

# 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Summer Reading

## The Cartoon History of the Universe: Volumes 1-7 by Larry Gronick

The summer reading is an essential part of the Ninth Grade curriculum. *The Making of the Modern World* is a one year survey course that begins with the origins of civilizations and ends with a discussion of the issues facing the world today. In order to cover such a grand sweep of history Ninth Graders must start the year with some basic background. The Cartoon History of the Universe introduces the origins of man and the civilizations of the ancient world with a humorous yet rigorous approach to history. In addition, since many of the students coming to the high school are just starting their career at LREI, a shared summer book provides a common foundation for discussion. For more information on how other schools are using The Cartoon History of the Universe, see <http://larrygonick.com/html/sch/sch.html#>.

### Essential Questions

The goal of the essential questions is to ensure that students are interacting with the reading and not skimming or reading passively. Although the text is in cartoon format, its presentation of history is sophisticated and requires close reading. The questions below will also provide some common reference points for future discussions. As students read, they should make notes and comments in the margins of the text. They should also mark any sections that they found particularly interesting. Post-its can also be a useful way to highlight sections that answer the essential questions.

1. Describe the origins of the Universe?
2. How did life on earth develop?
3. How did our early ancestors adapt to their environment? How did life change with the domestication of animals and the development of agriculture?
4. Why did early civilizations develop in river valleys? Compare the cities of Sumer with the civilization of Egypt. Be able to discuss, geography, beliefs, leaders, and achievements.
5. Who were the early hebrews? How did their history shape their understanding of God? Be able to discuss specific events in the Old Testament.
6. What myths and legends influenced the development of Greek civilization?
7. How did Athens develop a democracy? How was Athens different from Sparta?
8. What were reasons for the conflict between the Greek city-states and the Persian empire?
9. Why was the age of Pericles called a Golden Age? How did this golden age come to an end?

### In Class Essay Question

*During the first full week of school all ninth graders will be asked to write a five paragraph essay on the following.*  
**Directions:** Write a well-organized essay that includes an introduction, several body paragraphs addressing the task below, and a conclusion.

#### **Task:**

If you could go back in time, in which ancient civilization would you most like to have lived and when? What job would you want to have had? Would you rather have been a woman or a man? Be sure to explain the reasons for each of your choices.

**Suggestions:** The Cities of Sumer, Egypt, Israel, Crete, Sparta, Persia, Athens (These are only suggestions you may use any civilization mentioned in the reading.)

**Guidelines:** In your essay be sure to

- Address all aspects of the task
- Use a logical and clear plan of organization
- Support your points with relevant facts, facts, examples, and details
- Include an introduction and conclusion that go beyond a simple restatement of the task

*The Cartoon History of the Universe will be examined for notes and comment*