

Key Era Vocabulary

This report provides a summary of key vocabulary for this era. 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.

animism

- the belief that spiritual beings or souls can exist without a body to house them or in plants, animals, and other objects

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	animistic, animist
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	Immigrants from various Asian countries have brought the belief in animism to various US communities.

assimilate

- to absorb and incorporate (an ethnically distinct group) into the dominant culture of an area

Part of speech:	verb
Word forms:	assimilates, assimilating, assimilated
Synonyms:	integrate, naturalize
In a sentence:	The villagers were forcibly assimilated into the society of the conquerors.

belief system

- a set of principles or tenets which together form the basis of a religion, philosophy, or moral code

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	belief systems
Synonyms:	value system
In a sentence:	Cheating on a test violates her personal belief system.

caste system

- a social structure in which one's class in society is determined by heredity

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	caste, caste systems
Synonyms:	social hierarchy, social classes
In a sentence:	The Indian caste system was very rigid and made it difficult for someone of a lower class to move into a higher class.

centralized government

- a type of government in which decisions are made by one executive power

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	central government
Synonyms:	monarchy
In a sentence:	Although the nation is controlled by a centralized government, local governments are also able to make laws.

city

- a large and significant town, usually a locally governed commercial and population center

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	cities
Synonyms:	metropolis, municipality
In a sentence:	Many people work in the city and commute to their homes in the suburbs.

city-state

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

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)

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.

convert

- to change or influence change in someone else's or one's own faith or beliefs

Part of speech:	verb
Word forms:	converts, converting, converted
Synonyms:	compulsory, involuntary, forced
In a sentence:	She began the process to convert to Judaism when she became engaged to someone of the faith.

culture

- the sum of the language, customs, beliefs, and art considered characteristic of a particular group of people

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	cultures, cultural, culturing, cultured
Synonyms:	civilization, folkway
In a sentence:	The Catholic Church has played a large role in the development of French culture.

cuneiform

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

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.

diaspora

- a scattering of any people with a common culture

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	diasporas
Synonyms:	exodus, dispersal, exile
In a sentence:	When war broke out in their home country, a large diaspora settled in a neighboring nation.

divisions of labor

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

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.

doctrine

- a belief or system of beliefs held and promoted by a religious, governmental, academic, or other group; dogma

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	doctrines, doctrinal
Synonyms:	dogma, creed, gospel
In a sentence:	This book compares Christian doctrine with Hindu doctrine.

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

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

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.

enslaved

- to cause to be a slave or to be in a condition of bondage

Part of speech:	verb
Word forms:	enslaves, enslaving, enslave
Synonyms:	subjugated, coerced, imprisoned, forced
In a sentence:	The Romans enslaved thousands of people, with many being owned by the state to work in agricultural and mining industries.

government

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

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

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

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

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

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

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"

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

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

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.

meritocracy

- a system in which people attain power, influence, and wealth because of their intellectual abilities rather than because of their class status or family lineage

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	meritocracies
Synonyms:	merit system
In a sentence:	In order to move up in the meritocracy, all government officials must pass a series of tests used to measure their intellectual abilities.

monotheism

- the belief that there is only one supreme being

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	monotheist, monotheistic, monotheistically
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	Monotheism is a core belief of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

nomadic

- pertaining to, being, or resembling a member of a group or tribe that has no permanent home and moves from place to place

Part of speech:	adjective
Word forms:	nomad, nomads
Synonyms:	migratory, vagabond
In a sentence:	The nomadic tribes moved as the weather changed and prey migrated.

oral tradition

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

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.

origin stories

- a narrative about the beginning of the Universe or humanity

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	origin story
Synonyms:	narratives, oral histories
In a sentence:	Spiderman's origin story begins with Peter Parker being bitten by a radioactive spider.

pantheon

- all gods of a people, collectively; a temple dedicated to all of a people's gods

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	pantheons
Synonyms:	temple
In a sentence:	The Ancient Greek pantheon includes the Olympians such as Zeus and Athena.

patriarchal

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

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

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.

persecute

- to subject (especially those belonging to a different political, religious, or racial group) to persistent harassment, punishment, or ill-treatment

Part of speech:	verb
Word forms:	persecutes, persecuting, persecuted, persecution
Synonyms:	harass, oppress
In a sentence:	The Nazis wanted to persecute Jews, Roma, Poles, and political opponents, as well as people with disabilities, by sending them to concentration camps.

philosophy

- the study of the nature and principles of knowledge, truth, existence, and moral and aesthetic values; any system of ideas and theories based on such study

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	philosophies, philosophical
Synonyms:	ideology, theory, doctrine
In a sentence:	The philosophy of Confucius emphasized virtues such as loyalty and trustworthiness.

pilgrimage

- a long trip undertaken for religious purposes, such as to visit a holy place

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	pilgrimages
Synonyms:	journey, voyage, mission
In a sentence:	The family of Muslims set off on their pilgrimage to Mecca.

polytheistic

- the belief in more than one god

Part of speech:	adjective
Word forms:	polytheist, polytheistically
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	Christianity is not a polytheistic religion because it only accepts the existence of one god.

portable

- capable of being carried or transported

Part of speech:	adjective
Word forms:	portably, portability
Synonyms:	mobile, movable, transportable
In a sentence:	She was able to take her portable camera everywhere with her during her trip.

prophet

- a teacher, leader, or spokesperson of a movement or cause, especially a religious one, who is believed to be the recipient of some special inspiration or revelation

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	prophets, prophetic
Synonyms:	guide, messenger
In a sentence:	The Hebrew prophet Ezekiel foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.

ritual

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

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

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

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 order

- the totality of structured human interrelationships in a society

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	social orders
Synonyms:	social harmony
In a sentence:	Police officers will be walking around the rally grounds in order to help keep the peace and maintain social order.

social stratification

- the differentiation and categorization of people into social hierarchies

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	
Synonyms:	social classes, social hierarchies
In a sentence:	Often, social stratification 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

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

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

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

syncretism

- an attempted combination or reconciliation of different principles, beliefs, or practices, especially in religion or philosophy

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	syncretic, syncretistic, syncretist
Synonyms:	unification, consolidation
In a sentence:	The syncretism of the two religions was made possible by their shared goal to unite the people of the river valley.

taxes

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

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

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.

trade network

- a series of roads, waterways, railroads, and air routes that allow groups to trade goods with one another; a loose organization of societies that exchange goods with each other

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	trade networks
Synonyms:	exchange network
In a sentence:	In both ancient and modern times, trade networks have allowed for cultural exchange between societies.

urban

- of or pertaining to a city or town

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.