Social Scientists
The work of social scientists contributes to our understanding of history. Economists study the production, exchange, and use of goods and services, as well as the systems within which these processes occur. Simply put, economics deals with anything relating to wealth, trade, and the use of resources. Geographers study everything about the earth, its physical and natural features, as well as human populations and man-made political features. Geographers also examine the interactions between people and the physical environment. Geography is much more than just studying locations on maps. Archeologists are anthropologists that specialize in the study human cultures of the past, especially of prehistory (the time before written records). Archeologists mainly study artifacts (objects made by humans) such as tools, weapons, pottery, and jewelry, which can be analyzed to help explain how people lived. Historians study the past, focusing mostly on the historical past (since the first written records). For that reason, historians mainly study written evidence, such as letters, tax records, inscriptions, or even works of history written by historians of the past.

1. What kind of work do economists do?

Neolithic Revolution and the Birth of Civilization
The Neolithic Revolution was a major turning point in human history. Before the Neolithic Revolution, people lived a nomadic lifestyle, obtaining food by hunting and gathering. The Neolithic Revolution occurred when humans began producing their own food through agriculture, growing plants and raising animals. This was made possible by the development of domestication, selective breeding of plants and animals to produce qualities that benefit humans. Domestication started in the Ancient Middle East, but later spread throughout the world. As the use of agriculture spread, new technologies developed to help get the most production out of the land. One new development was irrigation, the process of bringing water from a river to crops in the field. By digging canals in the ground that lead from the water source to the farmland, more water could be brought more quickly, making it possible to grow more crops. Especially in fertile areas like river valleys, where flood waters deposited nutrients into the soil, people were able to create a surplus of food, meaning more than enough or extra. This allowed populations to grow and allowed people to take on new and different jobs other than farming, known as Specialization of Labor. While this allowed for the growth of civilizations, with different people performing different tasks, it also led to Social Hierarchy, with some classes, like priests and scribes, considered more important than others, like farmers and slaves.

2. What major change in the way humans live took place during the Neolithic Revolution?

3. What is a surplus, and how did new farming technologies help to create surplus?
4. Why were River Valleys great places for civilizations to grow?

5. What was the negative side of the Specialization of Labor?

**Mesopotamia**

The first major civilizations in the world developed in Mesopotamia, a region of the Middle East (also known as Southwest Asia) that, together with the Levant along the Mediterranean Coast, is known as the **Fertile Crescent** due to the fertility of its soil and its crescent-like shape. The fertility of Mesopotamia is due to its two rivers, the **Tigris and Euphrates**, which give us the name Mesopotamia, meaning land between two rivers. This **favorable geography** helped produce the first civilization in Mesopotamia, known as the **Sumerian** civilization. Their greatest contribution to the world was probably the invention of writing. Although it started out as a way for merchants to keep records of trade, the writing system known as **Cuneiform** came to be used for many tasks, such as recording religious rituals, keeping records of taxes for governments, and eventually writing down stories of the past. However, most people did not know how to read and write. In the Ancient World, writing was a special skill performed by **Scribes**, who became important and valuable members of society. Writing did not stay only in Mesopotamia. Through **cultural diffusion**, or the exchange of ideas, customs, and technologies from one culture to another, the idea of writing spread to Egypt, India, and beyond, where new forms of writing developed. Under the rule of Babylonians, the next major civilization in Mesopotamia, the ruler King Hammurabi used cuneiform to record the laws of his kingdom in stone. The many of the laws in the **Code of Hammurabi** were very strict, and they **often gave harsher punishments to lower classes**, but they did help to keep order in society.

6. What name was given to the region stretching from Mesopotamia to the Levant?

7. Along which two rivers did Mesopotamian civilizations flourish?

8. For what purpose was the writing system Cuneiform first used?

9. Did most people in the Ancient World know how to read and write? What is the job of scribes?

10. How did Social Hierarchy influence Hammurabi’s Code?

11. What is cultural diffusion?
**Ancient Egypt**

Another great early civilization developed along the fertile Nile River in Egypt. Like in Mesopotamia, Egyptian civilization had a **social hierarchy**, and at the very top was the **Pharaoh**, the ruler of Egypt who was believed to be a god in human form. During the Old Kingdom in Egypt, it was believed that, when Pharaohs died, they could pass into the world of the gods, whereas regular people would simply enter the dark underworld. For this reason, **Old Kingdom** Pharaohs like **Khufu** had great **pyramids** built as tombs for their bodies after death.

12. **For whom were Pyramids built, and for what purpose?**

Egyptian civilization lasted for a very long time, but it reached its height during the **New Kingdom** period, over a thousand years after the building of the Pyramids. During the New Kingdom, powerful Pharaohs strengthened Egypt in different ways. **Queen Hatshepsut**, a female Pharaoh, increased trade with the Middle East to increase the wealth of Egypt. **Ramses II** used his military to conquer new lands and expand the borders of Egypt, creating an Empire. **Akhenaten** was a very different Pharaoh, best remembered for trying to completely change the religion of Egypt to only worship one god. However, after his death, Egyptians returned to **polytheism**, or the worship of many gods. Like in Mesopotamia, writing played an important role in trade, government, and religion. The first writing system in Egypt was called **Hieroglyphics**. We are able to read it today thanks to the discovery of the **Rosetta Stone**, a large stone onto which the same passage was written in three writing systems: Hieroglyphics, Demotic, and Greek. Since people today still use Greek, it was possible to use it to unlock the mystery of Hieroglyphics. Now, experts can learn about Egypt by reading its ancient texts.

13. **Which of these three New Kingdom Pharaohs do you think did the most to benefit Egypt? Why?**

14. **What is polytheism?**

15. **How did the Rosetta Stone help scholars to understand Hieroglyphics?**

**Persian Empire**

The largest most powerful empire of the Ancient World was the Persian Empire. With a territory stretching from the Indus Valley to the Mediterranean Sea, it was too much for one ruler to control by himself, which is why the Persian Emperors established a bureaucracy, or a government made up of many different people doing different jobs. While it was still ruled by the emperor, having many government workers serving him helped him to maintain control. For example, to govern the different regions of the Empire, the Persian Emperor Darius installed Satraps, or governors, to rule different areas on his behalf.

16. **Give one example of how the Persians used Bureaucracy to maintain control of their Empire.**

The major religion in the Persian Empire was Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrians followed the teachings of a prophet named Zoroaster who taught people to worship the one God named Ahura Mazda, and taught that life was a struggle between good and evil. Zoroastrianism shares many qualities with another important religion from the Ancient Middle East called Judaism. Like Zoroastrianism, Judaism taught Monotheism, or the belief in only one God.
17. How are Zoroastrianism and Judaism similar?

Ancient India
Like Mesopotamia and Egypt, Indian Civilization began along a river valley. The Indus River Valley civilization was the largest and most advanced of all the ancient civilizations. They had planned cities, multistory buildings, and indoor plumbing systems. They traded as far as Mesopotamia and Egypt. However, Indus Civilization collapsed due to environmental change. There were originally two great rivers that supported the civilization, the Indus and the Saraswati Rivers, but a massive earthquake shifted the course of the Saraswati river, redirecting its waters into the Indus River as well as the Ganges River to the east. This caused the Indus River to overflow, creating floods, and the Saraswati River to dry up, creating drought and starvation. Unable to support itself, the many of the Indus people moved east to the Ganges River to find a new home.

18. How did change to the environment cause the collapse of Indus Civilization?

Indian Religions
Soon, a new people entered India from Central Asia. They were a nomadic people known as the Aryans who spoke an Indo-European language and practiced the Vedic religion. Over time, Aryan and Indus beliefs blended to form a new religion called Hinduism. Hinduism is a polytheistic religion that taught a belief in the cycle of reincarnation, the belief that a soul is reborn after death into a new body. However, the goal of Hinduism was to live a perfect life in order to reach Moksha, to be freed from the cycle of rebirth to become one with the universe. Hindus also believed in the Caste System, a strict social hierarchy that divided people into four groups or castes, with the Brahmins, or Priests, at the top. It was taught that the only way to move up to a better caste was to live a good life and be reincarnated to a higher position. Later, other religions like Buddhism and Jainism developed that shared the belief in reincarnation and the goal of Moksha (Buddhists called it Nirvana), but they rejected the Hindu Caste System, believing that all people were equal.

19. How were Hinduism and Buddhism similar?

20. How were Hinduism and Buddhism different?

Indian Empires
During the 4th Century BCE, the Macedonian conqueror Alexander the Great invaded and conquered the western lands of India. After his death, control returned to the local Indian rulers, but they were badly weakened by the attacks. Seeing an opportunity, a ruler from eastern Indian named Chandragupta Maurya led his armies to conquer the East and the West of India, creating the first major empire in India, the Mauryan Empire. The most famous Mauryan ruler was his grandson, Ashoka, who conquered South India as well, but was so upset by the many deaths he caused with his armies that he converted to Buddhism and dedicated his life to non-violence. To promote the ideas of peace and tolerance, he created the Edicts of Ashoka, large stone structures inscribed with his laws and teachings, which he placed throughout his Empire.

21. How did Alexander the Great help to create the Mauryan Empire?

22. Why did Ashoka become a non-violent Buddhist?
Centuries after the collapse of the Mauryans, another empire reclaimed India’s greatness. The **Gupta Empire**, as it was called, was best known for its advances in science, mathematics, medicine, and art. Their most famous achievements were the invention of the number **zero** and the creation of the **Decimal System**, from which our modern numbers are derived. They made it much easier to perform mathematical equations than ever before. The Guptas also helped to bring back the popularity of Hinduism in India, promoting the worship of Hindu gods like Vishnu and Shiva.

23. **How did the Gupta Empire contribute to the development of mathematics?**

**Ancient China**

Farther to the East, another great civilization developed in China along the **Yellow River**, also known as the Huang He River. Because of geography, China was more cut off from the other major civilizations, blocked from Central Asia by deserts and blocked from India by the massive **Himalayan Mountains**. Different philosophies played a large role in the development of Chinese civilization. The Zhou dynasty ruled according to the **Mandate of Heaven**, the belief that rulers were chosen by Heaven, and that if they behaved badly, ruling unjustly or committing immoral acts, they could lose the Mandate of Heaven, which would be shown by the arrival of disasters such as floods, earthquakes, droughts, or invasions. Then a new dynasty, or ruling family, would be chosen by heaven to rule, and the process would repeat in what was called the **Dynastic Cycle**.

24. **How did geography affect early China?**

25. **Based on the Dynastic Cycle, how could a ruler lose the Mandate of Heaven, and how would it show?**

**Imperial China**

After the fall of the Zhou, a new ruler named Shi Huangdi created the Qin dynasty, which was ruled according to the philosophy of **Legalism**, which believed that strict laws and harsh punishments were the way to keep China strong. His rule is best remembered for the building of the **Great Wall of China** to protect China from invasion by the **Huns** and the tomb of Shi Huangdi, which he filled with **life-size terracotta (clay) soldiers** to protect him in the afterlife. Peasant uprisings ended the Qin dynasty, and a peasant leader founded the Han dynasty, which ruled China for over four centuries. The Han dynasty ruled according to the philosophy of **Confucianism**, taught centuries earlier by the philosopher Confucius. Confucianism encouraged **Filial Piety**, respect for ones elders, which helped to maintain social order. It also called for **meritocracy**, meaning that important positions should go to those who are qualified, who have the most merit, rather than those who have money or family connections. The Han dynasty used this idea to improve their civil service system, the system of government workers, by creating a **civil service exam** to test candidates before offering them a job. The Han dynasty also expanded the trade in silk to as far away as Rome in an extensive trade network called the **Silk Road** that brought great wealth to China and facilitated cultural diffusion throughout Asia.

26. **What were the values of Legalism?**

27. **How did Shi Huangdi try to protect the Qin dynasty from the Huns?**
28. What were two effects of the Silk Road?

29. How did the Han dynasty use Confucianism to create a stable Empire?

Bantu Migration
In Africa, the expansion of the Bantu people from West Africa throughout Sub-Saharan Africa led to a great deal of cultural diffusion. While the Bantu population in West Africa was growing, the environment was becoming less fertile, prompting the Bantu to migrate South and East in search of new lands. As they spread throughout the continent, they spread their language to the local populations, resulting in many different Bantu languages throughout Africa. The Bantu had also developed iron-smelting technology, which they also spread to new communities.

30. How did the Bantu Migrations lead to cultural diffusion?