

Welcome parent(s)/guardian(s) of World Studies learners,

We are fresh off our first week together and the students have already accomplished a lot.

First and foremost, I am your teenagers World Studies teacher, Lauren Gustafson (hello!). I am presently in my 13th year of secondary education (all at the AA high school level) and fourth year here at HHS. I run our unique on-site free thrift store for students here at Helena High School known as 'The Bengal Closet.' My husband teaches at Capital high school and our children are 9 and 5! My family and I continually reflect on how grateful we are to be a part of the Helena community and feel so lucky to educate your teenagers.

Now, for housekeeping:

1. The syllabus for this course is posted on my teacher page. Your teens also have access to this as it was posted to the individual classroom TEAMS page, at the beginning of their first week of school. Our classroom page in TEAMS is a great way for you all to see what we 'do' daily. I highly encourage you to hop on occasionally, as it is a great way to know what the 'goings on' of World Studies, on a day-to-day basis. Clearly this does not physically put you in the room so please recognize there is so much more we do together that simply cannot be replicated in a single post. I encourage you to ask your teens about our class as it tackles issues that are complex and unique! I will maintain this daily posting practice to ensure not only you are able to stay apprised on course operations, but also, my students. They are encouraged to get in the habit of reviewing and revisiting daily posts to refresh themselves or access materials if absences occur.
2. I will post to my teacher page, at the start of each unit to alert you of our plan, practices, and agenda. Equally, I post to your teens TEAMS page daily and with additional reminders in the forecast, I do not want to overwhelm you much more than I already have, but feel it is important for you to keep in the 'know' regarding our class. As you will see, a link to the C3 state and national standards are included and also provides the topic and compelling question we will all be working toward answering, together.
 - a. There are 8 inquiries listed in the syllabus, but I will keep you all apprised on our coursework and lesson 'musts' for each inquiry, so you are aware of material your teens are learning. Our district is allowing 6 of the 8 be taught so plenty of notice will go home when a new inquiry is in the beginning stages. If you have any questions, please ask as this course is relatively new but the approaches we are conducting have been utilized over time to encourage critical thinkers, independent learners, and provide skills (with relevant and important content) that your teens will carry with them beyond high school. It is very exciting.
 - i. Take note, our first compelling question is, 'Are empires destined to fail?'
 1. Students will explore this by answering supporting questions, annotating texts, and comparing both Ancient Athens and the

Roman Republic to eventually answer our inquiry that leads Unit I. I highly encourage you to talk to your teens and also hop on to the TEAMS page to see what we are doing daily, if interested.

3. This week students really dove into content related material and uncovered a lot with where we are heading in our Ancient Greece case study. We answered, 'what is an empire,' and recently began to uncover 'how people are led' by practicing and refining our annotation and research skills with reputable sources. Our focus will remain for a time comparing the two largest city-states; Athens and Sparta (*there is a plethora of evidence available and from reputable sources your teens will work with*). We are understanding the foundations of democracy, the concept and evolution of citizenship, as well as the want and needs of the people that eventually will allow students to make comparisons to present day forms that exist. An activity I would like to highlight will be utilizing a fabulous source from PBS that provides diverse topics allowing students to compare the two locations, eventually creating a travel brochure encouraging people to move to either Athens or Sparta, based on evidence.
4. As we move ahead, it is important to note that Ancient Rome is a vast and incredible case-study for many content areas and has both intrigued and influenced a number of societies throughout time. Students will continue to use a variety of sources ranging in planned usage of; *National Geographic, TCI, TCR, PBS, John Green, Britanica, Khan Academy, mini video clips [including TedEd's, Modern Marvels, and musician Jeffrey Lewis], TIME, as well as well as power points, art work from Ancient Rome, discussions, debates, and even a short clip from the epic, BEN HUR, to highlight chariot racing!* We will start with the foundations of Rome (Romulus and Remus), then explore the rise of the Republic (Patriations and Plebians to political structure), all things emperors (the good and the bad), culture and society (*food, entertainment, religion, architecture, language, etc*) and of course the shift from republic to political changes, including it's downfall. Cultural explorations are necessary, and a variety of topics are taught to help understand why Rome was essentially, ROME and what, if anything caused its reduction (*notice I did not use failure...yet! Students will decided this at the very end*). 😊

In closing, something to ponder; *I do utilize guest speakers*. If you or someone you know would be interested in speaking and can connect their story to topics presented in the syllabus, please send me an email. I have several lined-up already but can work in more if the opportunity presents itself. Opportunities such as guest speakers to connect content with live chances at hearing the unique stories of others and how we are connected from around the world.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this. I ensure from here on out, an effort to make correspondence concise is the goal. Please encourage your teenagers to always reach out to me when questions arise but I am here to help each of you maneuver through this year as well. I can tell already; we have an eager group of individuals that are ready to learn.