Class 9 Social Science Chapter 1: Understanding Social Science - Notes, Important Questions and MCQs (2026-27)

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These Class 9 Social Science Chapter 1 notes cover “Understanding Social Science” from the new NCERT textbook Understanding Society: India and Beyond (Part 1, 2026-27): what Social Science means, why it matters, how society changes through time, its four branches – Geography, History, Political Science and Economics – the sources historians use, and how social scientists study society – with tables, Q&A, 10 MCQs and a free PDF.

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Chapter Overview

Human beings live in societies and depend on one another. Even simple daily activities – buying vegetables, travelling to school, using water – rely on systems of governance, production, cooperation and the natural environment. Social Science is the study of these human societies and how people interact with each other and with their surroundings.

The chapter introduces the four disciplines studied in Grades 9 and 10, shows how societies have changed over thousands of years, explains the evidence and methods social scientists use, and stresses that Social Science is about understanding people, places, culture and power – not memorising dates and maps.

Important Topics and Concepts

What is Social Science?

- The study of human society – how people live, work, govern themselves and relate to their environment.
- It helps answer questions such as why some people live in crowded cities and others in villages, or why prices rise.
- It links the past, present and future: learning from the past, analysing the present and imagining a better future.
- It prepares students to be informed, thoughtful and responsible citizens while staying rooted in India's cultural traditions.

Society through Time and Traditions

- Early humans depended directly on nature; over time they learnt to grow crops, domesticate animals and settle in villages and towns.
- Institutions such as families, communities, kingdoms and markets developed and changed.
- Social scientists observe people's lives, conduct interviews and surveys, study documents and compare different times and places.
- By gathering and analysing evidence, they explain how and why societies change.

The Four Branches

- Geography: location and distribution of places, materials and people, and the relationship between human societies and their surroundings – landforms, climate, oceans, biomes.
- History: the study of the past using evidence; how people lived, how kingdoms and civilisations rose and changed.
- Political Science: the study of governance – how power is distributed, decisions are made and policies implemented; constitutions, governments and institutions.
- Economics: how individuals and societies use limited resources to meet needs – production, exchange and distribution of goods and services.

Sources of History

- Literary sources: texts and manuscripts such as the Vedas, epics and palm-leaf manuscripts.
- Archaeological sources: material remains – tools, pottery, figurines, sculptures, buildings.
- Epigraphic sources: inscriptions on stone, pillars, copper plates and temple walls (e.g. Brahmi inscriptions of the Gupta period, Kannada inscriptions of Krishnadeva Raya).
- Numismatic sources: coins, which reveal rulers, trade, metals and dates.

Why Study Social Science?

- Everything around us – houses, water supply, roads, schools, markets and digital spaces – is part of systems created and managed by society.
- Social Science explains how these systems developed and how they can be improved.
- It builds skills of analysing evidence, comparing perspectives and thinking independently.
- It encourages empathy, national unity and active participation in shaping society.

Branches at a Glance

Most-asked table.

Branch	Studies	Example question
Geography	Places, people and environment	Why is Kerala rainier than Rajasthan?
History	The past through evidence	How did the Harappan cities function?
Political Science	Power, government, institutions	How are laws made in India?
Economics	Use of scarce resources	Why do onion prices rise in some months?

Types of Historical Sources

Source	Meaning	Example
Literary	Written texts and manuscripts	Sāmaveda manuscript, palm-leaf texts
Archaeological	Material remains	Terracotta figurines, sculptures
Epigraphic	Inscriptions	Gupta-period Brahmi pillar inscription
Numismatic	Coins	Gold coins of ancient dynasties

Important Definitions and Terms

Term	Meaning
Social Science	Study of human society and relationships among people and with the environment
Society	A group of people living together with shared institutions and relations
Geography	Study of places, people and their environment
History	Study of the past using evidence
Political Science	Study of governance, power and institutions
Economics	Study of how limited resources are used to meet needs
Epigraphy	Study of inscriptions
Numismatics	Study of coins
Archaeology	Study of the past through material remains
Survey	Collecting information from many people through questions

Short Answer Questions

Q1. What is Social Science?

The study of human societies – how people live, interact, govern themselves and relate to their environment.

Q2. Name the four branches of Social Science studied in Class 9.

Geography, History, Political Science and Economics.

Q3. What does Geography study?

Q4. What is Political Science?

The study of governance – how power is distributed, decisions are made and policies implemented.

Q5. What does Economics study?

How individuals and societies use limited resources to meet needs, and how goods and services are produced, exchanged and distributed.

Q6. What are epigraphic sources?

Inscriptions on stone, pillars, copper plates or walls that give information about the past.

Q7. Name two methods used by social scientists.

Interviews and surveys (also observation and study of documents).

Q8. How does Social Science help a citizen?

It helps people understand society, analyse issues and take part responsibly in improving it.

Long Answer Questions

Q1. Explain the four branches of Social Science with an example of each.

Geography – people and environment, e.g. why some regions get heavy rain.

History – the past through evidence, e.g. the life of Harappan cities.

Political Science – governance and institutions, e.g. how Parliament makes laws.

Economics – use of scarce resources, e.g. why prices of goods change.

Together they give a complete picture of society.

Q2. Describe the different types of sources used to study history.

Literary sources – texts, manuscripts and religious and secular literature.

Archaeological sources – tools, pottery, figurines, buildings.

Epigraphic sources – inscriptions on pillars, rocks and copper plates.

Numismatic sources – coins showing rulers, trade and dates.

Historians compare several sources to build a reliable picture.

Q3. “Social Science is not about memorising dates and maps.” Explain.

It aims to understand people, places, culture and power.

It asks why and how societies function and change.

It builds skills of analysing evidence and comparing perspectives.

It links past, present and future to solve real problems.

It prepares learners to act as aware and responsible citizens.

MCQs with Answers

1. Study of inscriptions is called(a) numismatics (b) epigraphy (c) archaeology (d) geographyAnswer: (b) epigraphy

2. Study of coins is called(a) numismatics (b) epigraphy (c) anthropology (d) economicsAnswer: (a) numismatics

3. Which branch studies how power is distributed?(a) Geography (b) History (c) Political Science (d) EconomicsAnswer: (c) Political Science

4. Which branch studies use of limited resources?(a) Economics (b) History (c) Geography (d) Political ScienceAnswer: (a) Economics

5. A terracotta figurine is a/an(a) literary source (b) archaeological source (c) numismatic source (d) epigraphic sourceAnswer: (b) archaeological source

6. The Sāmaveda manuscript is a(a) literary source (b) numismatic source (c) epigraphic source (d) mapAnswer: (a) literary source

7. Geography studies(a) only mountains (b) relationship between people and their surroundings (c) only maps (d) only climateAnswer: (b) relationship between people and their surroundings

8. Interviews and surveys are(a) historical sources (b) methods of social scientists (c) branches of geography (d) types of coinsAnswer: (b) methods of social scientists

9. Class 9 Social Science has how many disciplines?(a) two (b) three (c) four (d) fiveAnswer: (c) four

10. Social Science mainly helps us to(a) memorise dates (b) understand society and act responsibly (c) learn only maps (d) avoid questionsAnswer: (b) understand society and act responsibly

Quick Revision Points

- Social Science = study of human society.
- Four branches: Geography, History, Political Science, Economics.
- Sources: literary, archaeological, epigraphic, numismatic.
- Methods: observation, interviews, surveys, documents.
- Aim: understand past, analyse present, shape future.

Chapter Summary

Social Science studies how people live together, use resources, govern themselves and relate to their environment. Societies have changed greatly over time, and social scientists use evidence, interviews, surveys and comparisons to understand these changes.

The four disciplines – Geography, History, Political Science and Economics – each give a distinct view of society. Historians rely on literary, archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic sources. Together these subjects help students think independently and become responsible citizens.

Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern

- Learn one-line definitions of all four branches.
- The sources-of-history table is a likely 3-mark question.
- Give everyday examples to show how Social Science applies to life.
- Use the branch comparison table in long answers.
- Read the introduction of each later chapter to see how branches connect.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this chapter in the 2026-27 CBSE syllabus?

Yes. It is part of the new NCERT Class 9 Social Science textbook “Understanding Society: India and Beyond” (Part 1), prescribed for the 2026-27 session.

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Yes. Use the free PDF link at the top of this page – no signup needed.

What are the four branches of Social Science in Class 9?

Geography, History, Political Science and Economics.

What are the main sources of history?

Literary, archaeological, epigraphic (inscriptions) and numismatic (coins) sources.

Conclusion

Understanding Social Science sets the stage for the whole book. Learn the branches and sources tables, practise the Q&A here and save the free PDF for revision.

More Notes: Class 9 Social Science Chapter 2: Shaping of the Earth’s Surface notes | All Class 9 Social Science notes

Author Bio: Written and reviewed by the Nextoper Editorial Team, a group of CBSE social science educators who build chapter notes directly from the NCERT textbook and past board paper patterns.

Freshness Note: These notes follow the NCERT Class 9 Social Science textbook, Understanding Society: India and Beyond (Parts 1 and 2, first edition 2026, NCF-SE 2023), and the CBSE syllabus for the 2026-27 session. Last checked on 23 November 2026.