



Literacy Practices and Supports

Integrating Social Studies and Literacy Instruction

Literacy is woven into the fabric of social studies learning. As students build social studies content knowledge and disciplinary skills, they engage in deep literacy work: interrogating diverse primary and secondary sources, evaluating and constructing arguments, examining differing points of view and perspectives, and developing the skills to share their ideas and findings.

Recent research also indicates that when teachers integrate high-quality social studies and literacy instruction, literacy outcomes for students improve significantly. On average, elementary students who receive **an additional 30 minutes of social studies instruction per day outperform students with less social studies time by 15 percent on fifth-grade standardized reading assessments** (Tyner & Kabourek, 2020).



Knowledge building in social studies, integrated with reading, writing, listening, and speaking opportunities, is essential for developing deep and lasting literacy skills in students.



Shanti Elangovan, Founder and CEO, inquirED

Literacy in inquirED's Social Studies Curriculum

In inquirED's K–5 social studies curriculum, Inquiry Journeys, literacy-rich practices are embedded into every step of instruction. As students explore complex questions and investigate diverse sources, they not only build social studies knowledge and skills but also strengthen their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language skills. Explore the following page for examples from inquirED's curriculum.

About inquirED

inquirED works to support every teacher with high-quality instructional materials that make joyful, rigorous, and transferable learning possible for every student. Our elementary and middle school social studies curricula are used in schools and districts across the country to help students develop deep social studies content knowledge and build the inquiry skills that are essential for a thriving democracy.

Complex Texts in Inquiry-Based Social Studies

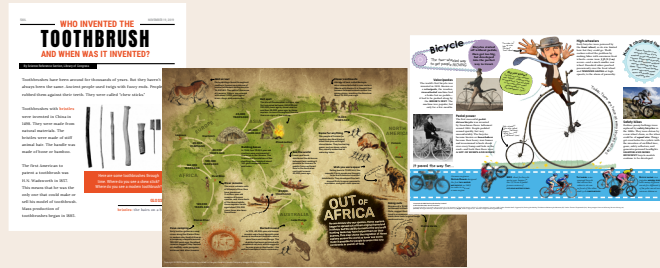
As social studies students explore meaningful questions, conduct investigations, and draw evidence-based conclusions, they need strong literacy skills to handle complex texts. inquirED's instructional materials provide scaffolding to help students engage with these texts, including comprehension strategies, leveled texts for background knowledge, and more. These scaffolds don't replace or simplify the texts but guide students through challenging content to help them understand the material.

Literacy Integration in Action

Explore practical examples from inquirED’s curriculum that illustrate how literacy and social studies can come together to create dynamic, engaging lessons.

Reading Comprehension

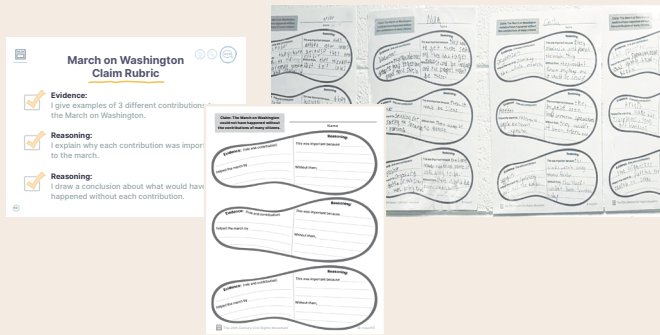
Students build background knowledge and develop reading comprehension skills by investigating a range of texts varying in length, format, perspective, and complexity. Lessons include explicit close reading instruction, guiding students to analyze text features and structure, and uncover author purpose.



Students collaborate to analyze and interpret a variety of narratives, articles, and non-linear formats. Pictured sources from DK and the Library of Congress.

Writing Composition

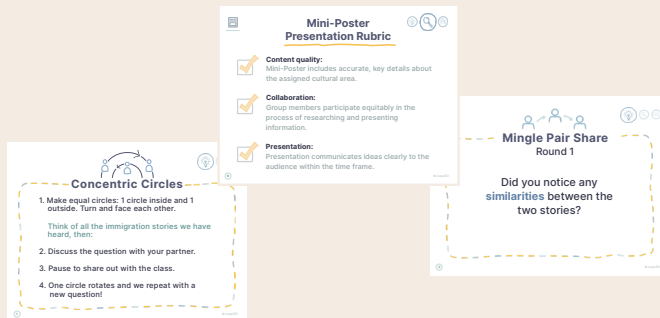
Students complete scaffolded writing tasks to develop disciplinary writing skills. These tasks encourage students to connect personal experiences or draw authentic, evidence-based conclusions, rather than seeking predetermined answers. By focusing on social scientists’ skills, students learn to make claims backed by evidence and supported by logical reasoning.



Students support claims with evidence and reasoning. In this example, they illustrate the steps of the civil rights movement in a unique wall display.

Speaking and Listening

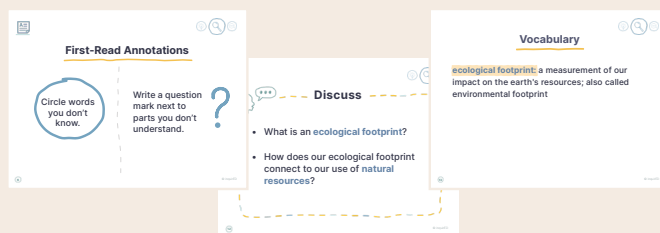
Students engage in a wide range of speaking and listening experiences. These include frequent informal opportunities for dialogue using prompts, accountable talk strategies, and discussion protocols. Structured opportunities for presentation allow students to demonstrate their understanding and share their findings with varied audiences.



Students engage in varied discussions, such as concentric circles, mingle-pair-shares, and formal presentations.

Vocabulary Instruction

Key vocabulary terms are embedded in texts, multimedia content, and student-facing instructional materials like prompts, handouts, questions, and sentence stems. Throughout the unit, students revisit these key vocabulary terms and practice using them.



Each module engages students with 5–10 high-leverage vocabulary words. In this lesson, students engage with a term in an article, video, and discussion, before adding it to their Vocab Wall.