



# Guided Inquiry

6th-8th

**STATE HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY OF IOWA**  
IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

**LIBRARY  
OF CONGRESS**  
**TEACHING  
WITH PRIMARY  
SOURCES**

# Introduction to Guided Inquiry

Guided inquiry is a type of inquiry-based learning where a teacher provides scaffolding to guide the students through their inquiries. They do this by giving students only the goal and the process. Teachers allow students to take control of their own learning.

Students will:

1. Create investigations
2. Ask questions
3. Do research
4. Distill information
5. Sharpen their critical thinking skills

Like all student-led learning, guided inquiry is a way for students to learn how to make sense of multiple sources of information, figure things out on their own, and learn more about research. There are many benefits to guided inquiry in the classroom.

Benefits:

1. Motivating for students
2. Develop critical and higher level thinking skills
3. Natures independent thinking
4. Develop research skills

# Steps to Guided Inquiry

## Step 1: Prep

Teachers may use the [Primary Source Sets](#) as a baseline or create their own from scratch.

- A. Create a compelling question that you want your students to be able to answer based upon the primary sources that will be given to them.
- B. Create a few short paragraphs of background information the topic.
- C. Compile 5-8 primary sources (gauge the number based on your class and project).

## Step 2: Open

Open your guided inquiry with the compelling question and background information. Discuss with the students that their goal is to answer the compelling question based on evidence found in the sources provided.

## Step 3: Explore

Have students read and annotate the sources as well as highlight important information that they feel helps to answer the compelling question. They should mark up their packets with quotes, vocabulary, and important information related to the topic or compelling question.

## Step 4: Gather

Students will start to gather their evidence together to construct an argument. Have them categorize their evidence from the sources into different groups. With this exercise they will want to organize their thoughts into how the evidence helps to answer the compelling question. A good rule of thumb is to categorize your evidence into three groups of similarities.

# Steps to Guided Inquiry

## Step 5: Create

Students will create an argumentative essay answering the compelling question and using the provided sources as evidence for their argument. Have them write a three paragraph essay with the following components:

- A. Paragraph 1
  - 1. Background Information
  - 2. Thesis
- B. Paragraph 2
  - 1. Piece of Evidence 1
  - 2. Piece of Evidence 2
- C. Paragraph 3
  - 1. Piece of Evidence 3
  - 2. Conclusion