

Answering the Question



Truman Presidential
Museum & Library

Because document-based activities begin with a question, the most natural way to assess students' learning is to have them answer the question. Typically this involves structuring and organizing evidence in order to complete a formal essay writing. While the informational essay is certainly an important skill in a social studies classroom there are also many other valid ways to have students create well-reasoned explanations based on available evidence. Consider the following options for students to answer the guiding question.



Note- This module is organized around the basic steps essential to an inquiry. You are welcome, and encouraged, to tailor these steps to the needs of your students. Younger students might need additional direction and collaboration is provided here.

Compelling Question: How is the current debate about immigration in the United States rooted in our nation's past?

Step 1: Hook

1. Introduce students to the political cartoon.
2. Have students work in pairs to analyze the political cartoon, using the graphic organizer that is provided.
3. Students will ultimately answer the question: What are the American people asking the government to do with migrant workers?
 - a. Some students may think this is a modern cartoon, but when they are done tell them that this cartoon was published in August 1904.
 - b. After students have analyzed the cartoon, have a class discussion about what the cartoon represents. Point out the group of immigrants that are pouring over the border wall (note the stereotypes that are used).
 - i. *Did they know immigration has been an issue for over 100 years?*
 - ii. *Why has this issue gone on for so long?*
 - iii. *Is there any way to solve this issue today?*
4. Use the background essay to tie the political cartoon into the issue.
5. Introduce the compelling question.

Step 2: Sources

1. Have students work either in small groups or individually.

2. Begin by having students analyze the sources and answer the attached questions.
 - a. Some students may struggle with comprehending the sources. Model how to work through the sources and questions by completing source 1 together as a class.
3. Once students have analyzed one document set, have them complete the corresponding formative performance task.
 - a. The formative performance tasks will assist students in completing the summative performance task.
4. Students should work through the document set in order, completing source 7 last.

Step 3: Summative Performance Task: Argumentative

1. Ask students to evaluate the documents provided in the activity, ranking the usefulness of each in answering the guiding question.
2. After students have analyzed the document sets, they will write a letter to the current sitting president discussing their opinion on immigration.
 - a. This letter should follow a formal letter format, which has been provided.
3. Students need to discuss how the use of migrant workers and illegal immigration from Mexico has been an issue throughout history.
 - a. They need to cite 3-4 sources throughout their letter to the president.
 - b. You can decide if you want to mail the letters or not.
4. You may use the rubric below to grade their letters.

Summative Performance Task: Extension

1. For the Debate, have students research and find factual information for and against the question of illegal aliens coming into the county.
2. Have them debate with the class using the information they found that is relevant to today and the information that they learned from the past. L
3. Let them move from side to side as they hear information from other classmates to show some may be changing their opinions.

Rubric for Letter/Essay

	0	1- Below Basic	2- Basic	3- Proficient	4- Advanced
P= Your main idea	Is not able to demonstrate any part of this task.	Can create a claim only with guidance from the instructor.	Creates an appropriate claim on a topic but is not able to introduce or give further explanation to the idea.	Clearly introduces and stakes out a position on the topic.	Clearly introduces the range of possible answers on a topic while staking out a clear position that can be supported with evidence.
E= Evidence you have to support your main idea.	Is not able to demonstrate any part of this task.	Includes generalizations or other ideas not aligned to the prompt	Generally alludes to evidence but does not cite it, or draws from only one account;	Refers to relevant and accurate evidence from more than one source and links it directly to specific accounts, mentioning the accounts by name.	Seamlessly integrates evidence from multiple sources by accurately summarizing details and using source information to establish its relevance.
E= Evaluation and Explanation of your evidence	Is not able to demonstrate any part of this task.	Distinguishes or sorts between evidence that is/ is not relevant to answering a question or explaining a point of view.	With minor errors explains how evidence is relevant to the question or point of view of the paragraph.	Accurately explains the significance of the evidence used to answer the question.	Accurately explains the significance of evidence used and evaluates the reliability or utility of the available sources.
L= Link to context/content	Is not able to demonstrate any part of this task.	Provides a conclusion that is confused or is not relevant to the evidence.	Provides a general conclusion sentence that summarizes the main point of with no specific link to the point.	Links the back to the original point by summarizing how the evidence supports the main idea.	Links back to the original point by both placing the evidence within historical context and by summarizing how the evidence supports the main idea.