

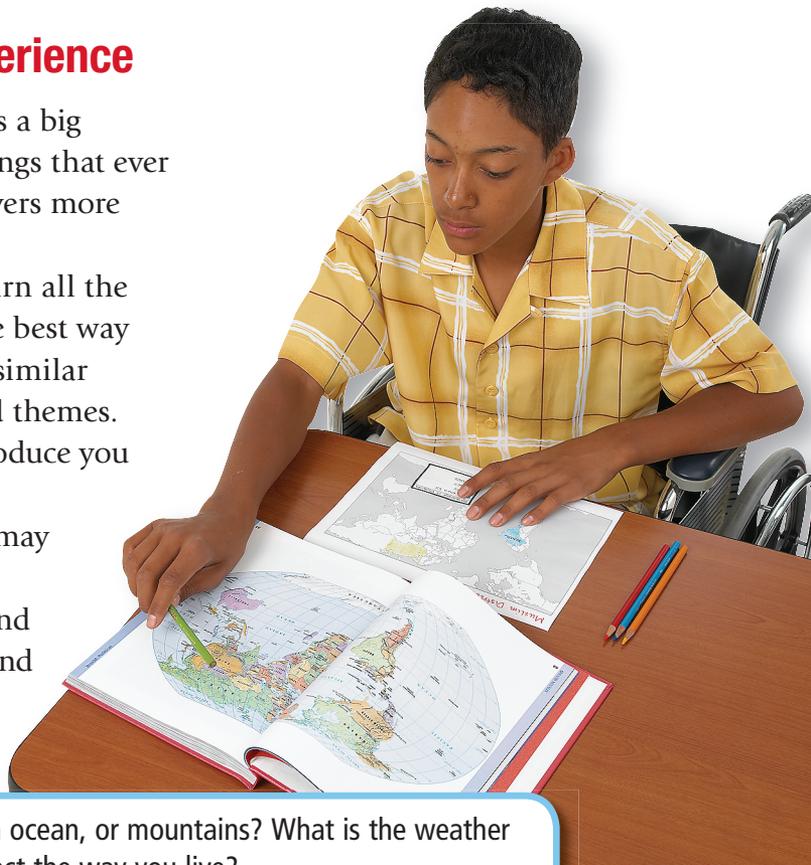
Historical Themes and Big Ideas

Beginning with Your Own Experience

Welcome to the study of world history. It is a big topic—the story of the most important things that ever happened to human beings. This book covers more than 5,000 years of that history.

You may be wondering how you will learn all the facts about such a long period of time. The best way is to sort the information into categories (similar groupings). The broad categories are called themes. This opening section of the book will introduce you to six major themes of history.

Let's begin with your life. Although you may not know it, you have already had many experiences that will help you to understand the themes. Consider the questions below and discuss your answers with your classmates.



Geography Is your town or city near a lake, an ocean, or mountains? What is the weather like? How do the landscape and the weather affect the way you live?

Culture Have you ever met someone from another place—another country, another state, or another city? In what ways did that person act differently from you? In what ways did he or she act like you?

Economics Are you always able to buy all the things you want? How do you decide what to buy when you don't have enough money for everything?

Government In your school, what would happen if every student could come to class at whatever time he or she wanted? Leave class whenever he or she wanted? Talk out loud anytime, even during tests?

Belief Systems When you were growing up, how did you learn what were the right and wrong ways of behaving? What people or groups taught you those things?

Science & Technology Think about a time when you wanted to share important news with a friend or relative who lived in another city or state. How did you share your news with them?

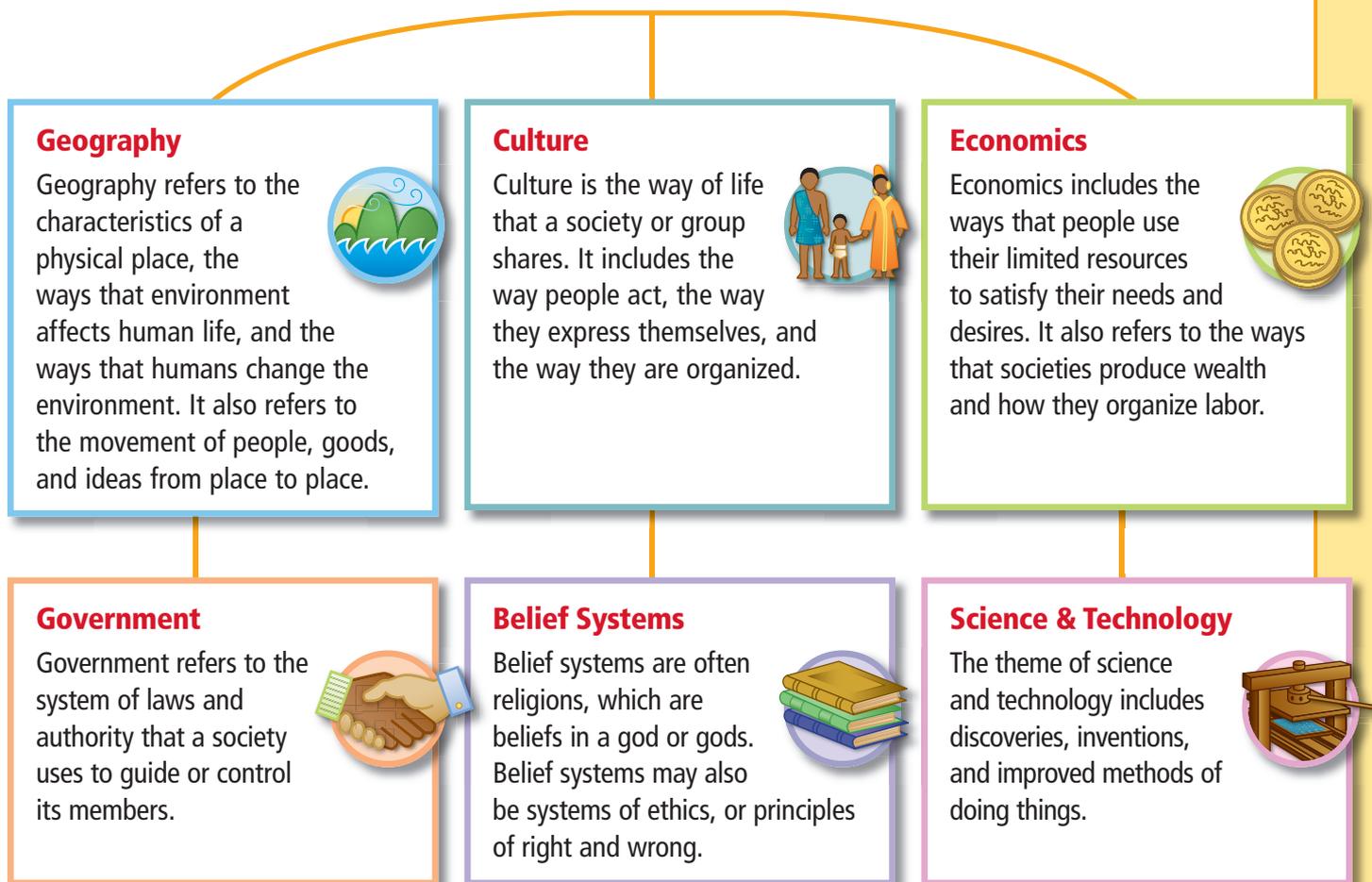


Understanding Historical Themes

As you and your classmates shared your answers, you probably discovered you had many different experiences. But you probably also found that you had things in common too.

For example, some people who live near the ocean like to surf, while others prefer fishing. Still others play beach volleyball. Some people who live directly on the coast build sea walls to protect their homes. Each of those activities is a different response to living by the ocean. Yet, what these people have in common is that the place where they live affects their lives.

Once you understand what a group of facts has in common, you are ready to talk about themes. The six themes of this history program are described below. As you read this book, you will notice that many statements and questions are labeled by one of these themes.





Looking for Big Ideas

As you read this book, you will begin to notice that certain patterns occur over and over in history. Different societies go through similar stages, make similar choices, or organize themselves in similar ways. We call those patterns the **Big Ideas** of history.

For example, many of the ancient societies that you will study began in river valleys because such places were good for farming and transportation. Therefore, one of the Big Ideas in this book is:



As you can see from that example, the Big Idea is a statement of the historical pattern. The first page of every chapter lists a Big Idea, which introduces a pattern that occurs in the chapter. Each Big Idea starts with a theme, as shown above. Think about the Big Idea before you start to read. It will help you know what to focus on as you study.

In this book, you will encounter 12 different Big Ideas, two for each theme:

Big Ideas are Patterns in History		
Geography	Civilizations developed in places that supported agriculture or trade or both.	Migration, trade, warfare, and the action of missionaries spread ideas and beliefs.
Culture	Ways of living change as humans interact with each other.	Many societies rely on family roles and social classes to keep order.
Economics	Societies trade the surplus goods that they produce to obtain goods they lack.	Nomadic peoples often attacked settlements to gain the goods that civilizations produce.
Government	Governments create law codes and political bodies to organize a society.	New ideas and beliefs can challenge a government's authority, leading to change.
Belief Systems	Many religions and belief systems start with the ideas of a teacher or prophet.	Belief systems and religions may shape governments and societies.
Science & Technology	New scientific discoveries change human understanding of the world.	New inventions and techniques change the way humans live their daily lives.



Asking Historical Questions

You can use themes and Big Ideas to ask questions about historic periods and people. As you read this book, ask yourself questions that you will try to answer as you read. This approach will help you understand the importance of various facts and will help you remember them.

Sample Historical Questions

Geography How has the place where people lived been important in influencing how they lived? What effect does landscape and weather have on human life?

Culture Throughout history, what have cultures learned about each other? How have they learned it, and how have they borrowed from other cultures to change themselves?

Economics Have societies always been able to acquire what they needed or wanted? When societies are limited in what they can acquire, how do they choose what to do without?

Government Throughout history, how have societies developed laws to guide the behavior of their members? How did those laws affect the way people lived together?

Belief Systems Throughout history, how have societies developed ideas of right and wrong? How do different belief systems compare?

Science & Technology In different time periods, how have people solved the problem of spreading information over long distances? What other problems of daily life have people solved by using inventions, discoveries, or new techniques?

To help guide your reading, we have included historical questions in every lesson of this book. They appear at the beginning of each section and are labeled **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**. By looking for the answers to these questions as you read, you will focus on the most important information in each lesson.

Be careful when you ask historical questions. Don't assume that life in the past was the same as life today. For example, consider this question: In the past, how did people get rid of a ruler they didn't like?

Because we have frequent elections in the United States, we can vote officials out of office. However, in the past, most societies were ruled by a monarch who controlled the army. It was difficult to replace such powerful rulers.

In conclusion, as you study world history, remember these three tips:

- Consider how facts and details relate to the six themes.
- Look for the patterns explained in the Big Ideas.
- Ask and answer historical questions.