



Four ways to create effective inquiry-based learning with Newsela

Inquiry-based learning is catching fire in social studies classrooms across America. Given its power to engage students and its compatibility with other innovations in edtech and pedagogy, it's no surprise that educators are excited to adopt this approach. Even better, students find inquiry-based learning just as exciting. Young learners love thinking about the great conflicts, dramas, and controversies underlying the academic curriculum, and inquiry-based learning highlights these exact issues.

Yet with all new things, there is a learning curve for everyone—students, teachers, and administrators. To bring curriculum revisions to life in the classroom, teachers need access to resources and professional development that enable student-led inquiry learning. Read below how teachers can leverage Newsela to support active learning with their social studies instruction.



1

Guide student-led inquiry using safe, vetted resources

Social studies educators know the considerable time and energy it takes to find factual, objective resources for their classrooms. When students take the reins by doing their own research for inquiry-based projects, they too must engage in the difficult work of differentiating good resources from bad ones. Educators can steer them in the right direction by giving them a variety of pre-vetted resources to work from.

NEWSELA TIP:

With over 10,000 texts, sourced from 100 world-class content providers, and 20+ genres of content, Newsela provides a safe and reliable place for students to explore their line of inquiry.

2

Provide structured student choice

Educators must cover certain topics in their lessons—but given their natural curiosity, most students will have their own ideas about what they want to learn. The best educators find ways to channel this curiosity without digressing too far from the curriculum. The secret is to provide students with structured choices about what and how they want to learn—while making sure all routes eventually lead back to the same key takeaway points. For example, upon finding out her students were fascinated with billionaires, one educator [took the opportunity](#) to let their questions lead her lesson on financial literacy, guiding the discussion toward key curriculum points about [money management](#) and why billionaires exist.

NEWSELA TIP:

Newsela's standard-aligned content allows teachers to provide students with structured choice by creating and assigning a Text Set around a specific topic, and allowing students to read the text(s) of their choice.

3

Leverage inquiry as a tool for differentiation

Teachers can leverage the hallmarks of inquiry-based learning, like structured student choice, to offer options that differentiate not only by interest, but also by learning style and ability level. For instance, students could choose to investigate a social studies-related question, like “How did World War II affect ordinary Americans’ daily lives?” through reading, multimedia exploration, or even interviews with eyewitnesses. Within these modules, students could challenge themselves while choosing the method of learning that most excites them.

NEWSELA TIP:

Have students explore different types of social studies texts on Newsela including: current events, famous speeches, primary sources, geographic profiles, court opinions, historic news, political cartoons, and more.

4

Ensure that inquiry-based learning culminates in informed action

When students apply social studies knowledge to their own lives, they succeed in college, excel in their careers, and become active participants in civic life. However, making the jump from grasping content knowledge to taking informed action based on one’s findings requires creativity, curiosity, and adaptability. By rooting lessons in the present day, educators can make it easy for students to connect the lesson content with the choices they make in their own lives—laying the groundwork for learning that will shape students’ thinking and decisions for years to come.

NEWSELA TIP:

Pair Newsela’s current events with the topics in your curriculum to draw connections to the present day. Select authentic stories that demonstrate student action to inspire students to problem-solve an issue in their community.



FOUND ON NEWSELA:

Content that sparks inquiry



U.S. HISTORY

Primary Sources: “Memories of Childhood’s Slavery Days”



U.S. HISTORY

Mexican Immigration History: Longer, more Complex than U.S.-Mexico border



LAW

Civil rights icon Huerta has advice for a new generation of activists



Newsela’s content is published daily from trusted and vetted sources at 5 different reading levels. Teachers can find a wide range of diverse perspectives and authentic voices to support instruction aligned to state social studies standards and the C3 National Framework.