



# Civilization Characteristics

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Social Studies  
Grades 6-8



## Introduction

Students will learn the key characteristics of civilizations and determine why they are important. Students will participate in a whole class discussion about the meaning of civilization. Students will brainstorm about the characteristics of civilizations. Students will work in groups to create posters that display important information about each characteristic. Students will participate in a classroom “museum tour” where they walk around the room and view each group’s poster. Students will summarize all 7 characteristics and describe the importance of each on a piece of paper.

## Learning Objectives

- Students will identify and describe the importance of the key characteristics of civilizations.

## Materials Needed

- Paper
- Poster board
- Crayons, colored pencils, and/or markers
- Clipboards

## Procedure

### Day 1

1. Introduce and define the term, civilization. Explain that civilizations are represented by groups of people with distinct features and characteristics. Also, explain that civilizations began a long time ago (roughly 5,000 BC or over 7,000 years ago) to help students better grasp the concept at hand.
2. Discuss why civilizations are important. Have students answer and discuss the following questions:
  - What purpose did civilizations serve?
  - Why were they established?
  - What was their purpose?
3. Ask students to brainstorm about what they think the important characteristics of a civilization are. (Hint: Students can draw ideas from thinking about the characteristics of the world around them.) Students should brainstorm for 2-3 minutes. Then, ask students to pair and share their ideas with those around them.



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- On the board, construct a web chart. Ask students to copy the web chart as you go. Ask students to share their ideas about the characteristics of a civilization. When someone correctly identifies 1 of the 7 characteristics, add it to the web chart. Continue until all 7 characteristics have been labeled. Be sure to discuss each characteristic as it is introduced. Encourage students to add additional notes to their web charts in order to better understand each characteristic.

Characteristics of Civilizations:

Culture	Government
Religion	Technology
Social Structure	Writing
Food Supply	

- For lesson closure, ask students to answer the following question: Which characteristic of a civilization do you feel is the most important and why? Ask students to turn in their responses before they leave the classroom.

## Day 2

- Briefly review the important content from the previous lesson. Ask students the following questions and discuss responses as a class.
  - What is a civilization?
  - What are the 7 characteristics of civilizations?
- Divide students into 7 groups. Each group should be assigned 1 of the 7 characteristics. For this activity, groups will research their assigned characteristic and create a poster using crayons, colored pencils, and/or markers. Groups may use technology, textbooks, teacher materials, or notes to complete their poster. Posters should be eye catching, creative, and provide readers with necessary knowledge on the topic at hand. Give students the remainder of the class period to complete their research and create their posters.

## Day 3

- Ask students to return to their groups. Groups will be given roughly 10 minutes to complete any unfinished items on their poster boards.
- Students will now complete a classroom "museum tour." Each group's poster will be displayed at various places throughout the room. Each student will need a clipboard and piece of notebook paper. Ask students to make their way around the room and study the information on each poster board. For each characteristic, students must write down 2 important pieces of information from the corresponding poster. (Alternative: To keep things more organized and less chaotic, students can travel around the room with their groups to study the other posters. You may set a timer and allow groups to rotate at your discretion.) At the activity's conclusion, students should turn in their papers.



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3. Ask students to return to their seats. Students will complete a short post-test. On a piece of paper, ask students to summarize all of the characteristics and explain why each is important. Students should not use notes or receive teacher assistance during this activity. (Alternative: You may give students a short quiz about the 7 characteristics of civilizations.)

## Evaluation

Student learning will be evaluated during the lesson's concluding activity. Students will summarize all 7 characteristics. In addition to summarizing each characteristic, students must identify why each characteristic is important.