

Simulation Board Game / Strategy Game Design Project

This is a **fully developed, classroom-ready group project** for **Simulation Board Game or Strategy Game Design**, where students create, test, and refine an original game based on historical alliances, battles, trade networks, political power, or diplomacy. This project works perfectly for: Wars • revolutions • imperialism • empires • colonization • civilizations • trade networks • exploration • Cold War • ANY unit where geography + power matter.

Students collaboratively design, build, and playtest a board or strategy game based on a historical era, conflict, or network of interactions.

Games must model real alliances, economic systems, battles, cultural contacts, diplomacy, or trade routes.

I. Purpose of the Project

Students learn to:

- Model complex historical systems
 - Understand cause-and-effect in wars, trade, and politics
 - Think strategically like historical actors
 - Use maps as functional game boards
 - Design rules, mechanics, and objectives
 - Collaborate through iterative design
 - Make history interactive and dynamic
 - Communicate ideas through clear instructions
 - Integrate creativity with historical accuracy
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II. Group Setup

Group Size: 4–6 students**

Roles:

1. **Lead Historian** – Ensures accuracy of events, factions, geography, and technologies
2. **Game Designer / Mechanic Creator** – Builds win conditions, rules, movement systems
3. **Artist / Board Designer** – Creates the map, cards, tokens, visuals
4. **Writer / Rulebook Author** – Drafts instructions, game lore, scenarios

5. **Playtester Coordinator** – Runs tests, gathers feedback
6. **Resource Manager** – Gathers supplies, organizes components

Roles may rotate through phases.

III. Materials Needed

- Poster board or cardboard for game board
- Blank index cards (event cards, resource cards, alliance cards)
- Tokens, dice, colored chips, pawns
- Markers, colored pencils, rulers
- Laminating sheets (optional)
- Game project rubric
- Instruction-writing template
- Historical maps, timelines, primary sources

Digital option: design on Canva, Google Slides, or Tabletop Simulator.

IV. Choose a Game Theme (5 minutes)

Students select **one historical focus** and build a game around it.

Wars / Battles

- Peloponnesian War
- Roman vs. Carthage (Punic Wars)
- Mongol conquests
- Hundred Years' War
- American Revolution
- WWI alliances
- WWII expansion & resistance

Imperialism / Colonization

- Scramble for Africa
- Spanish conquest of the Americas
- British in India
- Japanese imperialism

Civilizations / Empires

- Ancient Egypt
- Maya/Olmec/Aztec
- Persia
- China (Han, Qing)
- Ottoman Empire
- Mali Empire

Trade Networks

- Silk Road
- Trans-Saharan
- Indian Ocean trade
- Triangle Trade (with careful framing)
- Mediterranean commerce

Diplomacy / Politics

- Treaty of Versailles
- Cold War
- Renaissance Italian city-states
- UN negotiations simulation

V. Step-by-Step Procedure (90–180 minutes or multi-day)

Step 1 — Research Phase (10–20 minutes)

Groups gather:

- Key regions and borders
- Important cities/trade hubs
- Alliances / rivalries
- Resources
- Military strengths/weaknesses
- Technologies
- Political structures

Lead Historian checks facts for accuracy.

Step 2 — Identify Core Game Mechanics (10–15 minutes)

Groups decide how the game works. It must include at least **two** of the following:

Possible Mechanics

- **Conquest:** armies move on a map
- **Diplomacy:** negotiate alliances, trade agreements
- **Trade:** exchange cards/resources for points
- **Technology:** research upgrades
- **Events:** random cards change conditions
- **Territory Control:** hold key cities/regions
- **Cultural Influence:** spread religion, language, ideas
- **Economy:** gather gold, food, silver, spices

Possible Objectives

- Capture a capital
- Control the most trade routes
- Maintain alliances
- Build an empire
- Outlast rivals
- Achieve wealth goals
- Complete missions

Game Designer ensures coherence.

Step 3 — Design the Map / Board (20–30 minutes)

Artist + Historian create a map that reflects the actual geography:

- Mountains, rivers, deserts
- Trade routes
- Borders or war fronts
- Ports + sea lanes
- Cities, capitals, fortresses
- Resource zones (gold mines, farmland, timber, spices)

Teacher Tip: Allow use of printed maps as templates.

Step 4 — Create Game Components (20–30 minutes)

1. Tokens / Pieces

Represent armies, diplomats, traders, fleets, settlers, merchants, tribes, or factions.

2. Cards

Students must create at least **12–20 cards** in categories such as:

- **Event Cards:** drought, invasion, plague, alliance shifts
- **Resource Cards:** silk, horses, iron, spices, gold
- **Diplomacy Cards:** treaty, betrayal, marriage alliance
- **Battle Cards:** reinforcements, ambush, morale boost

Each card must reference a real historical idea.

Writer creates card text; Artist designs layout.

Step 5 — Write Rulebook & Instructions (10–20 minutes)

Groups write clear, concise instructions including:

- Overview of the historical scenario
- Game objectives
- Player roles/factions
- Setup instructions
- Turn order
- Movement rules
- Battle or negotiation rules
- Win conditions
- Example turn
- Glossary of game terms

Writer ensures clarity; Editor checks for historical accuracy.

Step 6 — Playtesting (20–30 minutes)

Groups exchange games.

Playtester Coordinator leads trial round.

Checklist for Playtesting:

- Is it fun?

- Are rules clear?
- Does the game *represent history accurately*?
- Is it balanced (one side not automatically winning)?
- Does strategy matter?
- Are there logical consequences for actions (like in real history)?

Groups revise based on feedback.

Step 7 — Final Presentation (10–20 minutes)

Each group presents:

1. Their game board
2. Main mechanics
3. Historical connections
4. Demo turn
5. Rationale for design choices
6. What players learn about the era by playing

Students can even let classmates play 10-minute mini-rounds.

VI. Example Game Models (Teacher Options)

1. “Silk Road Tycoon”

Players trade spices, silk, horses; must survive bandits + diplomacy.

2. “Age of Empires: Mali Edition”

Control gold mines, camel caravans, and religious influence.

3. “Imperial Rivalries: Scramble for Africa”

Players claim land but face consequences of resistance, disease, and rival powers.

4. “Allies & Empires: WWI Diplomacy Game”

Form secret alliances; one wrong move triggers world war.

5. “Voyage of the Polynesians”

Navigate winds, currents, and resource scarcity to settle islands.

VII. Optional Extensions

1. Video Instructions

Students film a “How to Play” tutorial.

2. Digital Version

Rebuild the game with Google Slides or Canva templates.

3. Expansion Pack

Create optional add-on cards to change scenario outcomes.

4. Historical Alternate Endings

“What if the Silk Road collapsed early?”

“What if Carthage won the Second Punic War?”

“What if alliances shifted differently in WWI?”

5. Museum Display

Groups set up their game like a museum exhibit.

VIII. Assessment Options

A. Project Rubric

- Historical accuracy
- Creativity + originality
- Functional game mechanics
- Clarity of instructions
- Visual design + board quality
- Collaboration
- Playability

B. Reflection Questions

- How does your game model real historical systems?
- What was the hardest mechanic to balance?
- What historical lessons can players learn from your design?
- How does your game highlight cause-and-effect?
- What changes made the game more accurate or fair?