rise and expansion of the empire?*
- *How did the empire use and express its wealth and power?*

Key Knowledge

- the physical environment and how it contributed to the development of the empire, such as the geographic location, geo-strategic location of imperial territories, topography and climate, natural resources and environmental changes
- the causes of the rise, expansion and consolidation of the empire, such as rivalry and decline of existing powers, wars, conflicts, economic needs and competition, methods of territorial expansion and military conquest, religious and cultural shifts, voyages of exploration and significant discoveries
- the social structure, demographics and identity of the empire, such as ethnicity, cultural and religious diversity, and the extent of individual and group participation in the empire
- the economic features and conditions that contributed to the expansion of the empire, such as changes in trade routes and hubs, mercantilism, banking and finance
- significant individuals who influenced, contributed to and/or undermined the empire, such as monarchs, military leaders, explorers, religious leaders, philosophers and scientists
- how political power was organised and expressed by the empire, such as significant leaders, oligarchs, monarchs, social hierarchies, officials, cities and centres of power, forms of military and legal power, piracy, and foundational stories and myths
- the ideas that influenced change and/or disrupted traditional beliefs and institutions, such as emerging national identities, imperialism, religion, militarism, absolutism, theocracy,

autocracy, scientific thinking, ideas associated with the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment

- the technological and scientific innovations that enabled expansion of the empire, such as the printing press, and advances in navigation and ship-building, medicine and the military, developments and applications in mathematics, and cross-cultural knowledge
- cultural expressions that reinforced imperial power and expansion, such as religious expression, language, art, architecture, literature, music, philosophy, festivals, textiles, fashion and food.

Area of Study 2 – Encounters, challenge and change

- *How did the empire manage and consolidate its power and influence?*
- *How did daily life change through exchanges between empire and its colonies?*
- *What were the consequences of encounters between empire and indigenous peoples?*
- *To what extent did the empire decline and/or collapse?*
- *What were the significant legacies of the empire?*

Key Knowledge

- the challenges of consolidating and expanding the power of the empire, such as indigenous encounters, revolts, frontier conflict and resistance, external invasion, rivalries with other empires, logistics in maintaining food supplies, diseases and plagues, environmental disasters, and internal rivalries
- the political, legal, social and economic structures and management of new territories, such as colonies, governance, trading hubs, settlements, military and frontier outposts, systems of law and order, and methods of suppressing dissent
- the competing motivations of individuals and groups in establishing and exploiting colonies, such as political leaders, explorers, missionaries and religious groups, traders and merchants
- the economic exchanges between the empire and its new territories and colonies, such as new resources and goods, systems of trade, markets, mercantilism, corruption, slave trade, plantations and systems of agriculture, industrial change, foods and medicines
- differing perspectives and experiences of people in the empire, such the ruling elites, colonisers, religious authorities, urban and rural people, indigenous peoples, slaves, slave owners, women and men, families, military personnel, traders and merchants
- the rise of colonial identities and cultures and their contribution to imperial identity
- the intended and unintended consequences of interactions between colonisers, subjects and Indigenous peoples, such as invasion and conflict, violence and resistance, disease, cultural differences, methods of imperial control, indigenous cultural practices, social hierarchies, resistance by subject and/or indigenous peoples and the consequences of such resistance
- the consequences of colonisation on the environment and society, such as threat to native plants and animals, land degradation, persecuted minorities, the lack of sustainability of traditional ways of life of indigenous peoples and/or of other subject peoples of the empire
- the extent to which the power and authority of the empire changed or remained the same, such as the social, political and economic features, conditions and influences

- the social, political, economic and cultural legacies and heritages of the empire, such as geopolitical spheres of influence, language, artistic influences, foods, travel and tourism, systems of government, cultural exchange, horticulture, fashion and medicine.

MODERN HISTORY

UNIT 1: Change and Conflict

In this unit students investigate the nature of social, political, economic and cultural change in the later part of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Modern History provides students with an opportunity to explore the significant events, ideas, individuals and movements that shaped the social, political, economic and technological conditions and developments that have defined the modern world.

Area of Study 1 – Ideology and conflict

- *How did significant events and ideas contribute to conflict and change?*
- *How did individuals and movements challenge existing political and economic conditions?*
- *What were the consequences of World War One?*
- *How did ideology influence the emergence of new nation states?*
- *To what extent did the events, ideologies, individuals, movements and new nations contribute to the causes of World War Two?*

Key Knowledge

- an overview of the significant events of the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century that caused the end of empires and influenced the emergence of nation states, such as Imperial India, the Meiji Restoration, post-Civil War USA, the unification of Italy, the unification of Germany, Russification and the end of serfdom in Russia, Australian Federation, the fall of the Qing in China, and the causes of World War One
- the consequences of World War One, such as the influence of Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points, demands for self-determination, creation of new nation states, successes and failures of the League of Nations, changes brought by post-World War One peace treaties, the end of the Ottoman Empire, the rise of the Fascists in Italy, and Nazism in Germany
- the significant ideologies that strengthened, challenged and/or weakened empires and/or nation states, such as self-determination, liberal democracy, nationalism, imperialism, socialism and communism, militarism, Marxism-Leninism in the USSR, fascism in Italy, fascism and militarism in Japan, Nazism in Germany, totalitarianism, isolationism and capitalism in the USA, liberal democracy in Britain, Immigration Restriction Policy in Australia, and the emergence of secularism in Turkey
- continuity and changes to political structures and systems of nation states, such as the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich in Germany, the end of the Taisho period in Japan, the French Third Republic, secular reforms of the Republic of Turkey, and the New Deal in the USA
- significant individuals who contributed to political change, such as Queen Victoria, Empress Dowager Cixi, Kaiser Wilhelm II, Emmeline Pankhurst, Woodrow Wilson, Georges Clemenceau, Rosa Luxemburg, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Emperor Hirohito, Josef Stalin, Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler, Winston Churchill and Mahatma Gandhi
- the significant causes of World War Two in 1939, such as the peace treaties, the actions and failure of the League of Nations, the rise of fascist and militarist regimes, the Great Depression, failure of diplomacy and territorial aggression.

Area of Study 2 – Social and cultural change

- *How did society and culture change?*
- *How did cultural life both reflect and challenge the prevailing political, economic and social conditions?*
- *How did ideologies contribute to continuities and changes in society and culture?*
- *What role did individuals, groups and movements play in social and cultural continuity and/or change?*

Key Knowledge

- the significant changes in how society was organised and the ways this influenced how people lived their lives, such as working conditions, workers' rights, the positions and roles of men, women and children, law and order, social control and personal freedoms and/or the influence of other social, political, economic, cultural, religious and technological changes
- continuity and change to the social life and experiences of people, such as race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, political and religious affiliation
- the methods and consequences of inclusion and/or exclusion of certain groups from participating in the society, such as the Nuremberg laws in Germany and the Holocaust, the Great Purge in Stalinist Russia, the Immigration Restriction Act in Australia, the emergence of universal suffrage, racial segregation in the USA, and the Peace Preservation Law in Japan
- the ways in which particular forms of cultural expression such as art, literature, architecture, film and music both influenced and reflected social, economic and political change
- the reasons for government, group and individual attempts to control, influence or resist cultural expression and use propaganda to challenge, influence and/or change political and social agendas
- the perspectives and experiences of those affected by social and cultural change, such as the Jewish community, Sinti and Roma people, indigenous peoples, the Modern Girls of Japan's Taisho Period and African Americans
- the significance of individuals and/or movements that contributed to social and/or political change through cultural expression, such as artists, film makers, photographers, writers and modernist movements (Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, the Bauhaus movement, Surrealism and Art Deco).

UNIT 2: The changing world order

In this unit students investigate the nature and impact of the Cold War and challenges and changes to social, political and economic structures and systems of power in the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Area of Study 1 – Causes, course and consequences of the Cold War

- *What were the causes of the Cold War?*
- *How did Cold War ideology contribute to increased tensions and conflict?*
- *What were the consequences of the Cold War on nations and peoples?*
- *What caused the end of the Cold War?*
- *How did the social, political, economic and cultural conditions influence and change the post-Cold War world?*

Key Knowledge

- the causes of the Cold War, such as ideological differences, Yalta and Potsdam Conferences, disagreements over post-war Germany, crisis over Korea, the Nuclear Arms Race, and Superpower foreign policy
- the economic, political and social characteristics of the competing ideologies of communism in the USSR, and liberal democracy and capitalism in the USA and Europe
- the significant features and consequences of the peace conferences at Yalta and Potsdam, such as the re-drawing of borders, and loss of territory and population experienced by the defeated countries, and the tensions between Truman and Stalin over the treatment of Germany
- the establishment and goals of the UN, such as including initiatives to address areas of international concern about human rights, economic and social issues, and the movement of displaced peoples
- the significant features and tensions of the Cold War, such as the Soviet–American relationship, the development of alliances, Churchill’s Iron Curtain speech, the policy of containment, the Domino Theory, the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the Nuclear arms race, the Berlin Blockade and Airlift, NATO and the Warsaw Pact, Sino-Soviet Treaty, proxy wars, the Red Scare, the space race, propaganda, sport, popular culture, and espionage
- proxy wars and conflicts that reflected the consequences of tensions and divisions of the Cold War, focusing on one or more of the following:
 - the Korean War, such as the causes and consequences of the conflict, reasons for international involvement and the impact on people, countries and the Cold War superpowers
 - the causes and reasons for the division of Germany and Berlin, reasons for the building of the Berlin Wall, the Stasi, the consequences for those who lived in West Germany (FRG) and East Germany (GDR) in 1945–1989, and the causes of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989
 - causes of challenge and dissent among Soviet Satellites, such as the uprisings in Poland and Hungary in 1956 and the Prague Spring in 1968, and Soviet responses to dissent
 - the Vietnam War, such as the causes of the conflict, the Domino Theory, reasons for international involvement, the anti-war movement, outcomes and consequences

- events in Cuba, such as the causes of the Cuban Revolution, the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Cuban missile crisis, and the consequences for Cuba and for superpower relationships
- the civil war in Angola and the roles played by the USSR, Cuba and the USA in the conflict between the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
- long-term and short-term causes of the end of the Cold War, such as detente between the USSR and the USA, mutually-assured destruction, the war in Afghanistan, the Olympic boycotts, Reagan and Star Wars, economic weakness of the USSR and Gorbachev's policies of Perestroika and Glasnost, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, developments in the satellite states (Solidarity in Poland, the Fall of the Berlin Wall and reunification of Germany), the breakup of the USSR and the opening up of China.

Area of Study 2 – Challenge and change

- *What caused the challenges to existing political and/or social structures and conditions?*
- *How did the actions and ideas of popular movements and individuals contribute to continuity and change?*
- *To what extent did change occur?*
- *What were the perspectives and experiences of those who demanded and/or resisted change?*

Key Knowledge

- the causes, significant events and conditions that challenged traditional social, political and/or economic structures of power
- the local and global ideas that influenced continuity and/or change, such as decolonisation, nationalism, theocracy, self-determination, state-building, nation-building, racism, sexism, feminism, egalitarianism and equality
- significant individuals, movements and/or groups who challenged existing structures of social, political and/or economic power and contributed to change
- the methods employed by individuals and/or groups to express their views and demand change, such as diplomacy, nation-building, meetings and marches, cultural expression, civil disobedience, violence and terrorism, armed conflict, the media and social media
- the responses and actions of established social, political and/or economic powers who sought continuity by resisting challenges and changes
- the extent to which change occurred and goals and ideas were successfully achieved and implemented
- the perspectives and experiences of those who challenged and demanded change and those who resisted change
- the short-term and long-term consequences of particular events, ideas and movements.