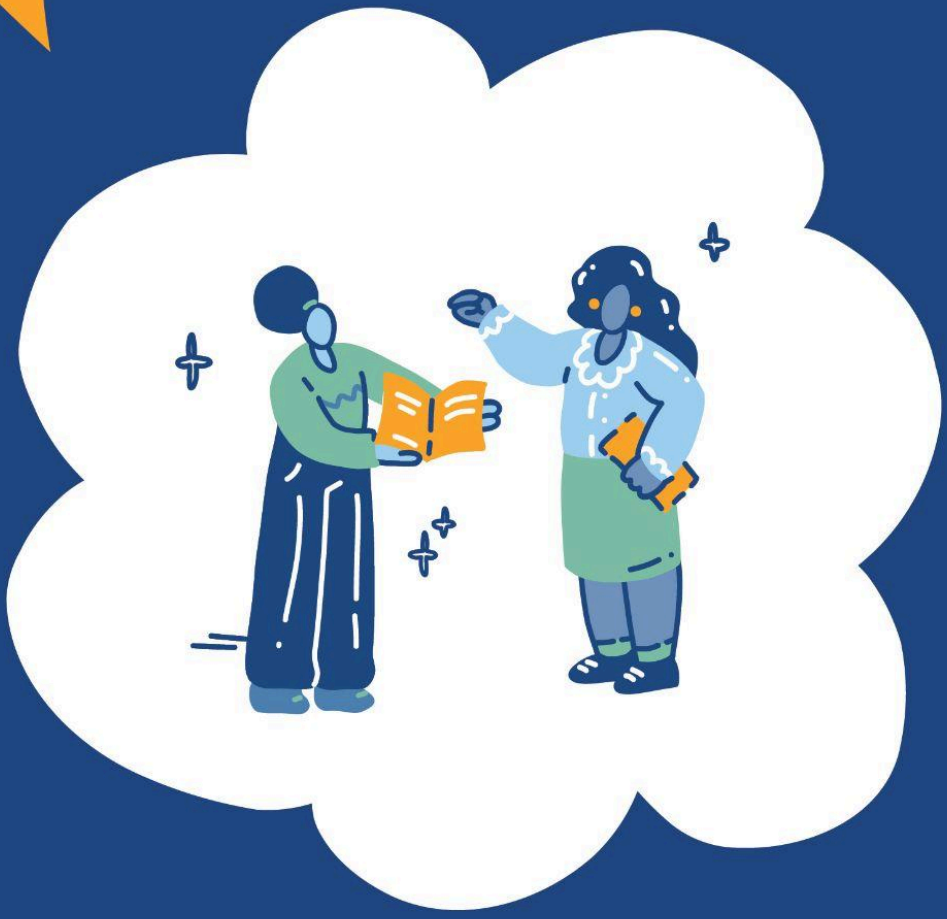
Investigating History



Grades 5-7
Curriculum Guidebook

June 2024

dese MASSACHUSETTS Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Acknowledgements

Investigating History is a collaboration between the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the following organizations:

Lead Curriculum Developer:

PRIMARY SOURCE
Educating global citizens

Additional Development Partners:

educurious
learning that connects

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
Wheelock College of Education and Human Development

CIRCLE
TISCH COLLEGE OF CIVIC LIFE

UMass Boston
College of Education and Human Development

All original content in this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License and © 2024 by DESE. Third party content including, but not limited to, images, illustrations, and photographs, are subject to their own license terms.

Reference in this curriculum to any specific commercial products, processes, or services, or the use of any trade, firm, or corporation name is for the information and convenience of the public, and does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Our office is not responsible for and does not in any way guarantee the accuracy of information in other sites accessible through links herein. For more information please contact: InvestigatingHistory@mass.gov.

About this Guidebook

Adopting a comprehensive curriculum like Investigating History is a significant undertaking. This guidebook is designed to help orient you to the materials—both their technical design and organization as well as the architecture of inquiry that shapes students' learning over the course of a unit. The guidebook also includes suggestions for internalizing lessons and preparing to teach them.

Orientation to the Materials

Course Structure

Each course in Investigating History is broken down into four or five **units**. These units feature:

- Essential Questions to anchor students' learning and drive their inquiry forward through the unit
- Enduring Understandings that lay out the most important conceptual understanding for students to take from the unit
- Prioritized content, practice, and literacy standards that will be the focus of instruction
- A Summative Assessment that reflects the culmination of students' learning at the end of the unit.

Units are divided into lesson **clusters**; lesson clusters are thematically related and generally based around a single supporting question (at times, longer clusters may leverage two supporting questions). The supporting question provides a narrower focus to guide students' day to day inquiry; each supporting question contributes to their deepening understanding of one or more of the unit Essential Questions.

An overview of the unit including Essential and Supporting Questions, Enduring Understandings, priority standards, and daily lesson objectives can be found in each unit's **Inquiry Map.**

Lesson Structure

Lessons in Investigating History have a number of components designed to support you as a teacher. At the top of each lesson plan, you'll find:

- **Context** that explains the focus of the day's work including key practices and literacy skills, as well as how the lesson connects to previous learning and sets the stage for the rest of the unit.
- A **learning and language objective** describing the intended outcome of the lesson; language objectives also include suggested **differentiation and scaffolding** to support students at varying levels of English proficiency.

- **Vocabulary** that is introduced in the lesson
- Links to any **materials** that are required for the lesson

Working through the different components of each lesson, you may also see:

- Stars that reflect **key moments** - important parts of class that are "can't miss" because they play a critical role in the unit as a whole or are a place where students learn essential content or skills. These can help you prioritize as you are making decisions about planning and pacing.
- **Sidebar notes** that include:
    - Suggestions to support all students through particularly complex tasks or challenging literacy work
    - Teaching notes that provide opportunities for you to deepen your knowledge and continue your learning
    - Points to make connections to prior learning or preview ideas that will be developed in upcoming lessons
- **Check in** moments that can be used as formative assessments of all students' learning; see below.
- Icons that denote the **inquiry routines** described in the next section of this Guidebook.

Assessments in Investigating History

Formative Assessments appear throughout the unit, generally marked as "**check ins**" or **exit tickets**. These are important moments for you to gather information about all students' learning and progress on the key learning of the unit.

Summative Assessments are primarily focused on assessing students' mastery of historical practices and understanding of unit concepts rather than probing their ability to recall facts and terminology. Although students will need to marshall knowledge of the past in order to be successful, most summative assessments are open-note and students can freely look back at their work from the unit as they engage in the tasks.

Assessments are accompanied by examples of student mastery for teachers to reference as well as a "one point rubric." This rubric lays out a description of what proficiency looks like for each criterion, but is not further subdivided (e.g. into a 1-4 or 1-10 point scale). Recognizing that different teachers, schools, and districts have different grading approaches, we encourage you to adopt the structure of these rubrics if necessary to best align with your practices.

Unit Design: The Inquiry Routines

A central part of the design of Investigating History is the deliberate and strategic development of students' capacity to conduct authentic, historical inquiry. Through leveraging a set of instructional routines, teachers can support students' engagement in inquiry with greater independence and depth over time.

While the routines may look slightly different, depending on the lesson context and grade level, each routine is defined by certain consistent components that are included whenever it appears. The inquiry cycle also gives students an opportunity to engage with the Practice Standards from the 2018 History/Social Science Framework; these are practices which lie at the heart of the work of historians and social scientists—and of active, engaged citizens.

The Inquiry Arc

Inquiry in Investigating History follows an arc through three stages. At each stage, the nature of the work students are doing and the type of thinking they are focused on looks slightly different. Each stage aligns with one or more practice standards and is anchored in a particular instructional routine.

Ask authentic history/social science questions to launch an inquiry (PS 2)

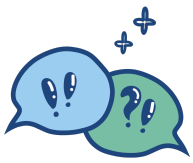
Launching the Question Routine

Student thinking is expansive and predictive

Dig into diverse and complex sources to gather evidence (PS 3, 4, 5)

Investigating Sources Routine

Student thinking is targeted and analytic, grounded in disciplinary skills



Collaborate with peers to make sense of learning, answer the inquiry question(s) (PS 6, 7)

Putting it Together Routine

Student thinking is synthetic and inferential, leveraging evidence to explain or argue

Launching the Question

When do we use it?

When introducing a new question that students will engage with meaningfully; typically, at the beginning of a cluster or new inquiry cycle. This may be a unit essential question, cluster supporting question, or a more specific question that will drive one or more days of learning.

Why do we use it?

- Engage students' curiosity and build motivation for learning
- Activate students' relevant prior knowledge, experiences, and conceptual schemas that provide context for the question
- Ensure that all students know the specific question they are working to answer and understand how they will begin to answer it
- Sharpen students' ability to generate questions that frame and advance an inquiry

What are its pieces and what do they look like?

1. Establish the context, purpose, and/or puzzle.

Students need to be engaged cognitively and effectively before diving into an inquiry question. Teachers launch this process by sparking their interest. Ideally, students' curiosity will be activated in such a way that they may begin asking questions (if unformed and tentative ones) without much prompting at all. As part of this, teachers may also need to establish a bit of context.

2. Introduce the question.

Typically, this question will be found in the lesson materials; our goal here is to establish students' shared understanding of it as the focal point for their thinking.

3. Engage in generative thinking about what we know, think we know, and/or wonder.

When historians answer questions, they figure out what they already know and what they want to know. Depending on the point in the year and the unit, the balance between students' ability to articulate these things may vary—what is important is that students are actively engaging with and taking ownership of the question, fitting it into the arc of what they have already learned and where they will go next.

4. Set up our next steps.

The final step transitions us from the question launch to the remainder of the lesson, inquiry cycle, or cluster. It's important to ground this transition in the generative thinking students have just done, rather than simply setting the routine aside.

Investigating Sources

When do we use it?

When we are deeply engaging with primary and/or secondary sources to answer a question, particularly with sources that demand careful and close reading.

Why do we use it?

- Build students' content knowledge; gather the information from diverse evidence (sources and/or perspectives) that will help students learn more about the past and present
- Sharpen students' ability to "read like historians" and citizens, including critically assessing sources' usefulness and reliability
- Move students towards answering the essential and/or supporting question through a combination of independent and collaborative work

What are its pieces and what do they look like?

1. Get clear on the question to answer or the purpose for the investigation.

Purposeful framing before students launch into sustained, challenging independent work is critical. Teachers can bring students into this part of the process through asking them to step back and take stock of where they are in their learning, e.g., "What are we trying to figure out?" "What do we already know?"

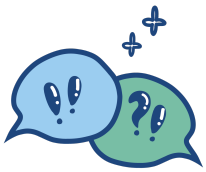
2. Create a plan.

As a classroom community, teachers and students determine what source(s) they will use, how they will organize information, annotation strategy, etc. In some cases, this will be provided in the lesson plan and this step merely involves clearly setting up the task for students; at other times, there may be an element of student choice (e.g., choosing which sources from a variety available should be prioritized and why).

3. For each source...

- **Meet the document.**
- **Observe its parts.**
- **Try to make sense of it.**
- **Use it as historical evidence.**

To learn more about this approach, read the Document Analysis protocol created by the National Archives.



Putting it Together

When do we use it?

After students have worked independently or in small groups to engage with evidence; typically, to close an inquiry cycle.

Why do we use it?

- Engage students in synthesizing diverse evidence and drawing connections between them: identifying points of corroboration and resolving potential contradictions.
- Push students to identify key takeaways/understandings from the lesson.
- Help students answer, even if only partially, the essential and/or supporting question.
- Foster a collaborative application of disciplinary and close reading skills; model how these help us draw well-supported conclusions.
- Develop students' ability to engage in student-to-student, collaborative, evidence-based discourse and build a culture where this discourse is the norm.

What are its pieces and what do they look like?

1. Take stock of what we learned and use it to answer the question.

The heart of the putting it together routine is rich, whole class discourse aligned to the question we've been working to answer. In this discourse...

> Students are sharing evidence, tying it back to the question at stake, building on and responding to each others' contributions, and asking each other questions to clarify thinking. It's important to balance deep probing of one particular source or angle on the question with getting all the relevant evidence "out in the open" as students move back and forth between the conceptual and the concrete.
>
> Teachers are listening carefully, helping move the discussion along as needed through both feedback and probing questions. They should be focusing their attention on two things. First, are students moving towards the key content takeaways and conceptual understandings that are the focus of the day's learning? Second, are students engaging effectively in collaborative, evidence-based habits of discussion?

2. Make our thinking visible and track key ideas.

At various points in the discussion, students and/or teachers "capture" key ideas as they emerge. They might take notes individually or as a whole class, or they may return to an anchor chart to add more information (e.g., if we have been answering the same question for multiple lessons).

3. Process and stamp what we've learned.

To close our discussion, all students engage in synthesis and summary in order to process the conversation and prioritize their takeaways. This might look like a quick turn and talk between pairs, a few-sentence exit ticket, or a more extended written response.

Internalizing a Lesson

It is important to take the time to get to know each Investigating History lesson well in advance of teaching it. Understanding the most important skills and content that students are learning, anticipating key places for student practice and feedback, and planning proactively for where you might need to adjust timing will help you bring the learning to life for students.

Read through the Summative Assessment and Unit Overview for the unit before you internalize the individual lessons. These documents offer a vision of the skills and understandings that students will need to demonstrate by the end of the unit, helping bring into focus the activities throughout the unit where students cultivate these skills.

As you read and internalize a particular lesson, you will find it helpful to open and follow along with the associated slidedeck and handouts, as these materials integrate closely with what you read in the lesson plan. Accessing the lessons in digital form initially is recommended, as it makes these interconnections most clear. It can be difficult to understand the lessons without reference to their accompanying materials.

We recommend a set of steps - the **Lesson Internalization Road Map** - as you prepare to teach a lesson. The Road Map guides you through:

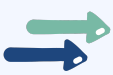
1. Getting Oriented
2. Pausing for Equity
3. Identifying the Point of Key Cognitive Load
4. Determining the Green Light
5. Focusing on Discourse
6. Getting Situated
7. Planning Forward

The Road Map is accompanied by a Professional Learning Guide that offers two sets of supporting questions for teachers to use as they work through the Road Map:

- **Onramp Questions**: What thinking and/or resources can help me complete this step?
- **Extra Mile Questions**: How can I push my thinking and planning further?

Investigating History Lesson Road Map

These questions represent the green light or "must do" preparation at each step of the internalization process. *If you need extra support getting to the green light, consider using the* ***onramp questions****. If you want to push your thinking further, consider some of the* ***extra mile prompts****.*

Get Oriented 	**Script out your lesson framing.** • What are students learning? • Why are they learning it? • How will they be learning it?
Pause for Equity 	***What facilitation moves will you use to...***
	...take advantage of students' prior knowledge?
	...provide "mirrors" for more students to see elements of their identities in the lesson?
	...intentionally disrupt stereotypes and "single stories"?
Identify the Point of Key Cognitive Load 	**Where in the lesson is the most important thinking happening?**
	What instructional moves will allow <u>all</u> students to do this thinking? **What scaffolds might you leverage?**
Determine the Green Light 	**Write the <u>exemplar response</u>:** What would you see or hear from a student who has mastered this thinking?
	What success criteria make that response exemplary?
	What does a <u>partial mastery</u> response look like? **What would you do or say?**
Focus on Discourse 	**Where is discussion happening in the lesson?** How will you organize it to support student-to-student discourse?
	What are the key ideas you'd like to hear in that discussion?
Get Situated 	**What other logistics do you need to consider?** • How will you adapt if things run long? • Where are transitions happening? • What are your material needs or prep steps?
Plan Forward 	*After the lesson...*
	Review evidence of learning. Who met the green light? Who didn't?
	How will you respond? • Adaptations to future lessons? • Small-group/individual follow up?

Investigating History Lesson Road Map: Professional Learning Guide

This guide is intended to accompany the Investigating History Lesson Road Map. It can be used by individuals or educator teams to help provide additional questions and prompts that can support completing the Road Map and extending this preparation further.

Internalization Step	**Onramps**: What thinking and/or resources can help me complete this step?	**Extra Mile:** How can I push my thinking and planning further?
Get Oriented 	Review the context paragraph, learning objective(s), and formative assessment(s) in the lesson, as well as the **Question Launch Routine** if it appears in this lesson. Consider the lesson in context: • How does this lesson help students answer the Supporting Question and/or Essential Question? • How does this lesson build towards the summative assessment?	Practice delivering your framing and get feedback from a colleague. Plan your framing of individual tasks within the lesson to ensure that students will be clear on how they fit together work towards the lesson goal.
Pause for Equity 	Reflect upon: • What you and/or your students may have already learned about this topic • What assumptions and stereotypes you and/or your students may hold about this topic • Which students in your class are more or less likely to feel a connection to this topic and the individual(s) represented in the lesson • Whose story and experiences are being centered in this lesson	Notice which questions in the onramp and road map were harder for you to answer and consider how you could build your ability to answer them more easily in the future, e.g., through deepening your knowledge of your students and their backgrounds. Check your thinking with a colleague to see what biases or blind spots may be affecting your approach to this lesson.
Identify the Point of Key Cognitive Load 	Consider each task in the lesson: • What thinking and learning are students doing here? • What reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are required to access the task? • How does this task relate to the lesson objective? What do students know or what can they do at the end that they didn't/couldn't at the beginning? If the point of key cognitive load involves source work, identify elements of the **Investigating Sources** routine and the components of document analysis to better target your support: • Meeting the document • Observing its parts • Trying to make sense of it • Using it as historical evidence	Enlist specialist teachers to: • Dig more deeply into the barriers that some students may face to accessing the point of key cognitive load • Think collaboratively about the scaffolds and supports that might be most helpful at helping all students access the critical, grade level thinking of the task • Leverage any additional time (e.g. small group instruction provided by specialists) to provide extra support through preview, review, and/or reteaching

Determine the Green Light 	Review the lesson: • Objective • Formative assessments, checkpoints, and exit tickets • Teacher notes regarding essential takeaways at each portion of the lesson Review the bigger picture: • Knowledge or work products students will need to draw on in the next lesson(s) • How this lesson moves students towards the summative assessment • Information provided about learning targets in the lesson cluster introduction	Write out other possible partial mastery or fully incorrect student responses and plan how you would respond. Identify misconceptions or potential responses that might cause harm to the identities of some students and plan how you might respond. Plan how you will know and track whether all students meet the green light (e.g., jotting down notes as you circulate during independent work).
Focus on Discourse 	Review the **Putting it Together Routine** if it appears in the lesson to focus your attention on what question students are answering, what you should be listening for, and how it connects with their work in the rest of the lesson. Think about what students are doing to prepare to participate in the discussion and what they will do to process and stamp takeaways from the discussion immediately afterwards.	Reflect upon students' strengths and areas of growth related to academic discourse habits and consider how you might adapt your facilitation plan.
Get Situated 	Note how students are engaging at each point of the lesson and do any necessary pre-planning (e.g. assigning groups in advance) Open up all associated documents to determine how students will need to access them and whether you will need to make copies. In making decisions about cutting material for time, keep the green light and point of key cognitive load in mind to ensure that you are maintaining a focus on the most critical learning of the lesson.	Modify or adapt any materials: slide decks, handouts, student readings, etc. Update any whole-class charts/bulletin boards: vocabulary walls, running timelines, etc. Determine what, if anything, you will put in the gradebook for this lesson and how you will translate what you see into a grade.
Plan Forward 	Review the success criteria that you identified in drafting your mastery Green Light response. "Bucket" collected student work based on trends in which success criteria students did or did not meet. Use unit-level documents and work from professional development to determine which skills and content will reappear later in the unit and which must be deliberately retaught.	Notice any patterns in student successes or challenges and consider what may be behind them. Reflect upon your facilitation of the lesson and record any notes or changes for the next time you teach it.

Reminders As You Teach

No curriculum is a script.
While Investigating History is intended to provide a comprehensive curriculum, teachers will make myriad choices based on the students in front of them. For example, students may benefit from more or less scaffolding for a particular text or may require in-the-moment reteaching of concepts from a prior grade level. As a teacher, you may have additional routines and systems that already exist in your classroom for things like teaching vocabulary, supporting persuasive writing, or working in groups.

Skillfully implementing Investigating History involves leveraging all of these factors as you make the lessons your own. Effective unit and lesson internalization will help you remain focused on the "green light" of each lesson: the learning that students must demonstrate in order for you to feel ready to move on, even if your path towards that green light looks slightly different from the way it is laid out in the lesson plan.

Pacing involves classroom-level decision-making.
Investigating History lessons are written for class periods of 30 minutes (in fifth grade) or 50 minutes (in sixth and seventh grade) with students who are working for the most part at grade-level. This does not describe every class or block of time, of course, so there is room for individual adjustment on pacing and other matters. Some flexibility is built into the curriculum; while comprehensive, it does not account for every day of the school year. You can and should slow things down and speed things up as needed for your students, or use the "Key Moments" guidelines to make choices about priority activities.

This curriculum requires an investment of time and professional learning to teach with confidence.
Investigating History is an ambitious curriculum, and it is advisable to think about its adoption as a process that may take several years. Some of its topics are not typically taught in middle school, so the learning curve for you and your students may be significant! Apart from deepening your knowledge of the content, you may wish to boost your cultural competence regarding particular world regions, particularly as the demographic profile of the U.S. population or your school district changes.

Collaborating with your school or community librarians will be beneficial.
Throughout the year, there will be times when collaborating with your school or public librarian will be beneficial — for instance, for gaining access to maps, atlases, and research materials, or for accessing childrens' books or young adult texts. This curriculum provides lists of children's books or young adult literature suggestions where appropriate, but librarians will have broader knowledge and recent suggestions to add.

As you make the curriculum your own, be mindful of your own biases and blind spots, and the way your own and your students' identities may intersect with the learning.
Investigating History was written with an awareness of current and historical power dynamics and debates, with an intentionality around presenting multiple perspectives and challenging single stories. The curriculum's aim is to present cultures responsibly and in context, emphasizing cultural appreciation and avoiding cultural appropriation. That said, the way that your students experience the curriculum is also a product of your own facilitation choices; moreover, we could never predict the way that any particular student might be uniquely impacted by an activity or concept. We encourage you to stay committed to your own continued learning, reflection, and relationship building to help you facilitate all students' learning in a culturally affirming way.

Investigating History is a dynamic curriculum that draws on a wide variety of resources, some of which may change over time.
As a free curriculum intended for noncommercial use, Investigating History draws on primarily open-source resources. In some lessons, the curriculum links out to sources available online, especially videos and websites. At times, outside links and their content will be removed without notice. This is not an error of design, but a product of decisions made at other institutions about the materials they make freely available online; over time, these tend to change. **Please support the maintenance of this curriculum by reporting broken or malfunctioning links using this form.** As materials are updated and refreshed, the Investigating History website will contain a log of recent changes and links to the most current versions of all materials.

Please note too that individual schools may have access to preferred maps, texts or databases that are not open-source; substituting or customizing the curriculum with such resources is your prerogative.