

## Grade 5 Social Studies: Ancient Rome

*by Danielle Metzler*

<b>Tool(s) used:</b>	Sustainability Compass
<b>Purpose of using tool:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Generating Questions</li> <li>• Synthesizing Thinking</li> <li>• Guiding Discussion</li> </ul> <p><b>Overview:</b> We were studying Ancient Rome. In the past, the focus was innovations and how Roman innovations have benefitted us today. Rather than collecting facts and presenting what we learned about an innovation in a hands-on project as we've done before, this year I think the learning was deeper because students were using skills like concept mapping, questioning, and research to find causal relationships and other types of connections between systems with the Sustainability Compass tool. Students explored the question: How did the Roman Empire get so big? Innovations were part of it, but there were so many other factors from the nature, economy, society and wellbeing systems that helped the Romans successfully expand.</p> <p>Our essential understanding for the unit as a whole became: Parts of a system are interconnected and changes to one part can and will affect other parts.</p>
<b>Context of lesson/case study:</b>	Fifth Grade Social Studies Project
<b>Participants (# and description):</b>	17 Year 5 students, 1 teacher in the first unit. Retought same unit to the other 5th grade section later in semester – 18 Year 5 students, 1 teacher.
<b>Topic, Theme, or Key Understanding of unit/project:</b>	<p>Ancient Rome</p> <p><b>Essential Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do systems work?</li> <li>• How did the Roman Empire get so big? (How did various factors interconnect and help Rome build its empire?)</li> </ul> <p><b>Essential Understandings:</b></p> <p>How do systems work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are four systems that govern how our world functions: Nature, Economy, Wellbeing and Society.</li> <li>• These systems interconnect in complex ways.</li> <li>• When something changes in one system, it can affect all the other systems.</li> <li>• When systems are in balance, they function well. If not, systems can fail.</li> </ul> <p>How did the Roman Empire get so big?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many factors (or nodes) in all the systems combined and contributed to Roman expansion.</li> <li>• Factors in one system connected to, affected or reinforced factors in other systems.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factors included: natural surroundings, the Roman army, roads, trade, social and economic structures like slavery, and many more.</li> </ul>
<b>Length of unit/project:</b>	5 weeks
<b>Resources/materials &amp; setting required:</b>	Classroom Books about Ancient Rome Poster Paper for Sustainability Compass Markers Projector/Way to play videos and show pictures
<b>Lesson Plan/Description of the Project:</b>	
<a href="#">Follow this link for a complete Unit Plan</a>	
<b>Reflection</b>	
<b>Plusses (Things that went well):</b>	
<p>I think the final projects and assessments show that students grasped the essential understandings about Roman Expansion and about systems. They were able to make connections they would normally never had made involving economic, health and societal implications for certain actions.</p> <p>It was a really engaging unit. Students really enjoyed it, felt like they were doing complex, important work, and it allowed for differentiation. Students with a more complex understanding of the connections could explore them and help their group understand new ideas, while lower students were still able to contribute at their own level.</p> <p>The concept mapping supported the reading comprehension. Students who were having trouble making inferences by just reading and thinking could jump into the more hands-on and visual concept mapping on the Sustainability Compass and see how inferences form.</p>	
<b>Challenges (Things I would change):</b>	
<p>I wrestled with starting the concept mapping in one system, “Nature”, then expanding. In this unit, I introduced the idea of concept mapping before the idea of systems because I knew these students didn’t have a lot of experience with concept mapping. Later I realized that it may have been an unnecessary step. Later, they had to move all the nodes that should be in other systems, and it just made things messier. I think in the end, I would move the Day 6 introduction to systems to Day 3 and have students practice concept mapping with a familiar topic, then we’d continue the content lesson in day 3 and have them start mapping Rome Nature factors on a complete Sustainability Compass.</p> <p>Doing a project like this requires constant check-ins for understanding and informal assessment to make sure individual students are understanding the big ideas along with facts. Because there’s so much group work, it can be hard to track this sometimes, so keeping an eye on particular students who need extra support, exit tickets, and accountability is important.</p> <p>One thing I tried during concept mapping later in the unit was to have each child write in a particular color, so that I could see what connections they were making individually and how individuals were contributing to the group’s understanding. (They made a color key on the side of their poster.) This worked well.</p> <p>Sometimes students had difficulty interpreting their maps because they got so messy. Later on, this became a problem when they were reviewing them for big ideas for their final project. Keeping all resources (like the articles we read) and reviewing the anchor charts of big ideas we made as a class helped students remember information along with the concept maps.</p>	
<b>Suggestions for other practitioners and educators:</b>	
<p>Post-it notes were our friend in this unit. Using post-its to record questions, for example, on the systems question charts meant we could move them around as necessary which was important for making connections.</p>	

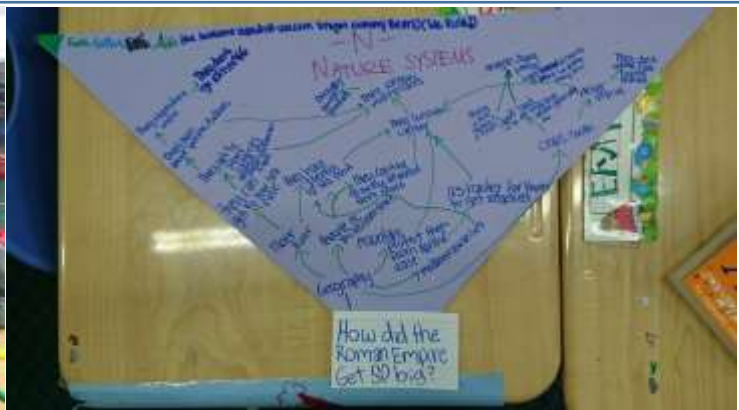
We could have used more time for independent research and developing their final project. Unfortunately, our timeline didn't allow it, but I would schedule 2 weeks in the future.

After research, when students begin making their final concept map in teams, it's important to emphasize that they're combining their learning from the the whole group reading and their individual research. To start, it was helpful to direct students to start in their "system area", add nodes simultaneously, then review as a group to start making connections.

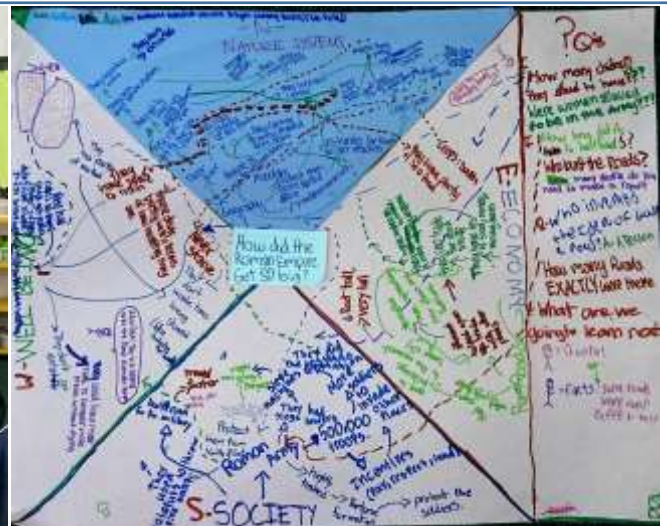
Continual dialogue about the essential questions, discussion about their essential understandings and connections to how this could help them in the future were really key. Next time, I would try to find even more ways for them to understand more deeply how this could benefit them in problem-solving in the future.

**Evidence and Resources:**

[Follow this link for an overview of the project with pictures, videos, and resources used About the Roman Army; Geography of Rome](#)



*Students making inferences about the natural landscape of Ancient Rome*



*Students used a Sustainability Compass Organizer to expand their concept maps, connect ideas and make inferences about Roman Expansion across systems*



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Sorting questions by system

Case study submitted by: Danielle Metzler, 2017, while serving as Grade 5 Teacher at Colegio Maya, Guatemala