

THE ELDREDGE INQUIRY FRAMEWORK

Historical Inquiry Starter Kit

Practical, student-centered tools for helping learners investigate, interpret, and explain the past.

HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES • FREE CLASSROOM RESOURCE

HISTORY IS NOT SOMETHING STUDENTS RECEIVE.

History is something students investigate, interpret, and explain.

Created by Ian J. Eldredge | Eldredge Inquiry Framework

Inside: inquiry launch guide, question builder, primary-source analysis organizer, corroboration matrix, CER planner, authentic-product planner, exhibition feedback, and reflection tools.

Classroom license: This free resource may be used and copied by one educator for their own students. It may not be posted publicly, resold, shared with other educators, or uploaded to a shared drive for school-wide distribution.

Seven connected phases

EIF moves students from curiosity to evidence, creation, public explanation, and reflection.

#	PHASE	STUDENT WORK
01	Spark	Encounter an artifact, image, contradiction, quotation, data point, or story that creates a genuine need to know.
02	Inquiry	Develop a consequential driving question and supporting questions that require evidence, not recall.
03	Investigation	Source, contextualize, corroborate, and compare evidence while tracking perspective and reliability.
04	Workshop	Learn the specific historical thinking, research, writing, and design skills the inquiry demands.
05	Creation	Transform claims and evidence into an authentic product for a meaningful audience.
06	Exhibition	Present, explain, and defend conclusions while responding to questions with evidence.
07	Reflection	Name how thinking changed, evaluate the process, and identify the next worthwhile question.

Teacher role: architect the conditions, curate evidence, model disciplinary thinking, teach skills at the moment of need, conference, challenge, redirect, and protect time for revision.

A one-week inquiry launch

Use this sequence to test the framework without redesigning an entire course.

DAY 1	Spark + Notice	Launch with one compelling source. Students record what they notice, what they infer, and what they need to know.
DAY 2	Question + Source	Build a shared question, model sourcing and contextualization, then annotate one source together.
DAY 3	Corroborate	Pairs compare two conflicting or incomplete sources and identify agreements, tensions, and missing voices.
DAY 4	Claim + Create	Students develop a claim, select evidence, address a counterclaim, and build a short public-facing product.
DAY 5	Defend + Reflect	Students share, answer evidence-based questions, revise one idea, and explain how their thinking changed.

Planning rule: Do not begin with the final product. Begin with the historical tension and evidence. The product should force students to transform what they learned for a real audience.

Build a question worth pursuing

Strong driving questions are open, consequential, researchable, historically grounded, and answerable in more than one defensible way.

Useful stems: To what extent...? • Who benefited and who paid the cost? • What made change possible? • Whose account is most convincing? • When does power become legitimate? • What should be remembered, and why?

HISTORICAL TENSION: What contradiction, controversy, change, or unresolved judgment makes this inquiry matter?

DRAFT DRIVING QUESTION

WHY IT MATTERS: What meaningful judgment will students make?

SUPPORTING QUESTION 1

SUPPORTING QUESTION 2

SUPPORTING QUESTION 3

Quality check: Can students disagree responsibly? Does answering require evidence? Is the scope teachable? Does the question preserve historical context? Will the final task demonstrate an answer rather than repeat information?

Read evidence like a historian

Complete the sourcing row before interpreting details. Return to it after reading to revise initial assumptions.

SOURCE / TITLE / CREATOR

SOURCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS	NOTES / EVIDENCE
Origin	Who created this? When and where? What type of source is it?	
Purpose	Why was it created? Who was the intended audience?	
Context	What was happening that shaped this source?	
Perspective	What values, position, identity, or experience shaped the creator?	
Evidence	What specific detail supports or complicates a claim?	
Limits	What can this source not tell us? Whose voice is absent?	

Make sources speak to one another

A source becomes more useful when students compare it with other evidence rather than treating it as a complete account.

QUESTION	SOURCE A	SOURCE B	SOURCE C
Main claim or message			
Strongest evidence			
Perspective / interest			
Agreement			
Tension or contradiction			
Missing voice / limitation			

CURRENT CONCLUSION: What can you say with confidence after comparing the sources?

Claim, evidence, reasoning, and counterclaim

Use this organizer before students draft an essay, exhibit label, podcast script, presentation, memorial proposal, or other authentic product.

CLAIM: Answer the driving question with a precise, defensible position.

EVIDENCE 1: Cite or describe a specific source detail.

REASONING 1: Explain how the evidence supports the claim using historical thinking.

EVIDENCE 2: Select corroborating, contrasting, or qualifying evidence.

REASONING 2: Explain significance, causation, continuity/change, or perspective.

COUNTERCLAIM: What is the strongest reasonable alternative interpretation?

RESPONSE: Concede, qualify, or refute using evidence.

Plan a product that transforms knowledge

An authentic product should require students to make choices about audience, evidence, interpretation, and design.

AUDIENCE: Who beyond the teacher has a reason to engage with this work?

PURPOSE: What should the audience understand, reconsider, decide, or do?

PRODUCT: Museum exhibit, memorial, policy brief, documentary, podcast, public history page, debate, or another form?

NON-NEGOTIABLE EVIDENCE: What must every product use or address?

STUDENT CHOICE: Where can learners make meaningful decisions?

QUALITY CRITERIA: What makes the historical thinking and communication effective?

CHECKPOINTS: When will students receive feedback on question, evidence, claim, design, and rehearsal?

Question the reasoning, not the person

Audience feedback should help students clarify evidence, strengthen reasoning, and reconsider choices.

FEEDBACK MOVE	PROMPT
Clarify	What do you mean by...? Which part of the claim is most important?
Press evidence	Which source best supports that conclusion? What makes it credible?
Test reasoning	How does that evidence prove the claim? What assumption connects them?
Consider perspective	Whose viewpoint shaped this interpretation? Whose is missing?
Complicate	What evidence challenges or limits your conclusion?
Transfer	Why should this audience care? What larger pattern does this reveal?

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK: One strength grounded in evidence

AUDIENCE QUESTION: One question that presses the reasoning

REVISION DECISION: What will change, and why?

Make the learning visible

Reflection is evidence about the learner's thinking, strategy, revision, and next step.

At first, I thought...

The source or idea that most changed or complicated my thinking was...

My strongest reasoning move was...

A limitation or uncertainty I still need to acknowledge is...

If I revised again, I would...

READY TO TEACH A COMPLETE INQUIRY?

Explore illustrated and printer-friendly high school World History units built with the Eldredge Inquiry Framework.

eldredge-inquiry-framework.soiancredible.chatgpt.site

Teachers Pay Teachers: Ian Eldredge

© 2026 Ian J. Eldredge. Personal classroom-use license for one educator. Thank you for respecting the work that makes future resources possible.