# Key Unit Vocabulary

This guide provides a summary of key vocabulary for this unit. For each word, you will find the definition, part of speech, word forms (plurals/tenses), synonyms, and examples of how the word, or forms of the word, are used in a sentence.

## city-state

* a self-governing state made up of a city and its surrounding territory

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | city-states |
| Synonyms: | commonwealth, community |
| In a sentence: | Venice was once a powerful city-state. |

## coercive

* of or using coercion (power to persuade someone using threats or intimidation)

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | adjective |
| Word forms: | coercively, coerciveness |
| Synonyms: | compulsory, involuntary, forced |
| In a sentence: | The cult leaders sometimes used coercive methods to obtain recruits. |

## contextualize

* to put into context, or provide a context for; context = the set of circumstances or events in which a particular event occurs; situation

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | verb |
| Word forms: | contextualizes, contextualizing, contextualized, contextualization |
| Synonyms: | research, consider |
| In a sentence: | When I contextualize my grandmother’s decision and consider the difficult circumstances she was in, I can empathize with her better. |

## cuneiform

* of, concerning, or written in wedge-shaped characters, as were many languages of the ancient Near East, such as Sumerian and Babylonian

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| Part of speech: | adjective |
| Word forms: |  |
| Synonyms: | pictographs, hieroglyphics |
| In a sentence: | A team of linguists are studying the ancient cuneiform texts in hopes of translating them into English. |

## divisions of labor

* the breakdown of labor into its components and their distribution among different persons, groups, or machines to increase productive efficiency

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | division of labor |
| Synonyms: | delegate |
| In a sentence: | After implementing divisions of labor, the company became more efficient at producing products in a timely manner. |

## dynasty

* a succession, lasting several generations, of rulers from the same family or group

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | dynasties, dynastic, dynastically |
| Synonyms: | empire, regime |
| In a sentence: | The 800-year dynasty came to an end when rebel forces attacked the royal palace, killing the last of the imperial family. |

## elite

* those having the greatest authority or privilege or highest status

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | elites |
| Synonyms: | aristocrats, nobility |
| In a sentence: | The posh (fancy) restaurant on 9th Avenue only caters to the elite. |

## empire

* territory controlled by a central government, with one supreme ruler, who governs a diverse population

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | empires |
| Synonyms: | kingdom, domain |
| In a sentence: | The Ottoman Empire ruled over a vast territory with multiple ethnicities and belief systems. |

## government

* the direction and control exercised politically over people living in a community, state, or nation

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | governments, governmental, governmentally |
| Synonyms: | administration, authority, regime |
| In a sentence: | The government recently decided to place a heavy tax on the people. |

## inequality

* the condition of being unequal, especially in natural talents or social or economic status

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | inequalities |
| Synonyms: | injustice, unfairness, disparity |
| In a sentence: | One of the many inequalities experienced by the lower class is lack of access to resources. |

## infrastructure

* the basic structures and facilities, such as roads and bridges, that are necessary for a system or state to function

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | infrastructures |
| Synonyms: | base, framework |
| In a sentence: | This country has a highly developed infrastructure of highways and bridges. |

## Iron Age

* the stage or level of development of human culture that followed the Bronze Age and that was characterized by the use of iron tools and weapons, beginning about 1000 BCE

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | proper noun |
| Word forms: |  |
| Synonyms: |  |
| In a sentence: | The Iron Age marked a period of technological advancement as people began to make their tools and weapons out of iron, which was stronger and more durable than bronze or stone. |

## irrigation system

* the supplying of water to land by man-made means to aid in growing crops

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | irrigation systems |
| Synonyms: | well system, watering system |
| In a sentence: | Farmers rely heavily on irrigation systems to water their crops. |

## kinship

* the state or fact of being a relative or relatives, especially by birth

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | kin, kinships |
| Synonyms: | family, clan, relative |
| In a sentence: | Most of the people living in this mountain region are connected by kinship. |

## legal code

* a code of laws adopted by a state or nation; “a code of laws”

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | legal codes |
| Synonyms: | code of law, penal code, written law |
| In a sentence: | It has been difficult to establish a legal code for the control of advertisements. |

## matrilineal

* pertaining to, derived from, or tracing descent through the mother’s family

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | adjective |
| Word forms: | matrilineally |
| Synonyms: | maternal lineage |
| In a sentence: | Jewish ancestry is passed down through matrilineal descent. |

## merchant

* one who buys goods and sells them for a profit

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| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | merchants |
| Synonyms: | dealer, trader, vendor, salesman |
| In a sentence: | We order our food from whichever merchant gives us the best price. |

## oral tradition

* the stories, beliefs, etc., that a group of people share by telling stories and talking to each other

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | oral traditions |
| Synonyms: | oral history |
| In a sentence: | Tales of my great-great-great grandfather's adventures as a sea captain have been passed down through my family by oral tradition. |

## patriarchal

* relating to a social system in which a father rules, and descent and succession are traced through the father

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | adjective |
| Word forms: | patriarchy, patriarchies |
| Synonyms: | fatherly |
| In a sentence: | When the queen took the throne, she ended the country's patriarchal system of government. |

## periphery

* the outer edge of an area; the less important part of a group or activity

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | peripheries |
| Synonyms: | brink, perimeter, fringe |
| In a sentence: | Many women feel they are being kept on the periphery of the armed forces. |

## ritual

* an established and prescribed procedure for a ceremony, especially a religious one

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | rituals, ritualistic |
| Synonyms: | ceremony, custom, practice |
| In a sentence: | Drinking sips of rice wine is part of the traditional marriage ritual in Japan. |

## sedentary

* living in a fixed location; not migratory

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | adjective |
| Word forms: | sedentism |
| Synonyms: | stationary |
| In a sentence: | Longhouses were built by mostly sedentary tribes because they take a long time to build and migratory tribes do not have enough time to build such ornate structures. |

## Silk Road

* a name given to the ancient trade routes between China and southern Europe, through southern Asia

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | proper noun |
| Word forms: |  |
| Synonyms: |  |
| In a sentence: | The Silk Road was not only a number of trade routes for the buying and selling of goods, but also for the exchange of religion and ideas. |

## smelting

* to melt or fuse (ores) as a means of separating and obtaining the metal content

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | verb |
| Word forms: | smelt, smelts, smelted |
| Synonyms: | melt, extract |
| In a sentence: | In order to extract iron from ore you need to smelt the metal compound in a furnace. |

## social hierarchy

* the differentiation and categorization of people into different ranks based on factors such as wealth or power

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | social hierarchies |
| Synonyms: | social stratification, social classes |
| In a sentence: | Often, social hierarchies can make it difficult for people of lower classes to find success because they do not have access to the same resources as do people of the upper classes. |

## society

* a community or group of people who live in the same country or area and are linked with each other by such things as laws and customs

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | societies, societal |
| Synonyms: | community, association, network, group |
| In a sentence: | Every society considers some behaviors acceptable and others unacceptable. |

## specialist

* a person who pursues a single interest or area of study

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | specialists, specialization |
| Synonyms: | expert, authority |
| In a sentence: | The medical specialist helped treat wounds because no official medical practices had been established yet. |

## steppe

* a broad, somewhat arid grass plain, especially the great plains in southeast Russia and southwest Asia

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | steppes |
| Synonyms: | grassland, plain |
| In a sentence: | Pastoralists wandered the steppes to let their animals to graze. |

## taxes

* a sum of money levied by government on income, property, or sales and used for its services and administration

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | tax, taxation, taxing, taxed |
| Synonyms: | tariff, surcharge |
| In a sentence: | The English monarchy imposed many taxes on the American colonists for items such as sugar and stamps. |

## trade

* the act of buying and selling commodities, or all such acts collectively

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | tradeable, tradeless |
| Synonyms: | commerce, business, exchange |
| In a sentence: | The new treaty will strongly affect trade between the two countries. |

## urban

* of or pertaining to a city or town

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | adjective |
| Word forms: | urbanization |
| Synonyms: | metropolitan |
| In a sentence: | New York City is one of the most populous urban areas in the United States. |