



Bayou Bridges: A Closer Look

Bayou Bridges is a K-8 Louisiana Social Studies Curriculum for whole-class instruction created in partnership with the non-profit Core Knowledge Foundation®. Bayou Bridges is designed to align with the student expectations of the [2022 K-8 Louisiana Student Standards for Social Studies](#) and was created using criteria similar to the quality indicators of the [instructional materials review rubric](#).

Bayou Bridges units are a coherent set of plans which ensure students have broad and deep knowledge about the world, are able to express reasoned and nuanced arguments, and are prepared to participate in civic life. Each unit topic is organized around a framing question, such as “To what degree were efforts to address the Great Depression and Dust Bowl effective?”, and contains engagingly written texts along with color illustrations, photographs, maps, and primary source documents.

Support is central to the design of Bayou Bridges. Student-friendly unit readers and resources create a consistent structure across all grades and lessons, which helps students and teachers stay on track and work toward a series of unit assessments aligned to end-of-year expectations. Detailed lesson plans provide scaffolds that connect specific objectives to Louisiana state standards. Further, these materials advance [Louisiana Literacy](#) by building explicit content knowledge and disciplinary literacy skills. All units emphasize primary sources and have been reviewed by subject matter experts, typically university professors.



Teachers across the state began piloting Bayou Bridges in the fall of 2023 and have continued to provide feedback to ensure that Louisiana teachers and students have access to a high-quality, affordable curricular option.





What comes with Bayou Bridges?

Each Bayou Bridges unit has a teacher guide, a student reader, and instructional slide decks.

- **Teacher guides** contain resources for teachers to build their own content knowledge, lists of core vocabulary, pacing guides, and calendars, detailed lesson plans with scaffolds that connect specific objectives to Louisiana state standards, formative and summative assessments with scoring rubrics, and student-facing worksheets/activity pages.
- **Student readers** offer engagingly written text, organized around framing questions, along with color illustrations, photographs, maps, primary source documents, vocabulary sidebars, and a glossary.
- Each **instructional slide deck** contains editable visual aids to reinforce the big ideas, chronology, and context of the unit.

Because the lessons include everything a teacher needs to teach, teachers can focus on adjusting the lesson supports so all students meet the lesson and unit assessment goals, instead of spending time searching for or creating resources.

The student readers and teacher guides include many resources:

Student Reader Chapter Topics

West African Kingdoms

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Africa During Europe’s Medieval Period

The term *medieval* originally referred to a period of European history. However, civilizations in Africa were very different from European medieval societies. In Europe, power and trade shrank during this time. In Africa, however, trade routes between Africans and the empires that ruled surrounding regions created cultural connections. The spread of Christianity and Islam brought religious ideas as well as new goods and wealth to African regions.

The empires of Western Africa benefited from their deposits of gold. Gold was valued because of its rarity and beauty as well as its **malleability**. This is the ability to be shaped into many forms, including jewelry. It was also used for making coins and illuminated manuscripts. Gold was traded for

Core Vocabulary

Vocabulary

prosperity, n. a successful condition, especially financially

malleability, n. capable of being shaped into many forms

Chapter 1 The Ghana Empire

Framing Questions

Traders of Past African Empires
 “I hope we’re near the oasis,” Yusef the trader sighed. Sweat dripped into his eyes. The sun stood at its highest point, and the air shimmered with heat. Yusef’s throat was dry with thirst. Like the other traders in this caravan, Yusef was transporting salt mined from the salt regions in the middle of the Sahara.

The Framing Question
 What characterized the African empire of Ghana?



PRIMARY SOURCE: EXCERPT FROM IBN BATTUTA'S TRAVELS IN ASIA AND AFRICA

In 1325, legal scholar Ibn Battuta began travelling through the Muslim world at twenty years old. He started the journey as a pilgrimage to Mecca but traveled for over twenty years. In this excerpt, he describes his visit to Teghaza, a city on the trans-Saharan trade route in the Ghana Empire.

After a journey of five and twenty days, [we] arrived at Teghaza, a village in which there is nothing good, for its houses and mosque are built with stones of salt, and covered with the hides of camels. There is no tree in the place; it has nothing but sand for soil; and in this are mines of salt. For this, they dig in the earth, and find thick tables of it, so laid together as if they had been cut and placed under ground. No one, however, resides in these [houses] except the servants of the merchants, who dig for the salt . . . To them come the people of Sudan from their different districts, and load themselves with the salt, which among them passes for money, just as gold and silver does among other nations; and for this purpose, they cut it into pieces of a certain weight, and then make their purchases with it.

Adapted from Lee, Rev. Samuel. *The Travels of Ibn Batuta*. London: The Oriental Translation Committee, 1829. pp. 231-232.

Primary Sources

Unit Performance Tasks

Note to Teacher: *Imhotep* is pronounced (/im*hoe*tehp/). *Djoser* is pronounced (/joe*sir/).

SUPPORT—The term *mastaba* is taken from the Arabic word for bench, because these buildings resemble benches.

SUPPORT—Goods and treasures left in a burial site are known to archaeologists as grave goods, and they can tell us a lot about the wealth, status, and attitudes of the dead—because ancient Egyptians wanted to be buried with all their best things and the things that mattered most to them.

SUPPORT—Display the image of the Sphinx on body and human head. Note that historians do not agree on the identity of the sphinx. Some say it's Khafre, who likely had the Sphinx built. Others believe it shows Khafre's father, Khufu.

After reading the text, ask the following questions:

LITERAL—What were mastabas?

- » Mastabas were rectangular structures with an underground burial chamber where Egypt's earliest kings and other people of wealth and importance were buried.

INFERENTIAL—Why is Khufu's pyramid considered the "Great Pyramid"?

- » Khufu's pyramid is the Great Pyramid because it was the tallest structure built by humans in the entire world for thousands of years.

Supporting Questions

Performance Task: Westward Expansion Before the Civil War

Teacher Directions: Ask students to write a brief essay that supports the idea that westward expansion was made possible largely because of new inventions and innovations in transportation. Encourage students to use the Student Reader to take notes and organize their thoughts on the table provided.

A sample table, completed with possible notes, is provided below to serve as a reference for teachers, should some prompting or scaffolding be needed to help students get started. Individual students are not expected to provide a comparable finished table. Their goal is to provide three to five specific examples of the influence of transportation innovations to use as the basis of their essays. Students should discuss at least two different types of transportation.

Type of Transportation	Impact of Westward Expansion
Railroad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No limit to where tracks could run • Could run during the winter • Fastest form of travel at the time
Canals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made it possible to travel long distances over water • Connected major waterways
Steamboat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could travel upstream and downstream • Faster than using flatboats • Improved trade along major waterways like the Mississippi River



Unit Overviews

What Students Should Already Know

Students using Bayou Bridges should already be familiar with kindergarten through Grade 3:

- How to use maps
- The importance of studying the past
- The first inhabitants of Louisiana and North America

What Students Need to Learn

- Where the first humans lived
 - Characteristics of nomadic hunter-gatherer societies, including
 - Hunting weapons
 - Use of fire
 - Shelter
 - Use of tools
- Early human migration out of Africa, first to Europe and Asia, then to the Americas and Australia.
- What the Agricultural Revolution was
 - Effects of the Agricultural Revolution, including
 - Barter economy
 - Food surpluses
 - Domestication of plants and animals
 - Specialization
 - Growth of permanent settlements
- Characteristics of civilization, including
 - Culture
 - Specialization
 - Infrastructure
 - Stable food supply
 - Government
 - Technology
 - Relief systems
 - Writing
 - Social structure

2 PREHISTORY AND THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION

Standards-aligned objectives

CHAPTER 1

TOPIC: Early Humans and the Paleolithic World

The Framing Question: Why did early humans migrate out of Africa?

Primary Focus Objectives

- Describe characteristics of nomadic hunter-gatherer societies, including their use of hunting weapons, fire, shelter, and tools. (4.1)
- Describe early human migration out of Africa. (4.10)
- Examine a cave painting to better understand early humans. (4.2, 4.2.a)
- Understand the meanings of the following domain-specific vocabulary: *fossilize*, *Homo sapiens*, *hunter-gatherer*, *millennia*, *scavenge*, *vegetation*, *nomadic*, *communal*, *migration*, *collectively*, and *permanent*.

What Teachers Need to Know

For background information, download the Bayou Bridges Online Resource "About Early Humans and the Paleolithic World".

Insert FPO for future URL.

Materials Needed

Activity Pages

- Individual student copies of Letter to Family (AP 1.1)
- Globe
- Individual student copies of Primary Source Analysis (AP 1.3)
- National Geographic "Prehistory 101: Cave Art" video

Use this link to download the Bayou Bridges Online Resources for this unit, where the specific link to the video may be found:

Insert FPO for future URL.

CHAPTER 1 | TOPIC: EARLY HUMANS AND THE PALEOLITHIC WORLD 13

Sample Pacing Guides

PREHISTORY AND THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION SAMPLE PACING GUIDE

For schools using the Bayou Bridges social studies curriculum
TG-Teacher Guide; SR-Student Reader; AP-Activity Page

Week 1	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Prehistory and the Agricultural Revolution					
"Taking an Argument" (TS, Chapter 1 Additional Activities, AP 1.6)	"Early Humans and the Paleolithic World" Core Lesson (TS & SR, Chapter 1)	"Primary Source: Paleolithic Cave Painting" (TS & SR, Chapter 1)	"The Human Olayaw" (TS, Chapter 1 Additional Activities)	"Natural Field Trip Lesson" (TS, Chapter 1 Additional Activities)	
Week 2					
Prehistory and the Agricultural Revolution					
"Nomads Live" (TS, Chapter 1 Additional Activities)	"Nomads Live" (TS, Chapter 1 Additional Activities)	"Nomads Live" (TS, Chapter 1 Additional Activities)	"Nomads Live" (TS, Chapter 1 Additional Activities)	"Nomads Live" (TS, Chapter 1 Additional Activities)	"Nomads Live" (TS, Chapter 1 Additional Activities)
Week 3					
Prehistory and the Agricultural Revolution					
Chapter 1 Assessment	"The Agricultural Revolution Core Lesson" (TS & SR, Chapter 2)	"Primary Source: Neolithic Art" (TS & SR, Chapter 2)	"How Farming Planted Seeds for the Future" (TS, Chapter 2 Additional Activities, AP 1.8)	"Domestication of Animals" (TS, Chapter 2 Additional Activities, AP 1.8, AP 1.9)	
Week 4					
Prehistory and the Agricultural Revolution					
"Secret Study: Speckled Snake" (TS, Chapter 2 Additional Activities, AP 1.2)	"Secret Study: Cave Painting or Perfect Study: Speckled Snake?" (TS, Chapter 2 Additional Activities, AP 1.2)	"Secret Study: Cave Painting or Perfect Study: Speckled Snake?" (TS, Chapter 2 Additional Activities, AP 1.2)	Chapter 2 Assessment	"The Characteristics of Civilization Core Lesson" (TS & SR, Chapter 3)	
Week 5					
Prehistory and the Agricultural Revolution					
"Domain Vocabulary: Chapter 1-2" (TS, Chapter 3 Additional Activities, AP 3.1)	"The Evolution of Ancient Writing" (TS, Chapter 3 Additional Activities)	Chapter 3 Assessment	Unit 1 Performance Task Assessment	Unit 1 Performance Task Assessment	

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Student Activity Pages

Name _____ Date _____

Activity Page 6.1 Use with Chapter 6

Native American Reaction to Removal

The Indian Removal Act of 1830, proposed by President Andrew Jackson, forced Native Americans living east of the Mississippi River to relocate west of the river. The passage below is from a speech given by Speckled Snake, a Creek. This speech was delivered after he learned about the forced relocation.

Read the speech, and answer the questions that follow.

Brothers! I have listened to many talks from our great father. When he first came over the wide water, he was but a little man... His legs were cramped by sitting long in his big boat, and he begged for a little land to light his fire on. But when the white man had swarmed himself before the Indians' fire and filled himself with their corn, he became very large. With a step he bestrode the mountains, and his feet covered the plains and the valleys. His hand grasped the eastern and western sea, and his head rested on the moon. Then he became our Great Father: He loved his red children, and he said, "Get a little further, lest I tread on thee."

Brothers, I have listened to a great many talks from our great father. But they always begin and end on this—"Get a little further; you are too near to me."

- According to Speckled Snake, how did Native Americans help the white settler?

- What does Speckled Snake mean when he says, "With a step he bestrode the mountains, and his feet covered the plains and the valleys. His hand grasped the eastern and western sea, and his head rested on the moon?"

- What is the message of Speckled Snake's speech?

18 WESTWARD EXPANSION BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

Formative Assessments

Timeline Card Slide Deck

- Show students the Chapter 1 Timeline Image Cards. Read and discuss the captions, making particular note of any dates.
- Invite students to note any comparisons with events previously studied or any examples of change or continuity that they notice. (1.1)
- Review and discuss the Framing Question: "Why did early humans migrate out of Africa?"

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING 10 min

Ask students to:

- Write a short answer to the Framing Question: "Why did early humans migrate out of Africa?"
 - Key points students should cite include: hunter-gatherers migrated in search of food; natural events such as droughts made food scarce; people migrated seeking better conditions.
- Choose one of the Core Vocabulary terms (*fossilize*, *Homo sapiens*, *hunter-gatherer*, *millennia*, *scavenge*, *vegetation*, *nomadic*, *communal*, *migration*, *collectively*, or *permanent*), and write a sentence using the word.

To wrap up the lesson, ask several students to share their responses.

Note: Distribute copies of Letter to Family (AP 1.1) for students to take home.

Additional Activities

Download the Bayou Bridges Online Resources for this unit, where the Additional Activities for this chapter may be found:

Insert FPO for future URL.

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10. Use the image to answer the question.



What does the photo of a Paleolithic cave painting suggest about how early humans lived?
(4.2, 4.2.a, 4.9)

- a) They used animals to survive.
- b) They lived in caves with animals.
- c) They had advanced artistic skills.
- d) They spent all their time in caves.

Chapter Assessments

Parent Resources

Name _____

Activity Page 1.1 Use with Chapter 1

Letter to Family

During the next few weeks, as part of our study of the Bayou Bridges Louisiana Social Studies program, your child will be learning about human life during prehistory and the Agricultural Revolution. They will learn about how scientists believe the first humans lived in Africa and spread from there across the world. During the Agricultural Revolution, humans transitioned from being nomadic hunter-gatherers to farmers. Civilizations developed as human settlements grew larger and formed connections with others.

In this unit, students will begin to develop their historical thinking skills as they learn to examine artifacts and other primary sources and draw conclusions from them. They will learn to use what they've read and examined to make a claim and support it with relevant evidence.

As part of their exploration of early human history, students will also learn a little bit about how early civilizations and cultures developed. This information is presented in a factual, age-appropriate way rather than in a manner that suggests the value or correctness of any particular viewpoint or culture. The goal is to foster understanding and respect for people and communities that may be different from those with which students are familiar.

Sometimes students have questions regarding how the information they are learning relates to themselves and their own experiences. In such instances, we will encourage each student to discuss such topics with you. We recognize that the best place to find answers to those types of questions is with your family and the adults at home.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Prehistory and the Agricultural Revolution TK

TK TK

TK

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Student-friendly Maps

Legend:
 - Natural distribution of cereals
 - Wild grains
 - Evidence of domestication of cereals
 - Fertile Crescent

The Fertile Crescent in Mesopotamia is where some of the first agricultural societies developed, beginning with the domestication of plants and animals.

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How do I access and purchase Bayou Bridges?

Bayou Bridges is a K-8 Louisiana Social Studies Curriculum that is easy to access and use. These materials are an open educational resource ([CCBY Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International](#)) available for free download and free use non-commercially. The units can be used, adapted, shared, and printed without permission, with the understanding that for any reuse or distribution, you must make clear the license terms of this work. Low-cost print copies of these materials are also available for purchase. To implement Bayou Bridges units, teachers will need access to the teacher guides, the student readers, instructional slide decks, and the student materials. All decisions about access are local decisions.

View detailed information on [how to access Bayou Bridges materials](#) and communicate with schools and teachers.

For additional information about Bayou Bridges, access the Louisiana Department of Education's [Bayou Bridges webpage](#) or contact classroomsupporttoolbox@la.gov.