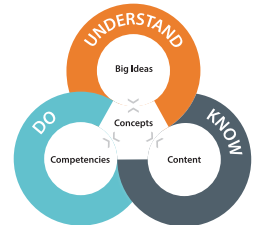# Ancient Peoples and Cannabis Use

"Of all the plants men have ever grown, none has been praised and denounced as often as marijuana (Cannabis sativa). Throughout the ages, marijuana has been extolled as one of man's greatest benefactors - and cursed as one of his greatest scourges. Marijuana is undoubtedly a herb that has been many things to many people. Armies and navies have used it to make war, men and women to make love. Hunters and fishermen have snared the most ferocious creatures, from the tiger to the shark, in its herculean weave. Fashion designers have dressed the most elegant women in its supple knit. Hangmen have snapped the necks of thieves and murderers with its fiber. Obstetricians have eased the pain of childbirth with its leaves. Farmers have crushed its seeds and used the oil within to light their lamps. Mourners have thrown its seeds into blazing fires and have had their sorrow transformed into blissful ecstasy by the fumes that filled the air."

~E. L. Abel, *Marijuana: The first twelve thousand years*

This lesson uses the Drug History Timeline to help students explore the place of cannabis in human experience from early times to the present. The timeline can be filtered by substance (e.g., cannabis), by region (e.g., China), by topic (e.g., medicinal use) or by typing a word in the search box. By resizing or dragging the view box at the bottom, students can view different parts of the timeline. Selecting one of the visible entries will open a slideshow with details of all entries in the current filter.

Instructional strategies

1. After familiarizing students with the Drug History Timeline, have students work independently, in pairs or small groups to learn about cannabis in ancient times (suggest they focus on the period from the beginning of the timeline up to about 200 CE). Have students collect facts and ideas to answer the following questions and then facilitate a class discussion about their findings.

- In what cultures was cannabis used in ancient times?

- For what different purposes did ancient peoples use the cannabis plant?

- What advice might ancient peoples give us about cannabis?

2. Based on their historical review, ask students to write a short report or do an art project exploring something of the complex relationship between humans and cannabis.

>>

Drug literacy

Big ideas

- ✓ People have been using drugs for thousands of years and in almost every human culture.
- ✓ Drugs can be tremendously helpful and also very harmful.
- ✓ We can learn how to control our drug use by reflecting on the different ways people have thought about drugs, exploring stories from various cultures and listening to each other.

Competencies

- ✓ assess the complex ways in which drugs impact the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, communities and societies
- ✓ explore and appreciate diversity related to the reasons people use drugs, the impact of drug use and the social attitudes toward various drugs
- ✓ recognize binary constructs (e.g., good vs bad) and assess their limitation in addressing complex social issues like drug use
- ✓ develop social and communication skills in addressing discourse and behaviour related to drugs

Links to curriculum

Social Studies 7

Big ideas

- ✓ Geographic conditions shaped the emergence of civilizations
- ✓ Religious and cultural practices that emerged during this period have endured and continue to influence people
- ✓ Economic specialization and trade networks can lead to conflict and cooperation between societies

Competencies

- ✓ Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to — ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions
- ✓ Assess the significance of people, places, events, or developments at particular times and places (significance)
- ✓ Determine which causes most influenced particular decisions, actions, or events, and assess their short- and long-term consequences (cause and consequence)
- ✓ Explain different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events, and compare the values, worldviews, and beliefs of human cultures and societies in different times and places (perspective)
- ✓ Make ethical judgments about past events, decisions, or actions, and assess the limitations of drawing direct lessons from the past (ethical judgment)