

UNIT OVERVIEW

Unit Length	Three inquiries structured into approximately 15 lessons with flexible options for pacing in self-contained unit or spaced throughout the school year
Grade Level & Subject	7th Grade Social Studies
Unit Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How and why have Black people defended democracy? ● Who is defending democracy in our communities and why? ● In what ways can I be a defender of democracy and why? <p>Although the United States has been called a democracy from its earliest origins, Americans have always disagreed about who has the right to participate in our democracy. Students will learn that throughout our nation’s history, many Black Americans have played a pivotal role as “defenders of democracy,” taking actions to demand that the right to fully participate in our democracy is extended to all Americans equally.</p> <p>As we look at the history of our nation, students will see that the definition of who has the right to participate has broadened and continues to broaden, in large part thanks to the activism of Black Americans. Yet even today, our democracy is not perfect. The ongoing work of defending democracy continues, and as we look for modern-day “defenders of democracy,” students will find that the members of their communities are taking up that mantle in many different ways. Additionally, students will come to see themselves as fellow “defenders of democracy,” taking actions informed by careful planning and collaboration, to advocate for equality and justice for ourselves and our communities.</p> <p>The unit consists of three inquiries, which culminate in a claim-based research task, an investigative journalism piece, and an informed action project.</p>
Objectives & Outcomes	<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create and defend a claim, based on multiple pieces of evidence, about how Black people have defended democracy. ● Conduct an investigative report about a current, local, underreported defender of democracy ● Develop a plan for a civic action to defend democracy
Standards	<i>Common Core State Standards</i>

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion, or avoidance of particular facts).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.10: By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Illinois Learning Standards

- SS.IS.2.6-8: Ask essential and focusing questions that will lead to independent research.
- SS.IS.3.6-8: Determine sources representing multiple points of view that will assist in organizing a research plan.
- SS.IS.8.6-8.MdC: Assess individual and collective capacities to take action to address problems and identify potential outcomes.
- SS.IS.8.6-8.MC: Apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions and take action in schools and community contexts.

C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards

- D2.Civ.8.6-8. Analyze ideas and principles contained in the founding documents of the United States, and explain how they influence the social and political system.
- D2.Civ.14.6-8. Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies, and promoting the common good.
- D2.His.3.6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.
- D2.His.16.6-8. Organize applicable evidence into a coherent argument about the past.

WIDA Standards

	<p>Standard 1: Social and Instructional Language Cognitive Function: Students at all levels of English Language proficiency DISCUSS their reactions, questions, and research findings.</p> <p>Topic-Related Language: evidence, reasoning, example, explain, define, claim, consensus</p> <p>Standard 5: The language of Social Studies Cognitive Function: Students at all levels of English Language proficiency INQUIRE and ANALYZE how historical documents answer the question “Who defends democracy?”</p> <p>Topic-Related Language: inquiry question, subquestion, sourcing, interpretation, investigative journalism, underreported story, ethics, analysis</p> <p><u>Accessibility Considerations for English Language Learners and students with IEPs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multiple means of input (audio, video, writing, graphics) ● Multiple means of output (handwritten, typed using speech-to-text, dictated to a scribe; using sentence stems, multiple choice or graphic organizers; allowing private, small group or recorded responses in place of whole group discussion participation) ● Flexible timing on assessed work, including feedback with opportunities to revise before final grade/proficiency is measured ● Student choice embedded where possible (topic of inquiry, group size, format of work product) ● Intentional groupings, including: work with same-language peer to discuss using home language; work with a peer who can model proficient English; work with teacher to have text read aloud; work with preferred partner(s); allow to work independently ● Provide large-print or high-contrast versions of texts as needed; allow students to read on-screen or on paper as needed
Unit Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The 1619 Project ● “Undemocratic Democracy” by Jamelle Bouie ● "The Fight for a True Democracy," 1619 Podcast ● “1917 NAACP Silent Protest Parade, Fifth Avenue, New York City,” Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love,” Valerie Kaur ● Pulitzer Center Website ● “Greta Thunberg calls for action five years after Paris Agreement” ● Chicago Public Schools Inquiry to Action Framework and Inquiry to Action Framework Infographic ● Teacher-created daily materials including presentations, jamboards and worksheets <p><u>Student Websites referenced through each inquiry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame ● Myself as Defender Example ● Defenders of Democracy Through Protest ● Good Kids Mad City
<p>Performance Tasks</p>	<p>Each inquiry results in a unique performance task designed to advance the learner’s engagement with themes of the unit.</p> <p>At the end of Inquiry 1, students create and defend a claim, based on multiple pieces of evidence, about how Black people have defended democracy. The final product will take the form of a web page submission to the Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame, using multiple examples to show a way that Black people have defended democracy.</p> <p>At the end of Inquiry 2, students conduct an investigative report about a current, local defender of democracy - an underreported story. The final product will take the form of a web page submission to the Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame, profiling a local person or organization.</p> <p>At the end of Inquiry 3, students develop a plan for civic action to defend democracy, possibly execute the plan or take a beginning step to execute the plan. Reflect on the scope of the planned action and its impact on the intended audience.</p>
<p>Assessment/Evaluation</p>	<p><u>Inquiry 1:</u></p> <p>Use the Inquiry #1 Argument rubric [.pdf] [.docx] to assess the summative argumentative composition.</p> <p><u>Inquiry 2</u></p> <p>Formative assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Throughout the research process, journaling, and triad participation, the Checklist for Investigative Research can be

used for student self-reflection, peer feedback, and teacher feedback.

- Encourage students in their triads to regularly use the rubric they created in Inquiry #2 Lesson 3, as well as the list of ethical considerations they created to center their feedback and revisions. Consider having the rubric and the list of ethical considerations be “live documents,” open to continued whole class revisions throughout the process.
- Consider allowing students to submit as many drafts of their project as necessary to meet the 3-Proficient criteria from the rubric.

Summative assessment:

- When students produce their final draft, use the rubric that they created in Inquiry #2 Lesson 3 to give feedback.
- Publish your students’ final submissions on the class website “Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame” and be sure to allow time and structures in the classroom for students to explore and celebrate each other’s work

Inquiry 3:

There is no formal evaluation for this inquiry. The reality is that there are numerous real-life variables that may impact a student’s ability to successfully complete the action they plan. We also did not want to be too prescriptive about what qualifies as success. We wanted students to be open to taking an action that they think is important and meaningful without worrying about whether or not they’ll get a bad grade on the test.

We encourage and guide students to plan for an action that is realistic for them and something they personally care about in the hopes that each student will take an action and we hope that they will all actually take that action.

Consider inviting students to engage in self-reflection and/or partner reflection using the same set of criteria that they developed in Lesson 1 to consider whether or not their action plan was successful.

DAILY LESSONS AND RESOURCES

Inquiry 1

(5 lessons, 7-11 class periods)

How and why have Black people defended democracy?

Who is defending democracy in our community and why?

In this inquiry, students rigorously engage with the idea of democracy by analyzing a series of texts, podcasts, and images that center the experiences of historically marginalized communities, primarily Black Americans. By discovering claims about democracy and history explored primarily in *The 1619 Project*, but also in *See No Stranger*, students consider who has defended democracy throughout American history and who is defending democracy in their communities. Ultimately, students will create and defend a claim about how Black people have defended democracy and submit their writing on a class web page, Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame.

By the end of this inquiry, students will...

- Define and explain the term “democracy”
- Paraphrase one author’s claim about American democracy
- compare one author’s claim to another author’s claim
- make an argument: a claim, based on multiple pieces of evidence and logical reasoning, about how Black people have defended democracy
- Express their personal view about whether or not it is important to defend American democracy today

By the end of this inquiry, students will know...

- The United States is described as a democracy
- From the beginning of our American democracy, Americans have disagreed about who has the right to participate in our democracy
- From the beginning of our American democracy, Black people have been fighting to ensure that the right to fully participate in our democracy is extended to all Americans equally
- Black Americans have participated in defending our democracy in many different ways throughout the history of the United States
- From the beginning of our American democracy, people have been fighting to ensure that the right to fully participate in our democracy is extended to all Americans equally
- For many Americans the fight to defend democracy continues today

Days 1 - 3: Inquiry 1, Lesson 1

Is America an “Undemocratic” Democracy?

Essential Question, Lesson Objectives, and Learning Outcomes

Essential Question:

How and why have Black people defended democracy?

Objectives:

Students will be able to

- Define and explain the term “democracy”
- Paraphrase one author’s claim about American democracy

Outcomes:

Students will know

- The United States is described as a democracy
- From the beginning of our American democracy, Americans have disagreed about who has the right to participate in our democracy

Lesson Materials & Resources

- [“Undemocratic Democracy” by Jamelle Bouie](#)
- Human Graph Activity Teacher Instructions [[.pdf](#)] [[.docx](#)]
- Undemocratic Democracy excerpt [[.pdf](#)] [[.docx](#)]
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Devices and access the internet

Lesson Activities

Vocabulary:

- Democratic
- Democracy

Lesson Steps:

1. Display the word “democracy” at the top of a large piece of chart paper.
 - a. Ask students to take out some scratch paper and draw pictures or jot down words, phrases, or ideas that come to mind when they hear that word.
 - b. Invite students to turn and talk to share their ideas about the word.
 - c. Ask a few students to share ideas that they shared with their partner or heard their partner share.

Accessibility: partner ELL students with same-language peers; provide choice of partner for students with IEPs as needed.

2. Inform students that the word “democracy” will be one of the key concepts throughout the year in our work together. Explain that we are going to create our own definition of the term and display it in the room.
 - a. Instruct students to work in groups of 3-4 people to construct a draft definition by consulting a few different online dictionaries and combining the ideas that resonate most with them.
 - b. Allow approximately 5-10 minutes for students to consult various sources and draft a definition.
3. When all groups have constructed a draft definition of “democracy,” ask each group to circle words or phrases (up to 5 words total) that are the most important part of their definition.
 - a. Invite one student from each group to come to the whiteboard and write the group’s key words.
 - b. Ask students to read the words on the board and invite a volunteer to suggest a definition that includes all of the most important ideas.
 - c. Write that definition on the board and ask, “Does everyone agree that this is an accurate and complete definition of the term? Are we missing anything essential?”
 - d. Continue to facilitate discussion until the whole group agrees on the definition, and then copy that definition in large letters on the chart paper.
4. Say, “Today we are going to participate in a human graph activity to get some conversation going about some of our ideas related to this concept of democracy.” Follow the directions in the Human Graph Activity Teacher Instructions. [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)

Educator note: You will want to keep an official record of the data collected in the human graph, because you will do this activity again at the end of the inquiry and compare results. Consider designating one student as a notetaker and having that student post the data in the classroom or in the class digital space to refer back to later.

5. Tell students that we will be reading a short excerpt from [“Undemocratic Democracy” by Jamelle Bouie](#), an essay written by an author named Jamelle Bouie.
 - a. Display the author’s name and picture and some [short biographical information](#).
 - b. Tell students that you will make the full essay available for those who want to see the full text; however, the essay is quite long and complex, so we will be focusing in class on a few short sections that relate to our inquiry.
 - c. Say to students, “Even though it is short, this reading is challenging. Don’t get discouraged if you find it difficult. Figure out what you can when you are reading alone, even if it’s just one word, and know that we will work together to make sure everyone understands.”
6. Explain to students that they will be reading today for a few different purposes simultaneously. Display these purposes as a reminder while students are reading.

PURPOSES FOR READING

- Notice what you are figuring out and also what you are not understanding.
- Notice questions that come up for you as you read and jot them down.
- Connect your ideas (to your own experiences, current events, books/media, historical events, etc.)
- Consider this question: What claim is this author making about American democracy?

7. Model the participation you want to see with a quick think-aloud model.

SAMPLE OF A TEACHER THINK-ALOUD MODEL

“I notice that the title of this essay is ‘Undemocratic Democracy.’ We just defined the word ‘democracy,’ so I know what that means, but the first word is very puzzling. I know that ‘un-’ means ‘not,’ and ‘democratic’ is the adjective form of the noun ‘democracy,’ so I think this means that the democracy he’s writing about is NOT a democracy in some sense. And I’m wondering (questioning) how that can be possible. I’m also thinking about this question, ‘What claim is this author making about American democracy?’ Well, I haven’t gotten very far yet in the reading, but this is giving me some clues that he might take a critical view of American democracy in some way.”

8. Divide the essay excerpt into 2 or 3 sections and tell students that we will read one section at a time, repeating the three steps of the close reading cycle for each section. As you facilitate, allow students to share their experiences with the reading, but continue to guide students back to the purposes for reading.

CLOSE READING CYCLE

INDIVIDUAL: Read silently and independently for 1 minute. Annotate about your thinking as you read.
PARTNER: Turn and talk to a partner. Share your experience with this section of the text and listen as your partner shares.
WHOLE GROUP: Tell us about something you shared with your partner or something your partner shared with you.
Accessibility: Partner ELL students and students with IEPs with a peer who will read aloud to them or pull a small group for the teacher to read the excerpts aloud; pre-teach vocabulary: legitimacy, reactionary, arrest, peculiar, ideological.

9. After reading the entire excerpt, tell students that for today’s exit ticket, you’d like them to write their answer to the question, “What claim is this author making about American democracy?” Allow students to refer to the excerpt while they write their responses, and tell students not to worry if they aren’t sure, because we will begin our discussion in the next lesson by reviewing this question and coming to a consensus about the author’s claim.

SAMPLE EXIT TICKET WITH SAMPLE STUDENT RESPONSE

PROMPT: What claim is the author making about American democracy?

“Jamelle Bouie is making the claim that for as long as American democracy has existed, Americans have disagreed about who has a right to participate in that democracy.”

Extension:

1. Do a Google image search of the term “democracy” and notice the types of images that stand out or frequently repeat. Discuss how those images relate to the definition we constructed. Invite students to draw some of these images to display with the definition poster.
2. Allow students to research and report on the history of democracies.
3. Invite students to research and list other countries in the world that are democracies.
4. Encourage students to ask their families or research to share information about their home country’s government.

Days 4 & 5: Inquiry 1, Lesson 2

Comparing Claims About Democracy

Essential Question, Lesson Objectives, and Learning Outcomes

Essential Question:

How and why have Black people defended democracy?

Objectives:

Students will be able to

- Paraphrase one author’s claim about American democracy.
- Compare one author’s claim to another author’s claim.

Outcomes:

Students will know

- From the beginning of our American democracy, Black people have been fighting to ensure that the right to fully participate in our democracy is extended to all Americans equally.

Lesson Materials & Resources

- ["The Fight for a True Democracy," 1619 Podcast](#)
- Transcript for “The Fight for a True Democracy” [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#) (audio and transcript [website](#))
- 1619 Podcast Episode 1 Notetaker [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- Prepared, anonymous examples of 2-3 student exit tickets from the previous class period

Lesson Activities

Educator Note: In this lesson, students will be listening to a podcast episode. The speaker assumes the listener has basic knowledge of the Declaration of Independence. If your students are unfamiliar with that content, you may want to teach students about the Declaration of Independence or have them read the document prior to listening.

Essential Vocabulary:

- Segregated/segregation
- Declare/declaration
- Liberation/liberating
- Abolish/abolition
- Emigration
- Emancipator
- Amendments
- Resist/resistance
- Ancestral

Additional Vocabulary:

- Resolve
- Pristine
- Tatter/tattered
- Devastating/devastatingly
- Ideals
- Hypocrisy
- Contradiction
- Progressive
- Honorably discharged
- Perfectors
- Denied

Lesson Steps:

1. Tell students we are going to begin today's lesson by reviewing the exit ticket from the previous lesson. Say, "Our goal is to come to a consensus as a group about what claim the author is making about American democracy."
 - a. Display 2-3 typed, anonymous examples of student writing from the exit ticket. (Ideally, these examples will represent a range of different ideas that were prominent in the group exit tickets, including a mixture of on-track and off-track thinking.)
 - b. Instruct students to read the examples and to discuss in groups of 2-4 which they agree/disagree with and why.
 - c. Use the examples as a springboard to facilitate a discussion and elicit student thinking and compose a group response to the question.
2. Tell students that today we are going to listen to a podcast hosted by Nikole Hannah-Jones, "[The Fight for a True Democracy.](#)" Display her photo and [some brief biographical information.](#)
 - a. Say, "Like Jamelle Bouie did in the excerpt from his essay yesterday, Nikole Hannah-Jones also makes a claim about American democracy in this podcast episode."
 - b. Say, "Today we are going to listen to the podcast. We'll divide it into sections and you'll use a notetaker to keep record of your ideas as you listen. As you listen, think about what claim the host is making, and consider whether it is the same or different from Jamelle Bouie's claim."
3. Distribute copies of the 1619 Podcast Episode 1 [Notetaker](#) and [transcript](#) to each student.
 - a. Tell students that we will use this notetaker to keep track of our ideas and questions as we listen to the podcast and follow along on the transcript. We will pause at the end of each section to generate ideas about the author's claim, so that by the end of the podcast you will be able to answer the questions.

Accessibility: Pre-teach vocabulary (bold are essential to the content):

- *Part 1 (0:00 - 10:35): resolve (noun & verb), pristine, tatter/tattered, devastating/devastatingly, segregated/segregation*
- *Part 2 (10:35 - 20:25): declare/declaration, liberation/liberating, ideals, hypocrisy, abolish/abolition, contradiction*

- *Part 3 (20:25 - 30:22): emigration, emancipator, amendments, progressive*
 - *Part 4 (30:22 - 41:57): honorably discharged, resist/resistance, perfectors, denied, ancestral*
 - *Play the podcast at 75% speed for EL students or students with auditory processing needs.*
4. After listening to the entire podcast episode and completing the notetaker in class, tell students that for today's exit ticket, you'd like them to write their answer to these questions:
- What claim is Nikole Hannah-Jones making about American democracy?
 - Do you think Nikole Hannah-Jones would agree with Jamelle Bouie's claim? Explain your thinking.
- a. Allow students to refer to the podcast transcript while they write their responses, and tell students not to worry if they aren't sure because we will begin our discussion in the next lesson by reviewing this question and coming to a consensus about the author's claim.

SAMPLE EXIT TICKET WITH SAMPLE STUDENT RESPONSE:

PROMPT: 1) What claim is Nikole Hannah-Jones making about American democracy? 2) Do you think Nikole Hannah-Jones would agree with Jamelle Bouie's claim?

"1) Nikole Hannah-Jones makes the claim that although the authors of the Constitution called the United States a democracy, it wasn't really a democracy, because not all Americans were invited to participate. She argues that for as long as this American so-called 'democracy' has existed, Black people have been "the perfectors of democracy," the ones fighting the hardest to ensure that the right to fully participate in our democracy is extended to all Americans equally.

2) Nikole Hannah-Jones would agree with Jamelle Bouie that the debate about who has a right to participate in our democracy goes back to the beginning of our country. I think she would add that the definition of who has a right to participate has broadened and continues to broaden, in large part thanks to the activism of Black Americans."

Extension:

Read an excerpt from Chapter 5 of [Caste by Isabel Wilkerson](#). Compare the experience of Miss Hale's father caring for his lawn to Nikole Hannah-Jones' story about her father's American flag. Ask students to reflect on what each man is trying to show and the response to them.

Days 6 & 7: Injury 1, Lesson 3

Grappling With Images of Democracy

Essential Question & Learning Outcome

Essential Question:

- How and why have Black people defended democracy?

Outcome:

Students will know...

- Black Americans have participated in defending our democracy in many different ways throughout the history of the United States.

Lesson Materials & Resources

- Collection of images from various sources, including *The 1619 Project*
- Chart paper and markers
- Teacher version of Image Collection with additional background information [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#) **Note:** We suggest that teachers preview this version before the lesson to build their own background knowledge, but not to use this version for the student activity.
- Student version of Image Collection with images and keywords [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- Alternative student version of Image Collection in a [Google Jamboard](#)
Note: This version does not contain keywords, but feel free to add them from the Student version above.
- Large printable version of Image Collection [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#) [\[.ppt\]](#)
- Timer or stopwatch for the gallery walk activity
- The Image Collection posters from Lesson 3
- Inquiry #1 Evidence Chart [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- Inquiry #1 Argument-Writing Frame [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#) (as needed for ELL students and students with IEPs)
- Inquiry #1 Argument Rubric [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- Model entry for the Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame (see class [website](#) example: [Defenders of Democracy Through Protest](#))
- Devices to access the internet

Lesson Activities

Lesson Steps:

1. Display the essential question, “How have Black people defended democracy?”
 - a. Instruct students to turn to a partner and discuss what the question is asking us to figure out. Some students might want to offer answers to the question immediately. Remind them that we will be looking at sources to identify evidence to support our answers to the question, and it’s important at the beginning of an inquiry to make sure you understand what the question is asking.

- b. After students discuss with a partner, invite a few students to share their ideas about what the question is asking. Tell students that this question is a perfect follow-up to Nikole Hannah-Jones' podcast episode. She made the claim that Black people have been the perfectors of democracy since the beginning, and we are going to be investigating to learn about the different ways they have done that.
2. Have students review a collection of images that relate to the question "How have Black people defended democracy?"

Educator note: Post 8 pieces of chart paper, spaced evenly around the room with some poster markers for each (You also have the option to use the [jamboard](#) for a digital version of this activity). Print the Large printable version of Image Collection [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#) [\[.ppt\]](#) and post one set of photos on each chart. Divide students evenly among the eight posters. If you'd like students to respond just to the images first, you can fold over the column with the key words or cut them off, then reveal the keywords that link once students return to their original poster.

- a. Say, "Today we will be starting our inquiry with a collection of images. All of the images you will see today relate to our question, 'How have Black people defended democracy?' You will be moving around the room and you will spend 2 minutes at each poster. As you analyze the images and discuss them with your group, please use the markers to make notes about what you notice, what you wonder, and any connections you can make."
- b. Write "I notice . . .", "I wonder . . ." and "I can connect to..." on the board to remind students of their purpose as they move around the room.
- c. Do a quick teacher think-aloud to model the kind of thinking that you want to see.

SAMPLE OF A TEACHER THINK-ALOUD MODEL

*"I'm going to take a look at Set 1 of the images and right away, I notice that in these two pictures, there is a woman and a man and both of them have microphones and podiums like they are on a stage in some kind of meeting. **WRITE: I notice that they have microphones and they are speaking in some kind of meeting.** Looking at these pictures, I wonder, "Who are they talking to and what are they talking about?" **WRITE: I wonder who they are talking to and what they are talking about.** "I can connect to watching presidential candidates speak or debate." **WRITE: I can connect to watching presidential candidates speak or debate.***

- d. Give students 2 minutes to analyze the images, discuss with their groups, and write ideas and questions on the poster.
- e. When the timer sounds, instruct students to move to the next poster and repeat the process with a new set of images.
- f. Continue with 2-minute intervals until all students have returned to their original poster. Allow students two minutes to read and discuss the comments posted by others.

Educator note: This lesson is an open-ended inquiry designed to help students generate questions and start to develop hypotheses about how Black people might have defended democracy. Don't worry if students are drawing conclusions that may later turn out to be unsupported, based on the limited information in the pictures. If students are struggling to notice and wonder, direct them to the key words displayed with each picture and remind them that it's okay to not be sure about what they are seeing. Tell students that they will have an opportunity to clear up any misconceptions they may have in the next lesson when they'll research the topics. Please decide, based on your students' needs and experiences, whether they would benefit from more input in order to make sense of the images.

3. Tell students that now that they have returned to the original poster and read all of the ideas and questions posted by other students, they are going to synthesize their ideas about that set of images and they can choose one of two ways to do that. Encourage students to do both if they'd like a challenge.
 - a. Display the choices and explain to students.
 - b. Allow 2-3 minutes for groups to discuss and complete the task.
 - c. When all groups finish, invite each group to read their title and/or sentence to the whole group.

Educator note: the titles we gave to each set of images in the teacher version is based on our own conclusions and background knowledge, and should not be considered the "right" answer. The goal is for students to practice visual literacy skills, draw connections and ask questions.

CHOICES FOR THE IMAGE COLLECTION TASK

Choice 1: Think of the perfect title for this collection of images and write it at the top of the poster.

Choice 2: Think about what this collection of images shows us about a way that Black people have defended democracy. Fill in the blank to complete this sentence and write it on the poster: **These images show that Black people have defended democracy by _____.**

4. Invite students to return to their seats and finish the lesson with a wrap-up discussion. Ask: "Does anyone want to share a reaction or a feeling that you had about one or some of the images? Does anyone have a question that you would really like to find the answer to?"

*Educator note: Most likely students will walk away from this lesson with a lot of unanswered questions about the images. Let them know that this is intentional and that they have opportunities to answer those questions later in this inquiry when we return to these images. We will use them as the starting point for our research in Lesson 4 or this inquiry. **

Keep the image collection posters displayed in the room for the rest of the inquiry. You will need them again in Lesson 4.

Extension:

Defenders of Democracy

Unit by Middle Grade Educators from Chicago Public Schools,
part of the 2021 cohort of *The 1619 Project* Education Network

If the wrap-up discussion in step 4 prompts discussion, consider organizing a Socratic Seminar about one of the topics to allow students to unpack their feelings and reactions. For example, the set of images related to military service might prompt discussion about whether or not dying or being injured is a way of defending democracy. Some students may have strong reactions to this and need a structured opportunity to reflect and discuss.

Days 8-10: Inquiry 1, Lesson 4

Writing to Celebrate Defenders of Democracy

Essential Question, Lesson Objectives, and Learning Outcomes

Essential Question:

How and why have Black people defended democracy?

Objective:

Students will be able to

- Make an argument: a claim, based on multiple pieces of evidence and logical reasoning, about how Black people have defended democracy

Outcome:

Students will know...

- Black Americans have participated in defending our democracy in many different ways throughout the history of the United States.

Lesson Materials & Resources

- Image Collection posters from Lesson 3 of this inquiry
- Inquiry #1 Evidence Chart [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- Inquiry #1 Argument-Writing Frame [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#) (as needed for ELL students and students with IEPs)
- Inquiry #1 Argument Rubric [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- Model entry for the Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame (see class [website](#) example: [Defenders of Democracy Through Protest](#))
- Devices to access the internet

Lesson Activities

Lesson Steps:

1. Display the Image Collection posters from the last lesson [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#) [\[.ppt\]](#) around the classroom (or invite students to review the jamboards from the last lesson if you chose the digital option).
 - a. Invite students to choose and stand near a poster that contains images and ideas they would like to learn more about. If one group has too many people, consider asking some students to move to a different poster or allow the large group to break into smaller groups who will all be researching the same topic.

Note on Accessibility: Consider previewing the choices with ELL students and students with IEPs and guiding them towards a topic and/or group that will best support them.

2. Tell students that for the culminating task for this inquiry, they will be making an argument: a claim, based on multiple pieces of evidence, about how Black people have defended democracy. Explain that

they will be working with their group to create a web page submission to the Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame.

Educator note: This step of the lesson assumes that students have already learned to find reliable websites for online research. If this is new to your students, consider teaching a mini-lesson on website reliability. We recommend [this lesson](#) from the Civic Online Reasoning curriculum published by Stanford History Education Group.

3. Say, “We are going to be using reliable sources on the internet to learn more about the images and ideas on your poster. Let’s start by generating a list of search terms that you can use to find the information you need. Let me give you a big hint: the words that are printed with the pictures are probably going to be good search terms. Think about what additional words you could use to learn more about your topic.”
 - a. Do a quick teacher think-aloud to model the process. Consider focusing your think-aloud on one of the posters that no one chose, one that students find especially difficult, or one chosen by a group that you think might need additional support.

TEACHER THINK-ALLOUD MODEL (example)

“I’m going to start listing search terms for Set 3. In all three pictures, I see different protests, so I’m definitely going to put the word ‘protest’ on my list. I’ve never heard of a ‘Silent Protest,’ so I’m going to search for that term, too. Maybe if I search that together with ‘New York City, 1917,’ and ‘NAACP,’ I can learn more about what was happening in this picture.”

4. Give students 5-10 minutes to generate a list of search terms. Let them know that they can always search additional terms later, but this will at least give them a good list to start with.
 - a. Say, “Now that you have search terms, you are almost ready to start searching for evidence. Before you do, let me introduce you to the tool that you will be using to organize your evidence in preparation for making a strong argument.”
 - b. Display and distribute the Inquiry #1 Evidence Chart [[.pdf](#)] [[.docx](#)]. Say, “A strong argument has a clear claim. In this first box, you are going to fill in the blank to make a claim about how Black people have defended democracy. For example, if I were still working on Set 3, I might write, ‘Black people have defended democracy through protest.’”
 - c. Give students 2 minutes to discuss with their group and fill in the blank to determine a preliminary claim. Emphasize that this is a preliminary claim based on the images, but they may want to change it to make it more specific based on the evidence as they read.
5. Say, “Okay, now that we have a preliminary claim, let’s talk through the rest of the evidence chart. Strong arguments are based on multiple pieces of evidence from different sources. You are going to use the list of search terms that you generated to research and find several different examples that support your claim.
6. Again, do a think-aloud to model for students how to collect evidence.

TEACHER THINK-ALLOUD MODEL (example)

“I’m going to keep working on Set 3. I will start by Googling ‘Silent Protest, New York City, 1917.’ One of the first [articles](#) that came up is from the Yale Library, and I know that Yale is a university, so I think this might be a reliable source to use. In the ‘Source’ column, I’m going to write the title and the website name. This will be useful if I need to go back and find this information. If you are working digitally, you can even put a hyperlink so you can just click to return to the site. Now, on the evidence side, I’m going to make note of any evidence that supports my claim that Black people have defended democracy by protesting. I’m going to write this sentence from the article: ‘10,000 African Americans marched down Fifth Avenue . . . silently carrying banners condemning racist violence and racial discrimination.’”

7. Give students time to work with groups to search, read and collect several pieces of evidence in their charts.

Accessibility: Allow ELL students and students with IEPs to jot shorthand notes, share a collaborative evidence chart with their group, or designate one scribe for their group instead of requiring that all students complete all portions of the chart. Encourage a group member to read aloud the web pages they are researching. Encourage use of screen readers and translation tools, as available.

8. Tell students, “Now that you have a clear claim and you have collected several pieces of evidence from different sources, it’s time to write a draft of your argument. I know you like to know ahead of time how to be successful, so let’s take a few minutes to look at the Inquiry #1 Argument Rubric [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
 - a. Guide students to read and analyze the criteria in the rubric and allow time for students to ask questions.
9. Give students time to draft an argument. Remind them to draw from the evidence collected in their evidence charts to support their claim.

Accessibility: Provide this argument-writing frame [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#) as needed for ELL students and students with IEPs.

10. As students are drafting arguments, identify two or three drafts that show different levels of skill; attempt to choose samples that show common mistakes that many students are making in their writing. Ask if these students will allow you to share their draft (either display their writing using a document camera or type it and project it.
 - a. Guide the class to read the samples and use the rubric to assign scores in each category. Use this discussion to help students internalize what a strong argument sounds like.
11. Then say, “Now that you’ve used the rubric to score writing and considered the strengths and weaknesses of a few drafts, talk with your group about specific changes you can make to improve your argument.”

- a. Invite groups to revise and edit their drafts, reviewing the Inquiry #1 Argument Rubric to make sure they are meeting all criteria for a strong argument.
12. When students submit their final arguments, guide them to post their submissions on the Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame webpage. ([Example of a class website](#))
 13. After the webpage is compiled, consider setting aside time for a celebration of the work that students have done.
 - a. Working in groups, invite students to browse all of the postings.
 - b. Give students prompts to guide their discussions, and invite them to share ideas with the whole group afterward.
 - c. Invite students to give positive feedback and shout-outs to classmates for their work in this inquiry.

PROMPTS FOR THE DEFENDERS OF DEMOCRACY HALL OF FAME CELEBRATION

- How did you feel as you learned about the many different ways that Black people have defended democracy?
- What was the most surprising thing you learned?
- What questions came to your mind as you browsed the different profiles?
- Which topics would you like to learn more about?
- What do you think Jamelle Bouie and Nikole Hannah-Jones would say if they could look at our hall of fame?

Days 11-12: Inquiry 1, Lesson 5

Making Personal Connections to American Democracy

Essential Question, Objectives, and Learning Outcomes

Essential Question:

How and why have Black people defended democracy?

Objectives:

Students will be able to . . .

- Paraphrase one author’s claim about American democracy
- Express their personal view about whether or not it is important to defend American democracy today

Learning Outcomes:

Students will know

- From the beginning of our American democracy, people have been fighting to ensure that the right to fully participate in our democracy is extended to all Americans equally
- For many Americans the fight to defend democracy continues today

Lesson Materials & Resources

- [See No Stranger](#) by Valerie Kaur
- See No Stranger Excerpt [[.pdf](#)] [[.docx](#)]

Lesson Activities

Vocabulary:

- Founders
- Constitution
- Consolidate
- Colonize
- Constrain

Additional Vocabulary for English Language Learners and students with IEPs:

- Legitimacy
- Reactionary
- Arrest
- Peculiar
- Ideological

Warm up:

1. Say, “Our essential question in this unit is, ‘How and why have Black people defended democracy?’ In the Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame, you all documented many of the different ways we could answer the question of ‘how.’”
 - a. Ask students to reflect on the Hall of Fame and volunteer different ways that Black people defended democracy.
 - b. Make a list on the board. (Responses might include: through voting, through protest, through military service, etc.)
 - c. Then say, “Today we are going to spend some time thinking about the *why* part of the question. Why have Black people defended democracy? Another way of thinking about the *why* part of the question could be to ask ‘Is it important to defend democracy?’ We’re going to read an excerpt from another author to reflect on this, and at the end of the class period today, I’m going to give you a chance to write your thoughts.”

Lesson Steps:

1. Tell students that we will be reading a short excerpt from an essay written by an author named Valarie Kaur. Display the author’s name and picture and [some short biographical information](#).
2. Explain to students that they will be reading today for a few different purposes simultaneously. Display these purposes as a reminder while students are reading.

PURPOSES FOR READING

- Notice what you are figuring out and also what you are not understanding.
- Notice questions that come up for you as you read and jot them down.
- Connect your ideas (to your own experiences, current events, books/media, historical events, etc.)
- Consider this question: What claim is this author making about American democracy?

3. Model the participation you want to see with a quick think-aloud model.

SAMPLE OF A TEACHER THINK-ALLOUD MODEL

“The first sentence starts with ‘the founders crafted the U.S. Constitution.’ I know the Constitution is the document that contains our law and our system of government. The founders, I think, refer to the men who wrote the Constitution. Sometimes people call them ‘framers’ or ‘founding fathers.’ I remember that Jamelle Bouie and Nikole Hannah-Jones both talked about those founders and both of them made the claim that those founders did not intend to extend the rights and protections of democracy to all people. I wonder if Valarie Kaur will say the same thing.”

4. Divide the essay excerpt into 2 or 3 sections and tell students that as a class, you will read one section at a time, repeating the three steps of the close reading cycle for each section.

- a. As you facilitate, allow students to share their experiences with the reading, but continue to guide students back to the purposes for reading.

CLOSE READING CYCLE

1. **INDIVIDUAL:** Read silently and independently for 1 minute. Annotate about your thinking as you read.
2. **PARTNER:** Turn and talk to a partner. Share your experience with this section of the text and listen as your partner shares.
3. **WHOLE GROUP:** Tell us about something you shared with your partner or something your partner shared with you.

Accessibility: Partner ELL students and students with IEPs with a peer who will read aloud to them or pull a small group for the teacher to read the excerpts aloud; pre-teach vocabulary: *legitimacy, reactionary, arrest, peculiar, ideological.*

6. After reading the entire excerpt, tell students that instead of doing an exit ticket individually, you are going to write our exit ticket together. The questions are:
 - What claim is this author making about American democracy?
 - Do you think Jamelle Bouie and Nikole Hannah-Jones would agree with Valarie Kaur’s claim?
 - a. Allow students to discuss with a partner and jot down ideas.
 - b. Invite students to share ideas with the whole group. Either write ideas on the board or type on a shared screen and guide students to contribute and refine ideas until the group reaches a consensus about the response.

SAMPLE EXIT TICKET WITH SAMPLE GROUP RESPONSE

PROMPT: 1) What claim is the author making about American democracy? 2) Do you think Jamelle Bouie and Nikole Hannah-Jones would agree with Valarie Kaur’s claim?

“1) Valarie Kaur is making the claim that the founders who wrote the Constitution did not intend democracy for anyone except white, Christian, elite men. However, throughout the history of our country, people have read their words as if they were intended for them and they have struggled to include more and more people as full participants in our democracy.”

“2) Nikole Hannah-Jones and Jamelle Bouie would agree with Valarie Kaur. They both wrote about how our democracy has been imperfect since the beginning of our country. Valarie Kaur and Nikole Hannah-Jones expressed similar claims about how the people who were originally left out have been the ones to insist that they be included.”

7. After writing the exit ticket together, display this question and invite students to discuss with a partner: *Think about the claims made by Jamelle Bouie, Nikole Hannah-Jones, and Valarie Kaur. What do these claims suggest about why Black people have defended democracy?*

Invite students to share out with the whole group and discuss. Responses might include: Black people have considered it necessary and important to defend democracy because the founders of the Constitution did not consider them to be included in the rights and protections it granted to others.

8. Say, “In this inquiry, we read what three different authors wrote about our American democracy. Now I’d like to invite you to do a final quick-write for this unit. This is a chance for you to record your personal views about American democracy based on everything we’ve done together in this inquiry. There are no right or wrong answers here. Choose some or all of the prompts below and please respond thoughtfully and honestly about your thinking.”

FINAL QUICK-WRITE PROMPT

- In your view, is it still important today for people to defend our democracy? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Do you believe that the framers of the Constitution had you and your family in mind when they designed American democracy? Explain.
- Why would people fight for rights for groups they don’t belong to? For example, why would Black women fight for voting rights for Black men?
- Can democracy ever be perfected? Is there such a thing as a completely fair and equal society? Explain.

Educator Note: Although there are no right or wrong answers to this quick-write response, it is important for teachers to gauge student views about this before moving on to Inquiry #2. The rest of the unit implicitly asserts that defending democracy continues to be important today. If a number of students write responses indicating that it is no longer important to defend democracy today, teachers may want to spend time unpacking student responses and inviting discussion before moving on. You may wish to have students think about and journal on some of these quotes to help guide this conversation:

- *"No one is free until we are all free." - Martin Luther King, Jr.*
- *"It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains." - Assata Shakur*
- *"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own." - Audre Lorde*
- *"I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept." - Angela Davis*

Inquiry 2

(2-4 class periods + weekly 20-minute check-ins for the duration of the project)

Who is defending democracy in our communities and why?

In this inquiry, students explore how some journalists defend democracy by telling underreported stories about underrepresented issues, ideas, or communities. Students begin this unit by reading articles by journalists supported by the Pulitzer Center. To determine the criteria for strong reporting, students cultivate an awareness of the reporting process and examine journalism standards and ethics. Together, students develop a rubric for their culminating project in this inquiry, student-driven investigations that highlight a community member who is defending democracy. Students will publish their report on the Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame website.

Throughout the inquiry, students will refer back to lessons, projects, and tasks completed in the previous inquiry.

By the end of this inquiry, students will...

- Define and explain the terms “investigative journalism,” and “underreported stories.”
- Explain why the people at the Pulitzer Center believe it is important to support the reporting of underreported stories
- Define the term “ethics”
- Reflect on the ethical considerations in one journalist’s reporting
- Create a list of shared agreements: ethical standards for investigative journalism
- Reflect on the journalistic criteria evident in one journalist’s reporting
- Create a rubric for investigative journalism
- Conduct investigative research and report about a current, local defender of democracy - an underreported story

By the end of this inquiry, students will know...

- Traditional news media choose to report or not report some stories based on a variety of factors
- Underreported stories are often those that uplift and celebrate modern-day defenders of democracy
- There are ethical standards in all professions, including journalism
- The merit of journalists’ work is measured based on specific criteria, including sourcing, claim, and author’s role
- There are many individuals and groups in their own communities who defend democracy today in many different ways

Days 1 - 2: Inquiry 2, Lesson 1

Underreported Stories and Defending Democracy

Essential Question, Objectives, and Learning Outcomes

Essential Question:

Who is defending democracy in our community and why?

Objectives

Students will be able to...

- Define and explain the terms “investigative journalism,” and “underreported stories”
- Explain why the people at the Pulitzer Center believe it is important to support the reporting of underreported stories

Outcomes:

Students will know

- Traditional news media choose to report or not report some stories based on a variety of factors
- Underreported stories are often those that uplift and celebrate modern-day defenders of democracy

Lesson Materials & Resources

- [Pulitzer Center Website](#)
- Devices to access the internet
- Student journals (students can choose to write by hand in a notebook or type/dictate using a device)

Lesson Activities

Vocabulary:

- Investigative
- Journalism
- Underreported

Lesson Steps:

1. Tell students that today we will be learning about investigative journalism.
 - a. Write the words “investigative journalism” on the board and invite students to talk in groups of 2-4 people to unpack the meaning of the phrase.
 - b. Ask students to share out and take notes on the board. Student responses might include:
 - Investigate means to look closely at something.
 - Journalism is writing in newspapers and magazines.
2. Tell students that we will be focusing on journalists who investigate and report on underreported stories.

- a. Write the words “underreported stories” on the board and follow the same process from step 1 to unpack its meaning.
 - b. Ask students to take out a piece of scratch paper or a notebook and spend 1-2 minutes silently jotting down some ideas about these prompts:
 - What kinds of stories do you think might not get reported by the media?
 - What are some reasons you can imagine why some stories don’t get reported?
 - c. After students write, invite them to turn and talk to a partner to share their thoughts and listen to their partner’s ideas. Then, ask a few students to share with the whole group something that they shared or heard from their partner.
3. Display the [Pulitzer Center](#) website. Tell students that the Pulitzer Center is an organization whose main goal is to support journalists who are reporting underreported stories.
 - a. Navigate to the section of the website “[Our Mission and Model](#)” under the “About” tab. Read the mission statement and discuss it with students.
 - b. Tell students, “We are going to watch this short video to learn more about the Pulitzer Center. As you watch and listen, keep thinking about the questions you just wrote and talked about and see if the video gives you any new answers to the questions.”
 - c. After viewing the video, invite students to turn and talk with a partner and share with the whole group, both about their impressions, thoughts, and questions, and new answers to the questions that they discovered.
 4. Tell students that we are going to spend some time today browsing the site to get a sense of the different kinds of stories that are reported by journalists supported by the Pulitzer Center.
 - a. Working in groups of 2-4 students, instruct students to navigate to the “[Stories by Pulitzer Center Grantees](#)” section under the “Journalism” tab.
 - b. Tell students: “We are going to spend about 5 minutes just browsing through the stories. Just click on a few that interest you and read the titles, look at the pictures, maybe read a sentence or two. For the sake of time, don’t try to read a whole article right now, but if you find one that interests you, you can always go back and read it later.”
 - c. After five minutes of browsing, ask: “What kinds of underreported stories did you see?” Make a list on the board as students share out.
 5. Choose one of the stories that students shared from the list (or choose one that you would like to use as an example). Project the page and give students a simplified, short summary of key points in the story. Use the following prompts to guide students in a discussion:
 - a. Who might want this story to be reported?
 - b. Who might want to keep this story from being reported?
 - c. Who might benefit from making this story public?
 - d. Who might benefit from keeping this story silent?
 - e. Why is it important to support the reporting of underreported stories?

6. Remind students that we previously learned about how Black people have been defenders of democracy throughout American history and we celebrated defenders of democracy with profiles on our class webpage. Ask students, “Did you see any defenders of democracy in the stories you browsed today?”
 - a. Invite a few students to share out.
 - b. Say to students, “When investigative journalists report on underreported stories, they are often uplifting and celebrating our modern-day defenders of democracy. You are going to have a unique opportunity in this project to do your own investigative research to uplift and celebrate someone who is defending democracy in our community.”
 - c. Introduce the essential question for the inquiry: “Who is defending democracy in our community?”

7. Tell students that one of the key routines in the investigative research process will be regular journaling. Explain that when journalists investigate stories, they take extensive notes and regularly reflect on how their story is developing. Students will be doing similar work in their journals.
 - a. Emphasize that, although students will sometimes share excerpts of their choosing with the teacher or with classmates, this journal is owned by the student. They can write as much as they want and they can decide what is important to write about.
 - b. Tell students that we will regularly set aside time in class for journaling, starting today.
 - c. Allow at least 10 minutes for students to begin their journal. Before writing, ask a few students to share ideas for writing and make a list on the board. Examples may include:
 - What I learned about investigative journalism and underreported stories
 - Who might be some defenders of democracy in my community
 - What kinds of topics I am interested in learning more about
 - What I’m confused about
 - Questions I have about the project.

Accessibility: Allow students to write in home language; provide noise-canceling headphones or separate seating for students who need silence to concentrate; allow students to use illustrations in addition to words in their journals.

Days 3-4: Inquiry 2, Lesson 2

Ethical Standards for Investigative Journalism

Essential Question, Objectives, and Learning Outcomes

Essential Question:

Who is defending democracy in our community and why?

Objectives

Students will be able to...

- Define the term “ethics”
- Reflect on the ethical considerations in one journalist’s reporting
- Create a list of shared agreements: ethical standards for investigative journalism

Outcomes:

Students will know...

- There are ethical standards in all professions, including journalism

Lesson Materials & Resources

- [“Anchor Charts,” Learning for Justice](#)
- Chosen article from [Stories by Pulitzer Center Grantees](#)
- Devices to access the internet
- Student journals (students can choose to write by hand in a notebook or type using a device)
- “When you get stuck” journal prompts [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- An article of your choice from Student journals

Lesson Activities

Vocabulary:

- Ethics
- Ethical

Warm-up:

1. Display this bell-ringer prompt: “What are ethics? What is ethical behavior?”
 - a. Ask students to take out their project journals and jot down some ideas that come to mind as they reflect on these prompts.
 - b. After a few minutes of writing, invite students to turn and talk to share their ideas. Ask a few students to share ideas that they shared with their partner or heard their partner share.

Accessibility: partner ELL students with same-language peers; provide choices for students with IEPs as needed.

Lesson Steps:

1. Say, “Ethics are the moral principles that guide our behavior. Simply put, ethics are the rules about what is right and what is wrong. There are ethical standards that people are expected to meet in all professions. Doctors take an oath to ‘do no harm.’ When I agreed to take this job as your teacher, I agreed to adhere to ethical standards about the ways that I will interact with you and behave in this professional setting. Professional journalists have ethical standards, too.”
2. Start an [anchor chart](#) with the title, “Ethical Standards for Investigative Journalism.”
 - a. Tell students that we are going to create a list of shared agreements about the ethical standards we will follow in our investigative journalism projects.
 - b. Say, “In our last lesson, we learned about the Pulitzer Center and the work they do to support journalists who are reporting about underreported news stories. You are going to do your own investigations to highlight someone who is defending democracy in our community. We browsed some of the stories yesterday, but today I’ve chosen one news story supported by the Pulitzer Center that I’d like you to read carefully and discuss in class. As we read and discuss, I’d like you to think about the ethical standards that these journalists would need to follow in order to do no harm in their reporting, and we’ll continue to add to our list of shared agreements.”

Educator notes: We chose [AP Road Trip: Racial Tensions in America's 'Sundown Towns'](#).

3. Briefly introduce the authors of the article and share biographical information.

Educator Note: As you are planning for this lesson, consider choosing an article written by a local journalist, and consider inviting the author to visit your classroom to answer student questions about journalistic ethics. See

<https://pulitzercenter.org/education/k-12-programs-and-resources/journalist-visits-classrooms> for more information.

4. Allow students to choose how they’d prefer to read the article from the Choices for Today’s Reading list below. Remind students that whichever method they choose, everyone should annotate or take notes in their journals to record ideas or questions that come up during the reading, and to focus on ideas related to journalistic ethics.

CHOICES FOR TODAY’S READING:

- Read silently and independently. (annotate or make notes in journal to discuss)
- Read silently with a partner. (both read silently, pause to discuss or ask questions)
- Read aloud with a partner. (take turns reading aloud in quiet voices, pause to discuss or ask questions)
- Read with the teacher. (follow along and listen to read-aloud and discuss in a small group)

5. After students have read the article, invite students to share ideas or questions from the reading.
 - a. Ask students, “As you thought about the work that this journalist did investigating and reporting this story, what ethical considerations came to mind for you?”

- b. Guide students to add to the list of “Ethical Standards for Investigative Journalism” based on the reading.
 - c. As you facilitate the discussion, continually remind students that these are shared agreements and ask students, “Does everyone agree? Is there anyone who disagrees?”
 - d. Remind students that the list is a “work in progress,” and that we can continue to revisit conversations about the ethical considerations of our project as we go deeper into the work.
6. Set aside a block of time for students to journal.
- a. Before writing, ask a few students to share ideas for writing and make a list on the board.
 - b. Allow at least 10 minutes of journal time to allow students to reflect on the article and the conversations about ethics.
 - c. If students struggle to start, provide them with the “When you get stuck” journal prompts.”
[\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)

Extension:

Research codes of ethics for several news organizations. Report to the class about the similarities and differences between different organizations.

Days 5-6: Inquiry 2, Lesson 3

Setting Standards for Investigative Journalism Project

Essential Question, Objectives, and Learning Outcome

Essential Question:

Who is defending democracy in our community and why?

Objectives

Students will be able to...

- Reflect on the journalistic criteria evident in one journalist’s reporting
- Create a rubric for investigative journalism

Outcomes:

Students will know...

- The merit of journalists’ work is measured based on specific criteria, including sourcing, claim, and author’s role.

Lesson Materials & Resources

- “When you get stuck” journal prompts [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- Investigative Journalism Criteria Notetaker [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- Blank template of a Investigative Research Project Rubric [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- An article of your choice from [Stories by Pulitzer Center Grantees](#) (same article used in Inquiry #2, Lesson 2)

Lesson Activities

Warm-up:

1. Display this bell-ringer prompt: “Think about the investigative journalism piece we looked at in the last lesson. What are some characteristics that make it good?”
 - a. If students struggle to answer that open-ended question, consider rephrasing the question by asking, “What kind of work do you think the authors had to do before they could write this piece?”
 - b. Ask students to take out their project journals and jot down some ideas that come to mind as they reflect on these prompts.
 - c. After a few minutes of writing, invite students to turn and talk to share their ideas.
 - d. Ask a few students to share ideas that they shared with their partner or heard their partner share.

Accessibility: Partner ELL students with same-language peers; provide choices for students with IEPs as needed.

Lesson Steps:

1. Say, “In our last lesson we talked about the ethical standards for investigative journalism. Certainly, a good journalist must live up to these standards, but there are many other considerations for what makes a piece of journalistic writing *great*. Today we are going to examine the same article we read yesterday. This time we are going to look for what the author is doing that makes this piece so strong, and we are going to break that down into a list of criteria. This will serve as your guide for your own investigative reporting when you start your projects soon.”
2. Give each student a copy of the Investigative Journalism Criteria Notetaker. [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
 - a. Spend a few minutes helping students to understand the three categories and give examples to illustrate the terms.
 - b. Invite students to re-read the article from the previous lesson. This time, they should take notes whenever they see evidence related to the three categories.
 - c. Say, “If I notice that the author is quoting the exact words of another person, I’m definitely going to write that in the ‘source’ section, because this is evidence that the author has consulted someone else in the process of writing this article. If I read something related to the author’s main claim (what the author is mainly saying) I will write it in the ‘claim’ section. If the author talks directly about herself or gives personal information about herself or her family, I will capture that evidence in the ‘author’s role’ section.”
3. Allow students to choose *how* they’d prefer to re-read the article from the Choices for Today’s Reading list below:

CHOICES FOR TODAY’S READING

- Read silently and independently. (make notes in notetaker to discuss)
- Read silently with a partner. (both read silently, pause to discuss or ask questions)
- Read aloud with a partner. (take turns reading aloud in quiet voices, pause to discuss or ask questions)
- Read with the teacher. (follow along and listen to read-aloud and discuss in a small group)

4. After everyone has re-read the article and recorded notes, invite students to briefly share with the whole group the most important evidence they collected for each category.
 - a. For each category, prompt students to consider how the author’s choices contribute to the success of the article. For example, you might say, “The author quotes sources from both sides of the issue, and also quotes a few other authors who have written about this topic. How does that make this writing more successful?”
5. Give each student a copy of the Blank Template of a Investigative Research Project Rubric. [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
 - a. Tell students that today they are going to help make the rubric that we will use to assess the quality of our final pieces in the investigative research project, using the piece we just read as a model.

- b. Spend a few minutes helping students to understand the terms on the rubric and how the information will be organized.
- c. Say, “This is a really powerful tool we are creating today, because you will be using it throughout the writing process to make decisions about your own writing and the choices you’ll make in presenting your research findings.”
- d. For each of the three categories on the blank rubric, guide students through an iterative brainstorming process using the steps below:
 - **STEP ONE:** Students work in small groups to review their notetakers and identify key phrases that describe evidence of proficiency in that category. For example, if students analyze an article and identify four main types of sources (such as interviews with residents, interview with a historian, historical newspaper articles, and US census records), this should lead them to conclude that having information from 4+ TYPES of sources is proficient. You can assign each group one category to focus on, or have all groups look at all three categories, depending on time and your students’ familiarity with constructing rubrics.
 - **STEP TWO:** The teacher invites each group to share the phrase they think is most important and records their contributions in the 3-Proficient section of the blank template. If possible, project the template on a screen for the whole class to see or make notes on the whiteboard.
 - **STEP THREE:** After each group has shared, the teacher asks the whole class to read the list and prompts, “Does this list include all of the essential criteria in this category? Are we missing anything important? Is there anything that you think should be changed?” If students suggest additions, deletions, or changes, invite the whole class to weigh in so the final criteria for 3-Proficient will be the result of group consensus.
 - **STEP FOUR:** Say, “Now that we have identified the criteria for a proficient project, we can use the opposite language to write criteria for a project that is not proficient.” Model for students how to take one of their criteria and turn it into an opposite statement and put that in the section 1-Not Proficient. For example, in the sourcing category, we would hope to guide students to identify that using only one type of source would be insufficient. Invite students to turn the other criteria into opposite statements for that section. Before moving on, prompt students again to discuss and approve any additions, deletions, or changes they might suggest. **Note:** *Sometimes this step in the process prompts students to realize that they need to make changes to the proficient section. Encourage students to continue reflecting throughout the process and be open to changing.*
 - **STEP FIVE:** Say, “The last thing we need to do is fill in the middle section, 2-Approaching Proficiency. In this section, we describe what it looks like if the author is partially meeting the criteria for proficiency, but not entirely. Another way this might look is if the author is attempting to meet the criteria for proficiency, but only somewhat successfully.” Model for students how to take one of their criteria, compare the 3-Proficient with the 1-Not Proficient descriptions, and to write a description of something in-between the two. For example, in the sourcing section, students may

conclude that at least two different source types should be used. Invite students to do the same with the other criteria. Again, prompt students to review the entire category and suggest any additions, deletions, or changes, and guide students to a group consensus on the entire category before moving on to the next category and repeating the process.

Educator Note: Depending on the group you teach, this process may become overly tedious. Use your discretion to speed the process along if needed. For example, you might consider this alternative: Have students generate the 3-Proficient category following the steps. Then the teacher fills in the 1-Not Proficient category and the 2-Approaching Proficiency category with a think-aloud model while writing descriptions to those sections. Students listen to the think-aloud, read the teacher descriptions, and then the teacher invites students to chime in on any necessary changes.

If you are able to invite a local journalist to be a guest speaker in your class, consider asking that author to read the student-created rubric and discuss the criteria with students during the visit.

6. Allow at least 10 minutes of journal time to allow students to reflect on their re-reading of the article and the rubric they created. Before writing, ask a few students to share ideas for writing and make a list on the board. If students struggle to start, provide them with the “When you get stuck” journal prompts. [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)

Day 7: Inquiry 2, Lesson 4

Routines & Procedures for the Investigative Research Project

Essential Question, Objectives, and Learning Outcomes

Essential Question:

Who is defending democracy in our community and why?

Objectives

Students will be able to...

- Conduct investigative research and report about a current, local defender of democracy - an underreported story

Outcomes:

Students will know

- There are many individuals and groups in their own communities who defend democracy today in many different ways

Lesson Materials & Resources

- Checklist for Investigative Research [[.pdf](#)] [[.docx](#)]
- Devices to access the internet
- Physical or digital journals for students to reflect as they research

Lesson Activities

Educator note: Based on your teaching schedule and the unique considerations in your setting, you can choose to structure this inquiry in one of two ways:

1. *A self-contained inquiry in which teachers guide the research process during class time and set aside time frequently for peer group check-ins.*
2. *An inquiry that continues throughout the school year simultaneously with other units of study. Students conduct research independently outside of the classroom, and teachers set aside a certain amount of time per week for journaling and meeting with peer groups as students move through the investigative research project and prepare for their final reports.*

Lesson Steps:

1. Tell students that they are going to have the exciting opportunity to conduct their own investigative research project and to report on an underreported story from their own communities.
 - a. Introduce the essential question for this inquiry: Who is defending democracy in our community?
 - b. Say, “You will be doing your own research and creating a profile to add to the Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame. You will be looking for a person or group in your own community, in whatever sense you define your community, who is doing current work, right here where we live, to defend democracy.”

- c. “In our last lesson, we came to some shared agreements about ethical considerations for this kind of work; please ensure that you hold yourself to high standards in the ethics of your work. To organize your ideas as you conduct your research, you will be keeping an investigative journal.”
- d. Explain that students will be the owners of their investigative journals; the journals are not a “teacher-task” to monitor compliance, but a tool for students to develop their own ideas about what they want to report.
- e. Say, “I’m not going to collect your entire journal and read every page because this is your journal and it’s up to you how you want to use it. You can choose to write with a pen or pencil in a physical journal or type in a Google Doc. I will be giving you a schedule and asking you to periodically choose one entry to share with me.”

Educator Note: In a self-contained inquiry, you might require weekly submissions. If the process continues throughout the school year, you might require monthly submissions.

- f. Explain to students that they can choose which entry they’d like the teacher to read, thinking about which part of the process they’d like to share to get some ideas or feedback. Say, “When you share an entry with me, I will read it carefully and write a response to you with some ideas or questions that I think will be supportive in your process.”
2. Tell students that they will also be receiving feedback and support from a peer group throughout the process.
 - a. Assign students to groups of 3, called triads.
 - b. Say, “You will also be choosing sections from your journal to share with your triads. You will work in the same group of 3 students throughout this process and this will be very supportive because you will have two other people who are very familiar with your research who can give you suggestions and feedback.”

Educator Note: In a self-contained inquiry, triads might meet several times a week. If the process continues throughout the school year, set aside weekly or biweekly time for triads to meet during class.

3. Guide students through the process, detailed below:

THE INVESTIGATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS

1. Investigative research and journaling to identify a defender of democracy and compile relevant information
2. Draft a profile for the Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame
3. Editing and revision with triads and teacher feedback
4. Publishing and celebrating final investigative reports ([Example of a class website](#))

Educator Note: Teachers might consider doing their own investigative research project as a model for the class. Throughout the process, teachers could model and think-aloud where they are in their own process to support students’ thinking, as needed.

Educator Notes on Assessment:

Formative assessment:

- *Throughout the research process, journaling, and triad participation, the Checklist for Investigative Research [[.pdf](#)] [[.docx](#)] can be used for student self-reflection, peer feedback, and teacher feedback.*
- *Encourage students in their triads to regularly use the rubric they created in Inquiry #2 Lesson 3, as well as the list of ethical considerations they created to center their feedback and revisions. Consider having the rubric and the list of ethical considerations be “live documents,” open to continued whole class revisions throughout the process.*
- *Consider allowing students to submit as many drafts of their project as necessary to meet the 3-Proficient criteria from the rubric.*

Summative assessment:

- *When students produce their final draft, use the rubric that they created in Inquiry #2 Lesson 3 to give feedback.*
- *Publish your students’ final submissions on the class website “Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame” and be sure to allow time and structures in the classroom for students to explore and celebrate each other’s work*

Inquiry 3

(4-8 class periods)

In what ways can I be a defender of democracy and why?

In the third and final inquiry of this unit, students explore their role in taking inspired and informed action to defend democracy in their own communities. Students study the role that young leaders like Greta Thunberg have played in advocating for change and develop their own call to action around a local issue that is important to them. Through research and analysis, students develop an understanding of an issue's systemic dimensions and ultimately develop an informed plan for civic action.

Throughout the inquiry, students will refer back to lessons, projects, and tasks completed in the previous two inquiries including the Democracy Defenders Hall of Fame, the summative task of inquiry 1, and the investigative research projects they created to celebrate defenders of democracy in their own communities.

By the end of this unit, students will...

- Review profiles of “defenders of democracy” to identify criteria to describe a successful action
- Identify an issue or problem as an area of focus for the informed action project
- Reflect on how an issue or problem connects to themselves and their broader communities
- Identify symptoms and root causes of an issue or problem
- Create a plan for investigating a problem or issue
- Take a civic action to address a problem or issue or plan to take an action

By the end of this unit, students will know...

- An overview of the stages of the informed action process
- The criteria that will be used to judge success in the informed action project
- A call to action question is a question that sparks an inquiry that leads to an informed action
- Civic actors must consider root causes, consult stakeholders, and gather and analyze data before deciding on an action to take to address a problem or issue
- Civic actors can choose from multiple pathways to address a problem or issue:
 1. Inform or create awareness
 2. Join, invite, or organize others
 3. Impact systems and policies

Days 1-2: Inquiry 3, Lesson 1

Introduction to the Informed Action Project

Essential Question, Objectives, and Learning Outcomes

Essential Question:

In what ways can I be a defender of democracy and why?

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

Review profiles of “defenders of democracy” to identify criteria to describe a successful action.

Outcomes:

Students will know...

- An overview of the stages of the informed action process.
- The criteria that will be used to judge success in the informed action project.

Lesson Materials & Resources

- Human Graph Activity Teacher Instructions [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- Chicago Public Schools Inquiry to Action Framework [\[.pdf\]](#)
- Inquiry to Action framework infographic [\[.pdf\]](#)
- Class [website](#) example
- Devices to access the internet

Lesson Activities

Vocabulary:

- Informed action

Lesson Steps:

1. Say, “Remember when we participated in the human graph activity at the beginning of this unit? We are going to do that again today. It will be interesting to see if our ideas have stayed the same or changed.” Follow the directions in the Human Graph Activity Teacher Instructions [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#).

Educator note: If possible, you may want to choose the same students to form the human graph, but if it is not possible, you can emphasize that the group is a representative sampling of the class.

2. After participating in the Human Graph activity, display the results from the first time and invite students to notice how their ideas related to democracy have changed or stayed the same through the course of the inquiry. When there are changes, ask:
 - Why do you think our ideas might have changed?
 - What have we learned that might have influenced this change?
3. Tell students that the Human Graph activity is a way to get them thinking about their own personal views about our American democracy. This is a good place to start in introducing our culminating activity for the year, an informed action project.

- a. Write the words “informed action” on the whiteboard.
 - b. Invite students to turn and talk to share their ideas about the word.
 - c. Ask a few students to share ideas that they shared with their partner or heard their partner share.
 - d. Through this discussion, emphasize that an informed action project is an invitation to take an “action” or plan to take an action to address an issue or problem that you care about.
 - e. Say, “Using the word ‘informed’ means that you will be taking an action based on information that you will gather. For example, before you take an action, you might gather information about what has already been attempted, what has worked or not worked in similar situations, or what kind of action would be best, according to the people in the community who would be affected by the action.”
4. Display the essential question for this project: In what ways can I be a defender of democracy?
 5. Say, “All year long, we have uplifted and celebrated defenders of democracy. We learned about the role that Black Americans have played throughout our country’s history as the ‘perfectors of democracy,’ as Nikole Hannah-Jones said. We researched to create our class webpage highlighting people in our own communities who are defending democracy. In all of the historical topics we’ve studied throughout the year, we’ve seen defenders of democracy making choices and taking actions to ensure that the right to fully participate in our democracy is extended to all Americans equally. Now, I’m inviting you to consider the powerful questions, ‘Where do I see evidence that our democracy is not yet perfect? And what might I do about it?’” Revisiting the Human graph activity might have already started you thinking about an issue or problem you might want to look into.
 6. Tell students that our process for the informed action project will be guided by the Inquiry to Action framework infographic [\[.pdf\]](#).
 - a. Display the framework infographic and invite students to spend 5 minutes looking at the graphic and sharing their initial thinking in groups of 2-4 students. Instruct students to make notes of ideas and questions that come up in their discussions.
 - b. After the groups discuss, invite a few students to share their ideas and questions with the group. As you facilitate the discussion, support students to understand key words and phrases and get a general sense of the process.
 - c. Tell students that the three sections of the framework will be the three steps in the process and we’ll spend more time unpacking each one later.

Educator note: We recommend reading the Chicago Public Schools Inquiry to Action Framework [\[.pdf\]](#) to build your own background knowledge about the framework before analyzing it with your students.

7. Say, “This informed action project is not a typical school project, so the way we will measure success is not going to be typical either. For this project, I want to invite you to collaborate with me to determine the criteria for how we will judge the success of our actions.”
 - a. Instruct students to go to the class website ([example](#)) and review the “Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame.”

- b. Working in groups of 2-4, allow students 5-10 minutes to review the content and start a list of criteria to describe a successful action. If students have a hard time understanding the task, consider giving them an example, such as “effort” or “planning” to get them started.
 8. After students have compiled working lists, invite them to share their ideas with the whole group and list all suggestions on the board under the title “Criteria to Judge Success of an Informed Action Project.” As you facilitate discussion, bring forward possible scenarios that should be considered.
 - a. For example, you might ask, “What if someone plans and attempts an action, but for some reason (out of their control) they aren’t able to complete it or they don’t see any noticeable change? Was that still successful in some way?”
 - b. Refer back to “Ethical Standards for Investigative Journalism” chart created in Inquiry #2 Lesson 2 to remind students about their commitment to do no harm.
2. When students have shared a list of several criteria, invite each group to choose their top three criteria that they consider to be the most important.
 - a. Ask each group to share out and circle the top choices in the list on the board.
 - b. Tell students, “Read all of the criteria circled on the board. Let’s think about this before we make our final list because whatever we choose as criteria is what you will have to deliver in order to be successful in this project.” Ask the following questions:
 - Do you think one individual can do all of these things?
 - Is there anything we should remove?
 - Can we combine any of the criteria together?
 - Facilitate the discussion until everyone agrees on a set of criteria and copy the final list on chart paper to display in the room.
 - c. Say, “As you are working on your project, keep reminding yourself of what success looks like by reviewing these criteria. I’m looking forward to seeing every single one of you succeed!”

Day 3-4: Inquiry 3, Lesson 2

Begin with a Call to Action Question

Essential Question, Objectives, and Learning Outcome

Essential Question:

In what ways can I be a defender of democracy and why?

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

- Identify an issue or problem as an area of focus for the informed action project
- Reflect on how an issue or problem connects to themselves and their broader communities

Outcomes:

Students will know...

- A call to action question is a question that sparks an inquiry that leads to an informed action.

Lesson Materials & Resources

- Youtube video: "[Greta Thunberg calls for action five years after Paris Agreement](#)"
- Chicago Public Schools Inquiry to Action Framework [\[.pdf\]](#)
- Chicago Public Schools Inquiry to Action Framework Infographic [\[.pdf\]](#)
- Devices to access the internet [\[.pdf\]](#)
- Our Call to Action Question [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- Your Call to Action Question Handout [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)

Lesson Activities

Vocabulary:

- Call to action question
- Equality
- Inequality

Lesson Steps:

Educator Note: We recommend reviewing the Chicago Public Schools Inquiry to Action Framework [\[.pdf\]](#), pages 7-11, to build your own background knowledge before this lesson.

1. Display the words "call to action."
 - a. Ask students to turn and talk with a partner to discuss the meaning of the phrase.
 - b. Ask a few students to share their ideas.
2. Say, "A call to action is just what it sounds like. The speaker is calling (inviting) someone to take some kind of action. We are going to watch a short call to action speech from a young person you may have heard of before. Her name is Greta Thunberg and she is an international climate activist. Listen to her

short speech and think about this prompt: What action is she calling us to take? What does she want us to do?”

- a. Show the Youtube video: [Greta Thunberg calls for action five years after Paris Agreement](#).
 - b. Invite students to turn and talk to a partner about the prompt. Then ask a few students to share their ideas related to Greta Thunberg’s call to action. Student responses might include:
 - She wants us to raise awareness about climate change.
 - She wants us to pressure our elected officials to change laws and policies.
3. Refer students to the Inquiry to Action framework infographic [\[.pdf\]](#) and say, “In our informed action project, we will begin with a ‘Call to Action Question.’ Like Greta’s call to action, our call to action question will be calling you to take some kind of action.”
- a. Explain that the question lays out an issue or problem and asks how students can address the issue or problem. Each student will decide the action they will choose to do in response to the question, but the Call to Action will provide the foundation for their work.
 - b. Display Our Call to Action Question [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#) .
 - c. Give students 5-10 minutes to jot down ideas in response to the prompts. After some silent time reflecting, invite students to turn to a partner and share their ideas and listen to their partner’s ideas. Then invite students to share with the whole group.
 - d. Ask students, “Does anyone have an idea of a specific issue or problem you’d like to address with your action?”
 - e. List student ideas on the board to help others generate ideas. Facilitate the discussion and intervene as needed until everyone has at least one idea.
 - f. Emphasize that students might change ideas later as they move through the process, but it helps to start with one specific problem or issue in mind.
 - g. Refer back to Inquiry #2 Investigative Research Project [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#) - students can choose to connect with or build on the work of any of the contemporary/local Defenders of Democracy profiled by their classmates.

Educator Note: Sometimes students want to move quickly to take immediate action. They might already have an idea about what kind of action they might take to address an issue or problem. Emphasize to students that we are not yet thinking about what specific action we will take, only just choosing a problem or issue. Remind students that this project is called an “informed” action, because they will be gathering information and using it to inform their decision about what action to take.

Accessibility: Consider creating supportive groups for ELL students and students with IEPs; provide more frequent check-ins during the inquiry process.

4. Tell students that they are going to continue to reflect by considering how they, their families and friends, and their communities are connected to the issue they’ve chosen.
 - a. Display Your Call to Action Question Handout [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#).
 - b. Give students copies of the handout and allow them to discuss with groups of 2-4 students while they fill in the circles.

5. Say, “For today’s exit ticket, please fill in the blanks in this prompt to give me some information about what you are thinking. PROMPT: The issue or problem that I’d like to focus on is _____. This is important to me and/or to my community because _____.”

Days 5-6: Inquiry 3, Lesson 3
Investigate the Problem

Essential Question, Objectives, and Learning Outcomes

Essential Question:

In what ways can I be a defender of democracy and why?

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

- Identify symptoms and root causes of an issue or problem.
- Create a plan for investigating a problem or issue.

Outcomes:

Students will know...

- Civic actors must consider root causes, consult stakeholders, and gather and analyze data before deciding on an action to take to address a problem or issue.

Lesson Materials & Resources

- Chicago Public Schools Inquiry to Action Framework [\[.pdf\]](#)
- Chicago Public Schools Inquiry to Action Framework Infographic [\[.pdf\]](#)
- Root Cause Tree [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- My Plan for Investigating the Problem [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- Chart paper and markers

Lesson Activities

Vocabulary:

- Root causes

Lesson Steps:

Educator Note: We recommend reviewing the Chicago Public Schools Inquiry to Action Framework [\[.pdf\]](#), pages 12-15, to build your own background knowledge before this lesson.

Accessibility: *To begin this phase of the project, consider analyzing the exit tickets from the previous lesson to identify groups of students with similar interests. Consider seating students near peers with similar issues/problems to facilitate group discussions.*

1. Say, “In our last lesson, you identified a problem or issue that is important to you and your community. Today we are entering the second phase of the process, ‘Investigate the Problem,’ which is really the ‘informed’ part of the “informed action” project, because this is the stage where we will be gathering information to help us decide how to act.”

2. Instruct students to analyze the second part of the Inquiry to Action framework infographic [\[.pdf\]](#) in groups of 2-4. Ask students to unpack the meaning of the words in the section and make note of words that they do not understand.
 - a. Invite students to share with the whole group what they figured out and questions they have about the second phase.
 - b. Explain that investigating the problem involves research to understand the causes and deeper roots of the problem. Students will analyze the information they find in their research or they might gather their own data to analyze. Based on their analysis, students will assess the situation to identify an action to take.
3. Tell students that we will start investigating the problem by using a tool called a Root Cause Tree [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#).
 - a. Project a copy of the handout and model how to fill out the root cause tree with a teacher think-aloud model.

SAMPLE OF A TEACHER THINK-ALLOUD MODEL

*“An issue that I care about in this community is food insecurity. I believe that in a perfect democracy, every person has the right to the resources they need, including healthy, nourishing food, so in the section “THE BIG ISSUE,” I’m writing, “Not everyone in our community has enough food.” Let’s start by filling out some of the symptoms. Help me out: when people don’t have enough food, what happens?
(Write student ideas in the SYMPTOMS section - health problems, anxiety, trouble concentrating in school)*

*Now let’s think about the root causes. Why don’t people have enough food? **(Write student ideas in the SYMPTOMS section - not enough money to buy food, no grocery stores nearby)** See how there are arrows below the root causes? That’s because for each root cause we can try to go even deeper and think about what caused it. Can anyone think of a deeper cause for one of the root causes we’ve written here?*

- b. Invite students to fill out their own root cause trees about the problems or issues they identified for the project. Encourage students to discuss in groups of 2-4 as they work and to help each other generate ideas.
 - c. After students have spent time reflecting with the root cause tree, tell students that they will be using the ideas they generated to complete a plan for investigating the problem.
4. Give each student a copy of My Plan for Investigating the Problem [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#). Explain that this handout helps students to create a roadmap for their investigations by reflecting on several prompts.
 - a. Allow students to work in groups of 2-4 as they fill out the handout and encourage students to discuss and help each other generate ideas.
5. After students have completed the plan, allow time for individual research and data gathering.

Educator Note: Use your discretion to determine what amount of class time should be designated for this phase. Keep in mind that some of the data gathering and community research might take place outside of class, so allow students ample time to make arrangements. Set a reasonable deadline for when students should report to class having completed all three steps of the plan.

6. Tell students, “When our investigations are complete, we will be moving on to the third and final stage of the informed action project, Decide on a Culminating Action. You will look at the information you collected and the data you gathered and analyzed and you will use that to inform your decision about the best action to take.”

Accessibility: *Some students may struggle to identify a community member who can serve as a reliable source of information. Although a combination of online research and interviewing is ideal, accept work that relies fully on internet research. If possible, connect your students with organizers/professionals in fields related to their interests - draw on the network of your school community to identify these individuals.*

Days 7-8: Inquiry 3, Lesson 4
Decide on a Culminating Task

Essential Question, Objectives, and Learning Outcomes

Essential Question:

In what ways can I be a defender of democracy and why?

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

- Take a civic action to address a problem or issue or plan to take an action

Outcomes:

Students will know..

- Civic actors can choose from multiple pathways to address a problem or issue:
 1. Inform or create awareness
 2. Join, invite, or organize others
 3. Impact systems and policies

Lesson Materials & Resources

- Chicago Public Schools Inquiry to Action Framework [\[.pdf\]](#)
- Chicago Public Schools Inquiry to Action Framework Infographic [\[.pdf\]](#)
- My Action Plan [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)

Lesson Activities

Vocabulary:

- Civic action
- Civic actor

Lesson Steps:

Educator Note: We recommend reviewing the Chicago Public Schools Inquiry to Action Framework [\[.pdf\]](#), pages 16-27, to build your own background knowledge before this lesson.

1. Say, “Recently, you’ve been working to investigate the problem or issue you’ve chosen. At this point in the process, you should have a lot of information and data that you’ve collected and analyzed in your investigation. Today we are entering the third phase of the process, ‘Decide on a Culminating Action.’ This is an exciting day because you will decide on the action you’d like to take.”
2. Instruct students to analyze the third part of the Inquiry to Action Framework Infographic [\[.pdf\]](#) in groups of 2-4.

- a. Ask students to unpack the meaning of the words in the section and make note of words that they do not understand.
 - b. Invite students to share with the whole group what they figured out and questions they have about the third phase.
 - c. Explain that the three pathways are three different ways that students could approach taking an action, and we'll spend some time today thinking about which is the best pathway.
3. Say, "Let's take a few minutes to browse through the Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame profiles on our website. These are all individuals or groups of people who took actions. See if you can find all three pathways in the various actions they took."
 - a. Give students 5-10 minutes to browse and discuss with a group.
 - b. Then invite a few to share about which of the three pathways are represented.
 4. Say, "Before we start planning our actions, let's reflect a little more about the actions we see in our Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame. What kind of work, time, resources, and organizing went into making their efforts successful?"
 - a. Invite students to discuss with a partner and then share their ideas with the whole group.

Educator Note: Consider choosing one of the profiles to focus the discussion on in order to give students an opportunity to reflect on the fact that actions need careful planning and organization that often requires time and resources.

5. Tell students that we will work toward planning or taking an action by using a tool called My Action Plan [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#). Project a copy of the handout. Model how to fill out My Action Plan with a teacher think-aloud model.

SAMPLE OF A TEACHER THINK-ALLOUD MODEL

"Remember that I've been investigating the problem of food insecurity in our community. I did a lot of reading about different people and organizations in our community who work to address this issue. I also did an informal survey of my classmates about school breakfasts and lunches. I found out that a lot of students don't take the school breakfast, even though they might not have had breakfast, because they don't like the food that is served. This gave me the idea that maybe one way we could make sure that all students have access to a nourishing breakfast is to improve the choices for school breakfasts, so in this first box, I'm going to write "give students more options for school breakfast."

*Now, I'd like you all to help me out with the next few boxes. If I want to give students more options for school breakfast, what are some ways I could inform or create awareness about this idea? **(Write student ideas in section 2 - post on social media, attend a parent meeting at school and make a statement)***

*Now let's do section 3. If I want to give students more options for school breakfast, what are some ways I could join, invite or organize others around this idea? **(Write student ideas in section 3 -***

start a group of student activists to work together, research organizations that are tackling the problem and find a way to volunteer for them)

Now let's do section 4. If I want to give students more options for school breakfast, what are some ways I could impact systems and policies about this idea? (Write student ideas in section 4 - write a letter to my representative in Congress, speak at a school board meeting)

Okay, finally I get to the point where I get to decide on an action. Looking back over the list I've made here, I'm thinking about what will actually be possible for me to do, what I am interested in doing, and what I think will be most helpful. I decided I'm going to _____ (Choose one of the actions from your list.), so I'm going to write that in the last box.

6. Give each student a copy of My Action Plan [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#). Allow students to work in groups of 2-4 as they fill out the handout and encourage students to discuss and help each other generate ideas.

Educator note: Sometimes students struggle to identify an action that is realistic for them to address the problem or issue they've chosen. It can be helpful to refer them back to the Your Call to Action Question Handout from Lesson 2 of this inquiry. Remind students that their action can come from any of the concentric circles. Some students may choose to simply have a conversation with a family member or schedule a meeting with the school principal.

7. After students have completed the plan, allow time for any students who would like to share to tell the class their planned action. Tell students that now that they have decided on an action, informed by a thorough investigation, they are free to take their action anytime they want to, and that we'd love to hear from students who want to share with the group about the experience.

Educator Notes on assessing the informed action project: We encourage and guide students to plan for an action that is realistic for them and something they personally care about in the hopes that each student will take an action and we hope that they will all actually take that action. In the event that a student might be unable to take an action, the My Action Plan document [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#) can serve as a record of the plan that students made, based on information and data, and students can be assessed on their plan, rather than the action itself.

Consider inviting students to engage in self-reflection and/or partner reflection using the same set of criteria that they developed in Lesson 1 to consider whether or not their action plan was successful.

Extension:

Add student profiles (based on actions taken in the informed action project) to the Defenders of Democracy Hall of Fame. ([Example of a class website](#))