



# SOCIAL STUDIES

## Focus 2025-26



## Grades 5-6

World, United States, and Texas History



**UIL Social Studies Focus Topic**  
**2025-2026**  
**for**  
**5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grades**

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~ President Hexco Inc., Linda Tarrant

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# **SOCIAL STUDIES FOCUS FOR 5<sup>TH</sup> & 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADES**

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**UNITED STATES**

(60% of the test)

**I. HISTORICAL ISSUES, EVENTS AND PEOPLE OF THE 20TH CENTURY****A. 1900 to 1910**

1. Galveston Hurricane - 1900
  - a. The 20<sup>th</sup> century opened with the devastating hurricane that slammed into Galveston Island in September.
  - b. Some have called it **Isaac's Storm** after Isaac Cline, the forecaster at the Weather Bureau in Galveston.
  - c. The strength of the storm and its exact destination could not be determined at the time. There were no satellites or radar systems creating pictures of the clouds and winds over the Gulf of Mexico to give advance warning.
  - d. Galveston was the leading port in Texas and for many people in "high society" it rivaled New York City.
  - e. Entire families were washed away as houses were swept off their foundations and tossed back into the sea. Almost 4,000 homes disappeared. The city was in ruins. It is thought that about 8,000 people died.
  - f. The rebuilding of Galveston was a huge task. City leaders decided to raise the elevation of the island by bringing in sand from the ocean floor. They built a sea wall 16 feet high and 17 feet wide along a 10-mile stretch of coastline to protect the city from future storm surges.
  - g. As a result of the storm, Galveston lost its place of importance. The city of Houston paid for the dredging of the Houston ship channel, which ultimately allowed Houston to become the major port and greatest commercial center of the southern coast of Texas.
2. Inventions - c. 1900
  - a. The Brownie film camera was created and launched by the Eastman Kodak Company. It cost \$1, and for the first time, made cameras and photography available to the public.
  - b. In 1877, Thomas Edison invented the phonograph, a machine that both recorded and played sound. The Victor Talking Machine Company, founded around 1900 by Eldridge Johnson, was the most successful maker of phonographs. Edison also perfected a long-lasting light bulb.
3. Assassination of the president - 1901
  - a. President **William McKinley** was gunned down by a radical named Leon Czolgosz at the Pan-American Exhibition in Buffalo, New York. Gangrene later set in and the wound proved to be fatal.
  - b. The nation's vice president, **Theodore Roosevelt**, was sworn in to replace him. McKinley's murderer was sentenced to death by electric chair.



Thomas Edison

## 4. Spindletop - 1901

- a. Patillo Higgins bought land in the 1880s on Spindletop Hill, south of Beaumont Texas, and began to drill for oil. He hired Anthony F. Lucas to help develop the area he thought would be a productive oil field, but the first efforts failed.
- b. In 1901, with new financing and developers, Lucas led the way in drilling a new well. Thinking they hit another dry spot, the workers were startled by the rumble, roar, and eventual explosion of oil that came from the ground that reached 100 feet high.
- c. Initially, this well produced more oil than all others in the United States (U.S.), but as more wells were drilled, production declined.
- d. Beaumont became a boomtown. Everyone wanted to be part of the oil rush.
- e. **Wildcatters**, people who developed oil fields that could be expensive and risky, came. They hired **roughnecks**, the nickname for oil field workers.
- f. New companies were built, such as Texas Company (**Texaco**), to drill and process the oil.
- g. A high supply of oil meant the price of gas went down. More people could afford cars, so businesses in other states, like the automobile industries in Michigan, were also helped by the boom.
- h. Profits from the oil industry also increased the taxes the state could collect.

## 5. More inventions - c. 1902-1908

- a. Batteries, in a primitive form, date back as far as the Parthian Empire, or over 2,000 years ago. **Thomas Edison**, the same person famous for patenting the light bulb, invented the alkaline battery.
- b. The **airplane** was completed in 1903 by **Wilbur and Orville Wright**, the brothers who successfully took off and landed the first airplane flight in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. This invention and its continual refinement throughout the century allowed humans to take to airspace for the first time and was later adapted for use in work, recreation, and even World War I (WWI).
- c. The basis for the modern air conditioner was created around 1902 by a man named Willis Carrier.
- d. The first mass-produced **automobile** was completed by **Henry Ford**, the man who set up Ford Motor Company. It was called the Model T and was nicknamed the "Tin Lizzie." Its design and the factory assembly-line system enabled the vehicle to become the first affordable automobile.

## 6. Panama Canal - 1904-1914

- a. When Theodore Roosevelt became president, he set his mind on the completion of this Central American canal, which was completed in 1914 and connected the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.
- b. The U.S. helped Panama gain its independence in 1903 and signed the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty with the newly independent republic. This treaty and a payment of \$250,000 allowed the U.S. to build the canal.
- c. The threat of tropical diseases like malaria and yellow fever and inhumane working conditions plagued construction.

**5. Dust Bowl - 1934-1940**

- a. During the 1930s, in addition to problems in the financial sectors of the economy, a severe drought hit the Plains states.
- b. Several factors contributed to the Dust Bowl: severe drought and high winds, overgrazing by cattle that made the grasses too short to hang onto the soil, over-plowing of land which left too much exposed to the wind, and erosion of the good soil.
- c. Farms were ruined as the winds blew the topsoil off the land, and the air was filled with dust. The dust made people and cattle sick. Many farms and ranches were destroyed in Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas, which were hit the hardest. Foreclosures in rural areas became common as farmers and ranchers were unable to repay their loans to banks.

**E. 1940 to 1950****1. Beginning of World War II**

- a. Germany was governed by **Adolf Hitler**. Hitler was a **dictator** and the leader of the **Nazi** Party in Germany.
- b. Germany was allied with Italy and Japan, and this group was known as the **Axis Powers**. Italy was led by **Benito Mussolini**, who was also a dictator, and Japan was led by **Emperor Hirohito**.
- c. The **Allied Powers** included Poland, Britain, and France, and later the Soviet Union, members of the British Commonwealth, and other countries.
- d. WWII began in 1939 in Europe when Germany invaded Poland. Britain and France had agreed to protect Poland.
- e. Italy invaded Africa in 1935, and Japan invaded China in 1937. Germany, Italy, and Japan eventually signed an alliance pact.
- f. Germany had a pact with Russia that said they would never invade, but Germany broke that promise. **Joseph Stalin**, the leader of Russia, decided to join the Allies.

**2. Middle Years of World War II**

- a. Germany was highly successful and soon took over France. The Germans continuously bombed Great Britain and began a march towards Russia. In 1940, Roosevelt promised Americans, "Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars."
- b. However, the U.S. became involved in WWII when Japan bombed **Pearl Harbor** in 1941. Roosevelt addressed Congress and stated, "Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan."

- e. Churchill described the beach at Dunkirk and the difficulties of trying to embark (load and sail) the troops trapped there. The waters were shallow and only small boats could get in and out. The Navy recruited not only military craft, but merchant vessels and French fishing boats to aid in transporting the troops to the larger ships waiting offshore.
- f. Churchill took time to note that the Royal Air Force, which had often been slighted and dismissed, had in many ways saved the day. "Wars are not won by evacuations. But there was a victory inside this deliverance, which should be noted. It was gained by the Air Force."
- g. Churchill went into great detail, explaining the effectiveness of the Air Force. The soldiers on the ground saw only the bombers the Air Force missed; they did not see the bombers, fighters, ships and troops the Air Force successfully destroyed. He ended this segment of his speech by saying, "All of our types—the Hurricane, the Spitfire and the new Defiant— and all our pilots have been vindicated as superior to what they have at present to face."
- h. Churchill then compared the young soldiers and their opportunity to display bravery and loyalty to the nation to the Knights of the Round Table and the Crusaders. "... these young men, going forth every morn to guard their native land and all that we stand for, holding in their hands these instruments of colossal and shattering power, of whom it may be said that **'Every morn brought forth a noble chance...And every chance brought forth a noble knight,'...deserve our gratitude,...'**
- i. Churchill commended all the heroes and stood in mourning with the families who had lost their loved ones. He said that there are those whose fate was unknown, but they may yet return. He acknowledged that many may have found themselves in a position where "honor required no further resistance from them." He suspected that many might be prisoners of war, and that was not shameful.
- j. In addition to the loss of over 30,000 men, the loss of materials, guns, ammunitions, vehicles, and equipment was tremendous. He announced that work to replace what was lost was in progress; factories were working 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In a few months they should be able to replace the materials lost.
- k. Operation Dynamo was an overwhelming success. However, "this must not blind us to the fact that what has happened in France and Belgium is a colossal military disaster." There were reports that Hitler had plans to invade Britain also. Britain was in danger, more than it ever had been, and the nation must prepare for all possible plans of attack, no matter how odd or cruel that attack could be; no possibility should be dismissed. Organizations must become more effective so that an offensive effort could be carried out.