

Introduction

The new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village.

—Marshall McLuhan

The grim fact is that we prepare for war like precocious giants and for peace like retarded pygmies.

—Lester Pearson

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

—Martin Luther King Jr.

World History, Book 4 includes forty lessons that are designed to engage students in the study of global developments after World War II. The book contains five sections. Part 1 focuses on the Cold War sparring of the two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union. Part 2 presents developing nations and contemporary global concerns. Part 3 features the world scene in the aftermath of the Cold War. Part 4 deals with examples of conflict and cooperation in the latter part of the twentieth century. Part 5 looks at important issues in today’s global village.

In studying human history, several underlying realizations are key. First, deeply ingrained American beliefs in the value of the individual and the paramount importance of freedom sometimes cloud an understanding of other nations’ and cultures’ beliefs and actions. The lessons in this unit strive to expand students’ horizons of understanding to include alternate points of view.

A second principle is that the long historical perspective applicable to earlier periods is not available for a study of more recent history. Newly emerging information can sometimes transform the historical view of what actually happened and why. Thus, a revisionist approach is necessary.

Finally, a major thrust of this unit is the conviction that events seldom occur in isolation. As students perceive and analyze cause-effect relationships and historic parallels, they are able to arrive at a concept of world evolutionary and revolutionary development.

These lessons engage students and teachers in an active process of discovering the history of the latter half of the twentieth century. Students are encouraged to share ideas and to work together in probing cause-effect relationships and “what-if” situations. As they grow in their understanding of the complexities of the world, they prepare to take their insights with them as citizens of the twenty-first century.

Basic Assumptions

1. History is an evolutionary process. To appreciate that process, we need to examine how and why changes occur.
2. History is composed of recurring themes. To understand the place these themes have in the present, we must analyze them and draw conclusions about them.
3. History is people living life with all of its problems and successes, and preserving in written form for posterity the results of this experience. We want to explore these results to make our heritage a vital part of us.
4. History is a discipline requiring certain skills: reading, writing, mapping and thinking, including analysis and synthesis. We provide practice leading toward mastery in each of the skill areas.

General Objectives

1. To give students a conceptual knowledge of history
2. To enable students to read and to digest factual information independently in order to allow class time for higher-level thinking skills
3. To guide students in studying history and in drawing conclusions about it
4. To foster an understanding of personal values and their relationship to history.
5. To enable students to communicate their ideas clearly to others
6. To provide a global experience in examining historical development and problem solving