

***The Jericho River* Curriculum Alignment Overview**

Adding fiction about history to the social studies curriculum helps students develop their reading skills and improve their disciplinary literacy. It does that by teaching them how to read, write, and speak like historians. In *The Jericho River*, author David Tollen takes readers on an adventure through the history of Western Civilization, including its Middle Eastern roots—covering ancient, Medieval, and modern times. Readers get an opportunity to apply **chronological reasoning** about the major events, as well as a chance to personalize information presented in standard textbooks. By following the main character Jason on his journey, students can exercise a key historical thinking skill: **understanding Change and Continuity over time**.^{*} Professor Gallo’s notes, interspersed through the text, create a scaffold that students can build upon with additional research of their own, including primary and secondary sources. A history teacher can use this text to engage readers in the plot and characters while also using it as a springboard for further work with the tools of history, such as student creation of timelines.

This novel also brings up issues about modern society such as the role of slavery, the treatment of women, and the struggle between science and faith as the source of knowledge—all potential topics of discussion. Group discussions on topics like these create a learning environment in which students are challenged to employ skills such as communication and critical thinking. Teachers can assign alternate activities tied to this novel with the intention of differentiating learning, depending on student interest and ability. Students of multiple reading levels and interests will have many chances to experience the fantasy of Tollen’s *The Jericho River*.

The text includes **questions for discussion** and a **sample lesson plan** at the back, and the author has posted additional teacher resources online.

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^{*} See, “AP History Disciplinary Practices and Reasoning Skills,” from the College Board or “Stanford History Education Group” for definitions or applications.

Curriculum Alignment for *The Jericho River*, by David Tollen

*New literacy standards require students to increase the complexity of their reading texts as they move into grades 6-12. Literacy standards also call for students to read across the curriculum into other content areas, such as social studies. The charts below align **The Jericho River** to specific standards for both middle- and high-school, as the novel is appropriate for both audiences. Although a work of fiction, **The Jericho River** plays out against the background of the history of Western Civilization (including Middle Eastern origins), so it is aligned to both literacy and social studies standards.*

Domain	Anchor Standard	8 th Grade	10 th Grade
Reading Literature	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it.	Determine a theme or central idea of <i>The Jericho River</i> and analyze its development over the course of the novel, including relationship to characters, setting and plot. (ELA-Literacy.RL.8.2).	Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of <i>The Jericho River</i> , interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme (ELA-Literacy.RL.10.3).
Reading Literature	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse forms (visually and in words).	Analyze how a modern work of fiction like <i>The Jericho River</i> draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered as new. (ELA-Literacy.RL.8.9).	Read and comprehend <i>The Jericho River</i> independently and proficiently (ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10).
Reading Literature	Close reading.	Analyze how the author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters in the novel (ELA-Literacy.RL.6.9).	Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in <i>The Jericho River</i> (ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.6).
Reading Non-Fiction, Writing	Research to build and present knowledge.	Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the historical themes of the novel (ELA-Literacy.W.7.9).	
Speaking and Listening	Integration of knowledge and ideas.	Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilizations and Ancient Greece.	Students relate the moral and ethical principles in ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, in Judaism, and in Christianity to the development of Western political thought.

[Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts \(ELA\) & Literacy in History](#)

The Jericho River – Applying Disciplinary Concepts

Concept	By the End of Grade 8	By the End of Grade 10
Individually and with others students construct Compelling Questions.	Explain why the compelling question is important to the student. Explain how a question reflects an enduring issue in history or social studies.	Explain why compelling questions are important to others (e.g., peers, adults).
Understanding ideas in specific fields of social studies: civics, economics, geography, and individuals in society, history).	Explain how a question represents key ideas in the specific field of social studies or history.	Explain how a question reflects an enduring understanding in the specific field of social studies.
Determining helpful sources.	Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of views represented in the sources.	Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of view represented in the sources, the types of sources available, and the potential uses of the sources.

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), [The College, Career, and Civic Life \(C3\) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History](#)

The Jericho River- Applying Social Studies Themes

Social studies standards are based on ten different themes. The use of The Jericho River in history and social studies is supported by the theme of Time, Continuity, and Change from the [National Council for Social Studies](#).

THEME: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE

- Studying the past makes it possible for us to understand the human story across time.** The historical experiences of societies, peoples and nations reveal patterns of continuity and change. Historical analysis enables us to identify continuities over time in core institutions, values, ideals, and traditions, as well as processes that lead to change within societies and institutions, and that result in innovation and the development of new ideas, values and ways of life.

- **Knowledge and understanding of the past enable us to analyze the causes** and consequences of events and developments, and to place these in the context of the institutions, values and beliefs of the periods in which they took place. Study of the past makes us aware of the ways in which human beings have viewed themselves, their societies, and the wider world at different periods of time.
- **Knowing how to read, re-construct, and interpret the past allows us to answer questions such as:** How do we learn about the past? How can we evaluate the usefulness and degree of reliability of different historical sources? What are the roots of our social, political and economic systems? What are our personal roots and how can they be viewed as part of human history? Why is the past important to us today? How has the world changed and how might it change in future? How do perspectives about the past differ, and to what extent do these differences inform contemporary ideas and actions?
- **The use of stories about the past can help students develop their understanding of ethical and moral issues** as they learn about important events and developments. Children begin to recognize that stories can be told in different ways, and that individuals may hold divergent views about events in the past. They learn to offer explanations for why views differ, and thus develop the ability to defend interpretations based on evidence from multiple sources. They begin to understand the linkages between human decisions and consequences. The foundation is laid for the further development of historical knowledge, skills, and values in the middle grades.
- **Through a more formal study of history, students in middle- and high-school continue to expand their understanding** of the past and are increasingly able to apply the research methods associated with historical inquiry. They develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for differences in perspectives on historical events and developments, recognizing that interpretations are influenced by individual experiences, sources selected, societal values, and cultural traditions. They are increasingly able to use multiple sources to build interpretations of past events and eras. High school students use historical methods of inquiry to engage in the examination of more sophisticated sources. They develop the skills needed to locate and analyze multiple sources, and to evaluate the historical accounts made by others. They build and defend interpretations that reconstruct the past, and draw on their knowledge of history to make informed choices and decisions in the present.

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