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## **Fifth-Grade Inquiry into a Convergence of U.S. Imperialism, Racism, and War: A World War II Lesson**

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### **Abstract**

This article describes a 5th-grade inquiry lesson in which an elementary school teacher engaged her students to examine what happened in the Philippines during WWII and why. Doing so, the article illustrates the possibility of teaching war from a critical lens in an elementary classroom.

**Keywords:** Teaching about war, elementary education, inquiry lesson, history education

*Did Japan attack the Philippines too?*

*Was the Philippines U.S. land? How come?*

*If the Philippines was U.S. land and attacked, why did FDR cross out Philippines [in the Infamy Speech draft]?*

*Why did FDR focus on Europe when U.S. lands in the Pacific were attacked?*

Fifth graders in Ms. Lee’s class were busy analyzing and sensemaking of primary sources on World War II (WWII) in the Philippines (see Appendix A). They were puzzled and intrigued by what happened in the Philippines during the war. The topics they focused on included the following: The Philippines was a U.S. territory from 1898 to 1946 (see primary source 1 in Appendix A). When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, it also attacked other U.S. territories in the Pacific including the Philippines (see primary source 2 in Appendix A). Yet in his “Infamy Speech” delivered to Congress, President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) primarily focused on the Pearl Harbor attack (see primary source 3 in Appendix A). Despite that fact that Filipinos were U.S. nationals and fell under Japan’s control, FDR’s administration opted to focus on the European theater first (see primary source 4 in Appendix A). This contributed to four years of brutal occupation of the Philippines by Japan (see primary source 5 in Appendix A) as well as the countless deaths of U.S. soldiers and Filipinos in the process of “liberating” the Philippines (see primary sources 6, 7 in Appendix A).

Analyzing the primary sources on this history, fifth graders in Ms. Lee’s classroom faced critical questions: How could the United States, a country born out of anti-colonial revolution against Great Britain, possess colonies of its own? How did racism shape U.S. response to Japan’s invasion of the Philippines? U.S. war with Japan, fought in the Philippines during WWII, showcases a convergence of U.S. imperialism, racism, and war, revealing race has shaped lives

not only in the U.S. mainland but also in U.S. territories overseas and determined who were counted as “Americans” worth protecting and who were not (Hunt & Levine, 2012; Immerwahr, 2020; Kramer, 2006).

In Georgia where Ms. Lee teaches, this event is not included in the official curriculum. The state standards expect fifth-grade students to study WWII with a focus on Germany’s aggression in Europe, Japan’s aggression in Asia, the Holocaust, the Pearl Harbor attack, and the U.S. role to end the war (Georgia Department of Education [GA DOE], 2017). This curriculum depicts the United States exclusively as a benevolent savior of peoples suffering under the empire-building of Germany and Japan. Doing so, it entrenches a dominant national narrative of the United States as a beacon of anti-imperialism and promotes a myopic understanding of U.S. history, such as the one former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (2003) adopted in his response to a journalist’s question regarding the U.S. invasion of Iraq:

[The United States] is not a colonial power. We have never been a colonial power. We don’t take our force and go around the world and try to take other people’s real estate and other people’s resources, their oil. That’s just not what the United States does. We never have and we never will. That’s not how democracies behave.

A perspective on U.S. history like this is dishonest about historic and current U.S. actions in the world, which includes conquering Indigenous peoples’ lands and Mexico’s territories; conquering islands in the Pacific and Caribbean; backing pro-United States dictators and oppressive regimes in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America; waging multiple wars and inciting coups there; and occupying almost 800 military bases around the world today (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Hunt & Levine, 2012; Vine, 2020a).

As a former teacher and current teacher educator, I maintain that students need an honest, critical understanding of U.S. history to make informed decisions on government actions and to bring peace, not violence, to the world. Especially in the continued war that the United States has waged in since 2001, students need a fuller story than what is offered by mainstream media, official government sources, and official curriculum to contemplate alternatives to war (Gibbs, 2021; Noddings, 2012; Vine, 2020b). With this belief, I collaborated with Ms. Grace Lee, an elementary school teacher in Georgia, to develop and teach a lesson on WWII in the Philippines as a part of a fifth-grade unit. In this paper, I describe how Ms. Lee engaged her students in the lesson and how the fifth graders made sense of U.S. imperialism and racism entangled with WWII in the Philippines. Doing so, the goal of the paper is to illustrate the possibility of teaching war and history from a critical lens in an elementary classroom. Before proceeding, I first present historical background of the war and situate the lesson within the literature on teaching about war.

## Historical Background

### History of U.S. Territories and Imperialism

Many U.S. mainlanders know little about U.S. territories, the land over which the United States claims sovereignty as part of the country. When thinking about the United States, most people would picture a map that has 48 states in the mainland along with Hawaii and Alaska. In this mental map, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the North Mariana Island—today’s five inhabited U.S. territories—are rarely included. Few would also know that the United States held jurisdiction over more people overseas (135 million) than on the mainland (132 million) during the 1940s when the Philippines, Hawaii, and Alaska were U.S. territories (Immerwahr, 2020).

The history of U.S. territories in fact goes back to the beginning of the United States (Alessio & Renfro, 2016; Immerwahr, 2020). When the Treaty of Paris was ratified to grant the United States independence, Virginia ceded its claims over the area north of the Ohio River to the federal government. With that, the United States was no longer a union of states alone but an amalgam of states and territories, which it has been ever since (Immerwahr, 2016). Through wars, conquests, treaties, and purchases, the United States took over more territories, finishing territorial conquest within North America by the 1850s (Alessio & Renfro, 2016).

Eventually, these territories became states and were admitted into the Union. However, the passage to statehood was not same for all territories, and often white supremacy was at the core of the process (Delay, 2015). For example, California transitioned from military rule to statehood in 2 years because it quickly filled with whites. In contrast, Oklahoma languished as a territory for 104 years because it had few whites within the territory. Only after thousands of whites poured into the territory was it admitted as a state in 1907 (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014).

U.S. territorial conquest did not stop when it completed the border within the mainland (Hunt & Levine, 2012). Even well before all the continental territories became states, the United States was active overseas, claiming more territories such as *guano* islands, that is, uninhabited islands possessing valuable fertilizer (Skaggs, 1994). Through the Spanish-American War, the United States further occupied the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam (Alessio & Renfro, 2016). These overseas colonies were under U.S. control until the end of WWII.

In the post-WWII context when the decolonization movement swept the world, the United States felt pressure to let its colonies go because presenting itself as the world’s triumphant democracy while holding onto its colonies would be hypocritical (Immerwahr, 2020). Hence, in 1946 the United States granted the Philippines independence. In 1952 it granted Puerto Rico a status of commonwealth. In 1959, it made Alaska and Hawaii states. Today, the United States still has five inhabited territories, and 4 million people live in them.

In short, the United States has held territories throughout its history through imperialist actions (Immerwahr, 2020). Defined as powers over peoples and, often, occupation of their lands outside the borders of a nation-state, imperialism has a long history in the United States (Immerwahr, 2020; Kramer, 2011; Okihiro, 2017). Yet official curriculum tends to present U.S.

imperialism and territories as a short-lived aberration existing only around the time of the Spanish-American War (Loewen, 2009). Doing so, the curriculum silences history in which people in U.S. territories have often been treated as inferior or unworthy of protection due to their non-whiteness (Kramer, 2006). Few mainlanders would know of inhumane medical trials carried out on people in U.S. territories or the use of territories for U.S. nuclear test, which uprooted people's lives there (Immerwahr, 2020).

### **History of the Philippines as a U.S. Territory**

Curricular silence on WWII in the Philippines is not surprising given the general curricular silence on U.S. imperialism and territories. In school, students may hear about the Philippines during the study of the Spanish-American War, but that's mostly it. Many would not learn what happened next to the Philippines and other newly acquired territories in the aftermath of the war.

Despite nearly dropping out of U.S. collective memory, the Philippines was a U.S. colony for more than 40 years, from 1898, when the United States took it over after the Spanish-American War, until 1946, when the United States finally set it free. Prior to becoming a U.S. colony, the Philippines was a Spanish colony for 400 years (Francia, 2013). When the United States came to the Philippines during its war with Spain, Filipinos were already fighting an anti-colonial revolution against Spain. Filipino revolutionaries believed the United States was their ally and helped the United States win the Spanish-American War. In the middle of the war, Filipino General Emilio Aguinaldo proclaimed Philippine independence and announced the establishment of the First Philippine Republic. However, both the United States and Spain ignored this proclamation. Instead, Spain surrendered to the United States and sold the Philippines along with Guam and Puerto Rico to the United States (Francia, 2013; Go & Foster, 2003).

Taking over the Philippines as a colony was controversial in the U.S. mainland. Imperialists advocated annexation to spread U.S. power across the Pacific. They further viewed Filipinos as unfit for self-rule, arguing the United States had a moral duty to take over and civilize them (Kramer, 2006; Rusling, 1903). Anti-Imperialists opposed annexation by arguing that governing a foreign people without their consent would violate the ideals of the Declaration of Independence. Some anti-Imperialists further opposed annexation because they didn't want Filipinos, a primitive race in their eyes, to become a part of the United States (Kramer, 2006).

The debate ended with an Imperialist victory, and the United States began installing a new colonial regime in the Philippines. Filipinos resisted, and the War of Philippine Independence began in 1899. Despite commonly being called the "Philippine-American War" in the United States, this war was, for Filipinos, a war of independence. It was their continued fight for sovereignty against foreign empires, first with Spain and then with the United States. The war (1899–1902) was brutal, involving mass killing, torture, and the burning of villages because many U.S. military leaders dehumanized Filipinos as barbaric savages (Kramer, 2006). After winning the war, the United States ruled the Philippines until 1946 (Karnow, 1989).

## WWII in the Philippines

So, when Japan attacked the Philippines in 1941, Japan did not attack a sovereign country; it attacked a U.S. territory. In contrast to the popular memory of Pearl Harbor, Japan attacked not only Pearl Harbor but also most U.S. territories in the Pacific. Moreover, the attack on Pearl Harbor was only an attack, and the Japanese never came back. Yet the Philippines and other U.S. territories such as Guam and Wake Island were invaded and occupied by Japan (Immerwahr, 2020).

FDR, however, focused on Hawaii when he delivered the Infamy Speech to Congress. In fact, the night before the speech, he made several revisions, crossing out prominent references to the Philippines and Guam. One possible explanation is that FDR knew that the Philippines and Guam, although technically part of the United States, were foreign to U.S. mainlanders (Immerwahr, 2020). In contrast, Hawaii was more plausibly “American” with more white population. To rally the nation to war, FDR might have highlighted Hawaii while taking the Philippines and Guam out from prominent references of his speech (Immerwahr, 2020).

Despite the Philippines and other U.S. territories in the Pacific were attacked, FDR chose the Europe First strategy, which prioritized U.S. military resources to win the war against Germany before the war against Japan. This contributed to Japan’s quick occupation of the Philippines, which lasted almost 4 years. In the Bataan Death March, thousands of U.S. and Filipino troops died on the way to prison camps and during their incarceration under Japanese occupation (Immerwahr, 2020).

The U.S. Army finally returned to retake the Philippines from Japan in 1944. The U.S. reconquest was extraordinarily violent, bombing and shelling suspected Japanese targets from afar instead of fighting on the ground. The aim was to protect the lives of U.S. soldiers, but the cost was borne by Filipinos. About 1 million Filipinos lost their lives (Jose, 2006; Seekins, 1991). After Japan surrendered, the United States finally granted independence to the Philippines on July 4, 1946. The U.S. flag came down, and the Philippine flag went up over the capital city Manila on that day.

### Why Teach WWII in the Philippines?

Teaching about what happened in the Philippines during WWII and its historical context can debunk American exceptionalism, a national myth that the United States is uniquely virtuous among other great powers because, as a republic born out of anti-colonial revolution, it must be inherently against imperialism and wage war only when evildoers leave no other option. Despite sounding comforting and familiar, this myth hides not-so-glorious parts of U.S. actions in the world.

For example, U.S. conquest of Indigenous peoples’ land is outright settler colonialism (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Taking over a third of Mexico in the 1840s is also far from anti-colonial (Zinn, 2011). Supporting oppressive regimes and pro-U.S. dictators instead of grassroot leaders in many countries in Asia and Latin America is also not what an anti-imperialist country would

do (Immerwahr, 2020). Moreover, many U.S. wars were intricately linked to the issues of money and power, largely serving the economic and political interests of elites while leaving countless people at home and abroad, including children, dead, wounded, displaced, or devastated with trauma and pain (Vine, 2020a).

Breaking curricular silence on WWII in the Philippines is a part of honest, critical teaching of U.S. history (Gibbs, 2021; Zinn, 2007). Teaching this event can engage students with important questions in U.S. history, such as these: Can a democracy rule another people? What does it mean for the United States, a former colony of Great Britain, to possess colonies of its own? For what reasons has the United States intervened in the affairs of others? How has race and white supremacy shaped U.S. actions in the world? What role should the United States play in the world? Inquiry and discussion on these questions would better equip students with critical civic literacy and agency to bring peace, not violence, to the world (Gibbs, 2021; Vine, 2020a; Zinn, 2007).

### **Fifth-grade Inquiry into WWII in the Philippines**

#### **Lesson Design and Context**

Ms. Lee and I designed a 90-minute inquiry lesson on WWII in the Philippines as a part of fifth-grade unit on WWII. The compelling question for the inquiry was: What happened to the Philippines during WWII and why? The learning goal was for students to analyze primary sources about the war and infer the cause, execution, and effect of the war. Doing so, the lesson was aligned with Dimension 2 of the C3 Framework (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2013), including D2. His.10.3-5: compare information provided by different historical sources about the past; D2. His.14.3-5: explain probable causes and effects of events and developments; and D2. His.16.3-5: use evidence to develop a claim about the past. The primary sources chosen for the lesson were to challenge the comforting narrative of American exceptionalism, thus possibly creating feelings of discomfort in students (Garrett, 2017; Pitt & Britzman, 2003; Zembylas, 2014). Therefore, we used a whole-group guided inquiry with multiple spaces where students could share their emotional and cognitive reaction to the lesson.

Students were diverse, including five African American, six Asian, four Latinx, and nine white students who were ages 10 and 11 and came from varied socioeconomic statuses and migration histories. Ms. Lee is an Asian American teacher with 6 years of teaching experience and master's degree in education. I am an Asian American teacher educator and have regularly collaborated with Ms. Lee for critical social studies education.

#### **Student Engagement with the Lesson**

The lesson was taught after students learned about German aggression in Europe, Japanese aggression in Asia, and Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in previous days. Ms. Lee was a primary instructor, and I was a guest teacher assisting the teacher and students. A packet of primary sources and a source analysis sheet was given to each student before the lesson (see Appendix B). All names are pseudonyms to protect privacy.

*First round of inquiry: What happened on December 7, 1941?*

Ms. Lee began the whole-group guided inquiry by asking students to individually analyze two sources: 1) A newspaper headline, “Japs Bomb US Islands; Naval Bases at Hawaii, Manila Attacked” (see Figure 1); and 2) Eleanor Roosevelt’s remarks on Japan’s attack in her weekly radio program the night before FDR’s Infamy Speech to Congress. After students recorded their analysis on the sheet, Ms. Lee invited students to share their thoughts, feelings, and questions.

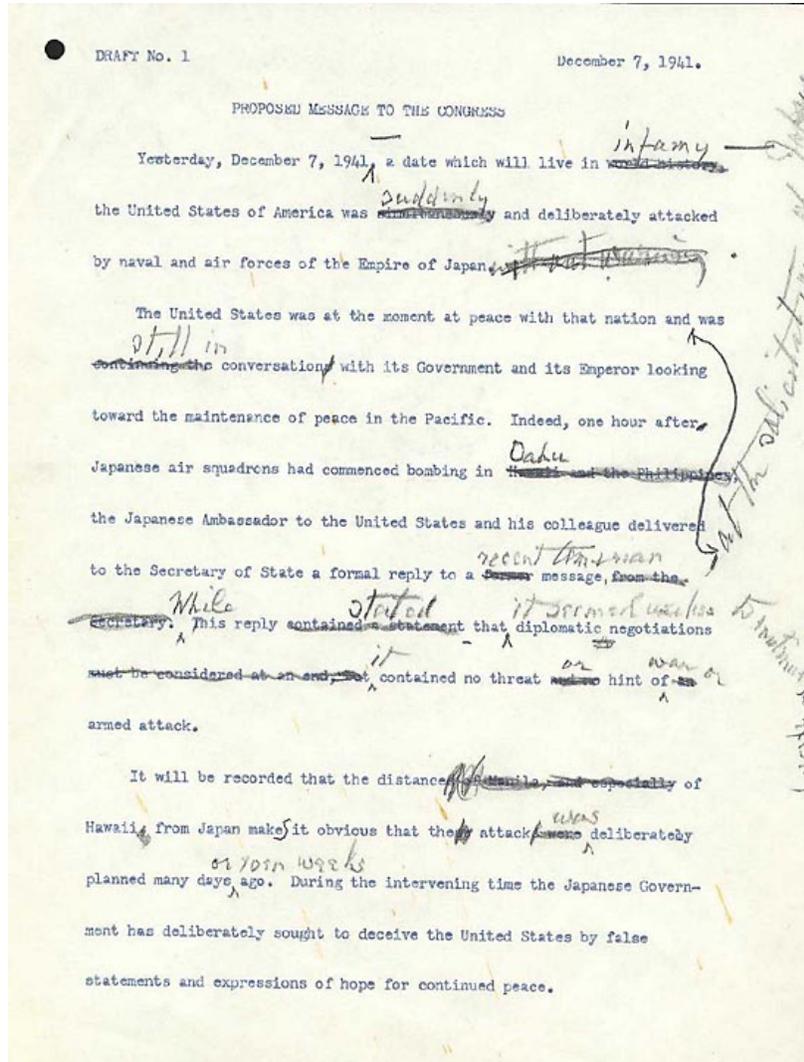
**Figure 1**

*Japan’s attack on the U.S.*



Ariel started, “Japan attacked Philippines too!” Bella added, “Yeah, but the video clips we watched yesterday [BrainPOP and FDR Infamy Speech] didn’t say about this!” Caleb agreed, “It was only about the Pearl Harbor, I think.” Cali asked, “Was Philippines U.S. land? How come?” Ms. Lee explained, “Do you all remember Spanish-American War that you learned earlier this year? Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam became U.S. colonies after the war, right?” While nodding, Cali pointed out, “Then, why didn’t the video clips say about Philippines?” Ms. Lee commended Cali’s question and guided students to look at the next primary source, which was FDR’s Infamy Speech draft (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**  
FDR's Infamy Speech Draft



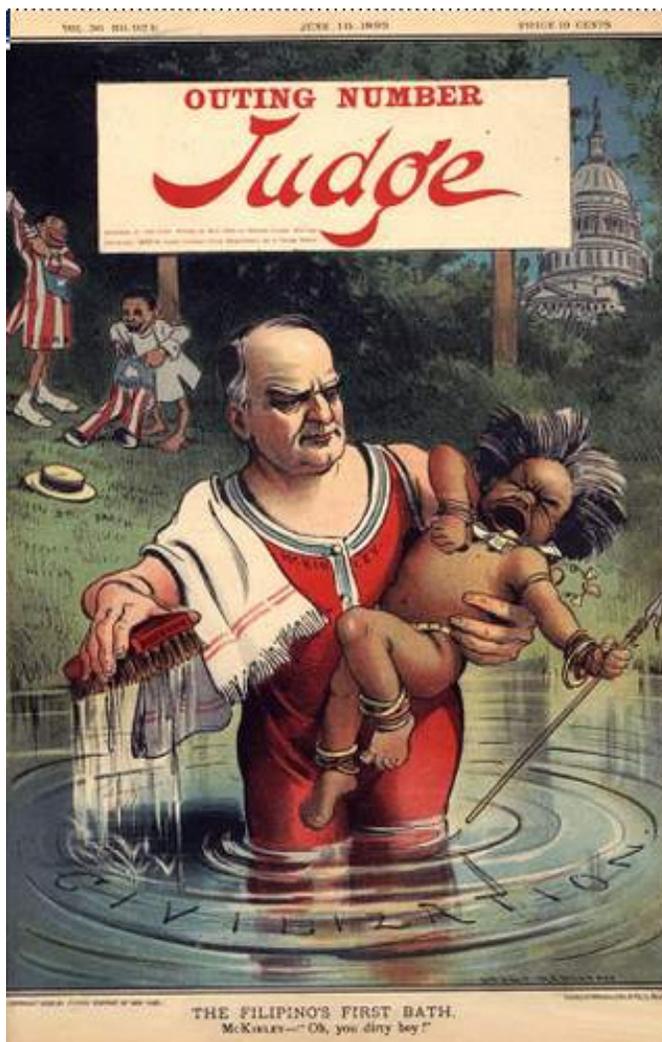
While analyzing the speech draft, students began to think out loud: “FDR deleted it [Philippines]!” “He did! But why?” Many seemed puzzled and intrigued. After a short silence, Gabi speculated, “Maybe the attack wasn’t that bad?” Harper extended, “Maybe Philippines wasn’t that much important?” Isaac added, “Or maybe he wanted to hide America had colonies?” Jackie built on, “That makes sense! Talking about Philippines would make us look bad!” Commending students’ insights, Ms. Lee stated that FDR never explained about his revision, and so historians can only infer based on available sources “like you all did wonderfully!”

Second round of inquiry: How did Philippines become U.S. colony?

The second round of inquiry focused on the historical origin of the Philippines as a U.S. colony. Ms. Lee asked students to first individually analyze two sources: 1) William McKinley's interview on his decision to annex the Philippines; and 2) a magazine cover titled "The Filipino's First Bath" in which McKinley is bathing a Filipino and saying, "Oh, you dirty boy!" (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

*"The Filipino's First Bath"*



Recording their analysis on the sheet, students started commenting, "This is racist!" "This is bad!" Katie elaborated, "So, he [President McKinley] is basically saying Americans are better than Filipinos, so America needs to teach them how to run the country? This is racist!" Jacob added, "The magazine cover too!" Acknowledging student analysis, Ms. Lee explained the

discourse of benevolent assimilation behind U.S. annexation of Philippines. She then provided a brief overview of timeline on the Philippines as a U.S. colony before students headed out for lunch.

*Third round of inquiry: What happened to the Philippines during WWII?*

After lunch, Ms. Lee led the next round of inquiry. Using a PowerPoint photo slideshow, she guided students to analyze first a set of photos depicting the Bataan Death March. Students reacted: “It’s sad!” “I feel bad for our solders and Filipinos!” The next photo showed the U.S. bombing of Manila (see Figure 4). Paris stated, “The girl in the bombed city, I can’t imagine how scared she was!” Penelope asked, “Did America really have to bomb the city?” The last photo set showed the United States granting independence to the Philippines in 1946. Seeing a photo in which the U.S. flag was coming down and the Philippines flag was going up, students exclaimed, “Yay.” “Finally.”

**Figure 4**

*Aftermath of the U.S. Bombing of Manila*



*Whole-group discussion*

It was time for whole-group discussion. Ms. Lee first asked students to share new knowledge they generated from the lesson. Students stated: “Japan attacked Philippines”; “Philippines was an American colony”; “Racism was bad”; “FDR chose Europe first”; “Many

innocent people died.” Next, she asked students how the new knowledge made them feel and why. Students articulated: “I was surprised because I didn’t know we had colonies”; “It was sad to see many people died”; “It was disappointing to see our government didn’t protect our soldiers!” Last, Ms. Lee encouraged students to share questions they generated from the lesson. Students wondered: Why did FDR delete Philippines in the draft? Did FDR want to hide America had colonies? Why did FDR help Europe first? How did Filipinos feel about the war? How did our solders feel about the war?

There wasn’t much time left to address all student questions fully. Ms. Lee promised to come back to the questions in future lessons while commending students’ deep engagement with the lesson. She also reminded the students to continue to use a critical lens to study how the United States has engaged with the world in their upcoming units on Cold War and post-9/11 wars.

### **Student Learning**

Sitting down for a lesson debrief, Ms. Lee and I agreed that although the 90-minute lesson was too short to address students’ questions, insights, and feelings fully, it did create a space where students could critically read and question U.S. imperialism and racism entangled with the war. We also agreed on students’ openness to difficult knowledge. Literature suggests that when confronting disruptive knowledge, the learner may resist difficult knowledge to stay within their cherished world views (Miles, 2019; Pitt & Britzman, 2003; Zembylas, 2014). The fifth graders were, however, in general, open to the cognitive and emotional challenge. Although feeling puzzled, confused, sad, or disappointed, they continued to engage with new knowledge on racism and imperialism entangled with the war. In making sense of student engagement, we posit that fifth graders may not have developed attachment to their previous knowledge to the extent that they would reject new disruptive knowledge quickly. This means then elementary classrooms can and should be places where students engage with critical study of history, not a place where they are sheltered from it.

Meanwhile, given the time constraint, we could not incorporate C3 Framework’s Dimension 4: Taking Informed Action (NCSS, 2013) to the lesson. In future lessons, Ms. Lee plans to guide her students to act on new understanding from the lesson by writing a letter as a class to BrainPOP. In the letter, students will make a persuasive argument on why and how to make change in the current BrainPOP video clip on the Pearl Harbor attack.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Fifth graders in Ms. Lee’s class taught us that elementary students are ready and eager to go beyond a dominant narrative of U.S. actions in the world. I hope many teachers will join Ms. Lee to empower students with an honest and critical understanding of U.S. history. How students view the past and the present will shape how they imagine and act for the future.

**Sohyun An** is a Professor of Social Studies Education at Kennesaw State University. A former high school teacher of social studies in South Korea, she now is a teacher educator of elementary social studies education. Her teaching and research center on anti-racist social studies curriculum and pedagogy, critical war studies, and critical Asian American history education.

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Appendix A. Primary Sources Set

Source 1. A map of the United States in 1900s



Source 4. "Europe First" strategy



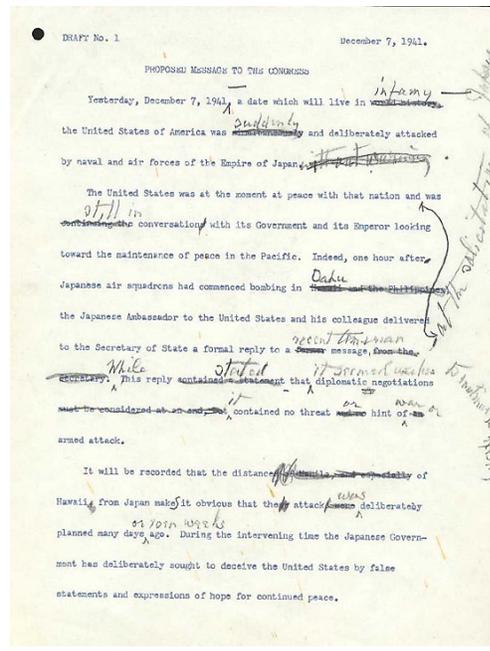
Source 2. Japan's attack on the US



Source 5. Japan's occupation of the Philippines



Source 3. FDR's infamy Speech Draft



Source 6. Bataan Death March



Source 7. Bombing of Manila



### Appendix B. Primary Source Analysis Worksheet

**Investigative Question:** What happened to the Philippines during the World War II?

**Direction:** Study primary sources one at a time, in the numbered order, and record your observations and thoughts below.

Primary Sources	I see...	I think that...	I wonder...
Source 1			
Source 2			
Source 3			
Source 4			
Source 5			
Source 6			
Source 7			
<b>What is your answer to the Investigative Question?</b>			

## Is Culture Always Celebrated? An Inquiry-based Exploration on Asian Americans for Early Elementary Students

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### Abstract

Using the Inquiry Design Model (IDM), this pedagogical article provides context, plans, and materials for an inquiry on the culture and contributions of Asian Americans for early elementary students (K-2). This inquiry, focused on both history and current events, is intended to serve as a jumping-off point for more in-depth explorations. Students will be introduced to elements of Asian American heritage, culture, and accomplishments. The questions foregrounding this inquiry are: Is culture always celebrated? What can names teach us? What can food teach us? How can the accomplishments of Asian Americans inspire us? A full IDM and appendix of suggested classroom resources is included.

**Keywords:** inquiry-based learning, Asian American history, primary grades

As readers of this journal are well aware, social studies teachers at all grade levels now face important ethical and pedagogical decisions when planning for instruction. The twin pandemics of Covid 19 and racism, and in particular increased hatred towards Asian Americans, provide new opportunities for critical inquiries that build students' critical thinking skills, cultural awareness, pride, joy, and empathy. According to the national report of hate crimes published by Stop AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander) Hate, from March 19, 2020 through June 30, 2021, physical assault, vandalism, online and public hate, and incidents involving the elderly all increased (Yellow Horse et al., 2021). With this in mind, the following article will present the context, plans, and materials for an inquiry on Asian Americans for early elementary students (K-2). Asian Americans are vastly underrepresented in curricular spaces (Rodriguez & Kim, 2018), and this inquiry is intended to serve as a jumping off point for more in-depth explorations. Students will be introduced to elements of Asian American heritage, culture, and accomplishments. The questions foregrounding this inquiry are: Is culture always celebrated? What can names teach us? What can food teach us? How can the accomplishments of Asian Americans inspire us?

### Context for Teaching and Learning

With a firm understanding of the abilities, commitments to justice, and curiosity of young children, (e.g., Cowhey, 2006; Vasquez, 2004) we chose to design curricula for K-2 students. Social studies is typically marginalized in elementary classrooms in favor of reading and math instruction (Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; Fitchett et al., 2014) but we know social studies enhances critical thinking and teaches students to make informed arguments based on evidence (National

Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2017). These skills are important and deserve priority, even with our youngest learners. We use the Inquiry Design Model (IDM) (Swan et al., 2018) to outline our curricular route. The IDM, with its organization of questions, tasks and sources, creates space for teachers to teach *with* and *for* inquiry, emphasizing both content and thinking outcomes (Parker, 2018).

To frame the inquiry, we sought a “juicy piece of content” (Swan et al., 2018, p. 16) that would pique students’ interest and lead to investigation. The current surge in acts of hate toward Asian Americans (Nuyen, 2021) makes visible the glaring lack of curricular resources related to the Asian American experience, both past and present (Kleinrock, 2021). Noting this, the inquiry is focused on Asian Americans. To make this a critical inquiry (Crowley & King, 2018), themes of power and oppression are woven throughout, while centralizing the often-marginalized perspectives of Asian Americans.

According to the Pew Research center, Asian Americans are incredibly diverse (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). They make up the youngest and fastest-growing major racial or ethnic group in the United States and represent at least 19 heritage countries, along with a wide variety of socioeconomic, educational, and cultural distinctions. Asian Americans live in every U.S. state, with different origin groups being represented in some regions more than others. Overall, “there are more than 22 million Asian Americans (about 6% of the U.S. population), representing nearly 50 ethnic groups and speaking more than 100 languages, and they make up the fastest growing racial or ethnic group among eligible U.S. voters” (Waxman, 2021). Despite this, Asian American history and present-day experiences are largely absent from elementary curricula.

The term “Asian American” was coined by graduate students Emma Gee and Yuji Ichioka in 1968 to create solidarity for political purposes (Kambhampaty, 2020). While it is used as a general identifier, there are vast and important cultural distinctions that fall under this umbrella. As such, it makes sense to frame the inquiry as an entry point to understanding the cultures and experiences, both past and present, of this massive group of people. It is harder to fear or hate people when there is some level of understanding and respect about their lives. Importantly, one purpose of this inquiry is to teach elementary students specifics about Asian American culture and communities, including their contributions to society, both past and present. This approach interrupts the stereotypical version of the Asian American as the passive and obedient “forever foreigner” (Lee et al., 2009) and uses questions, tasks, and sources to create new and more accurate understandings.

### **Topic Implementation: Outlining the Inquiry**

The following instructional plan serves as an entry point for young students to the beauty, difference, oppression, and resistance within Asian American communities. Several points of connection are included so students can consider their own cultural practices in comparison to what they’re learning. In doing so, the inquiry serves as both “windows and mirrors” (Sims-Bishop, 1990). Asian American students may see their lives reflected in the curricula (though, we acknowledge we do not include content on all Asian American heritage countries, nor do we

include specific content on mixed race identities) and those students who do not identify as Asian American will look through windows to learn new information. Particular sources also explicitly create opportunities to begin to explore the discrimination of and advocacy for Asian Americans.

Using the IDM Blueprint™ (<https://c3teachers.org/inquiry-design-model/>), this inquiry is designed around an overarching compelling question (see Appendix A). The three supporting questions further stimulate curiosity among students as they analyze primary and secondary sources and complete tasks to work toward answering the compelling question with an informed argument. Note that the blueprint is only a snapshot. Teachers are encouraged to adjust and differentiate according to student backgrounds, interests, and needs. We also encourage taking a broad, critically engaging perspective; students should understand that these are just a *few* examples of the depth and diversity of Asian Americans and Asian American heritage. There is much more beyond these examples to explore. Each part of the inquiry is described below.

### **Staging the Question: Is culture always celebrated?**

This inquiry begins by activating background knowledge and generating excitement around topics of study. To stage the compelling question: *Is culture always celebrated?* The teacher can ask students to turn and tell shoulder partners about the holidays their families celebrate. During the ensuing whole group discussion, teachers can record class celebrations on chart paper. To take it a step further, the teacher may also ask about culturally specific clothing, music, language, games or food students enjoy. Once ideas are shared, the teacher can announce they'll be learning about different parts of Asian American culture. Next, the teacher can show students a world map to introduce the geographic scope, pointing to and naming all of the countries included in the term "Asian Americans." We suggest the teacher has images ready to share from several or all of the countries to give students a sense of the varying landscapes and people who live there. We also encourage stocking the classroom library with non-fiction books about Asian countries that students can spend time with on their own throughout the inquiry (see Appendix B). The books we list will challenge and engage a wide range of learners, as they offer photographs of life in different Asian countries as primary sources for analysis. As the class moves forward with the inquiry, the teacher should keep the world map, students' discussion responses, and pictures from Asian countries available for reference.

### **Supporting Question 1: What Can Names Teach Us?**

After staging the question, students should have an emerging understanding that there are many Asian countries with different lifestyles and cultures. To further investigate culture, teachers will now pose Supporting Question 1: *What can names teach us?* The inquiry begins with something everyone has: a name. This will allow students to connect across cultures as they learn and share stories about a key part of their identities. It is important to note that based on the sources we offer this question will focus on one Asian culture: Korean. Help the students find Korea on the map, explaining that there is a North and a South Korea. Share briefly that

while these two used to be unified, they have been separated for several generations due to political division. Throughout this inquiry, it is important that teachers specify what Asian countries are the focus of each lesson and resist blending them all into the broader “Asian American” category.

Ask students if they know how their names were chosen. Some may be named after family members or other influential people, others may have cultural ties. A collection of students may not know how or why they got their names and could do some follow up investigation at home. Students may also note the names of pets, special places, or their school, town/city, state, and country. All the while, encourage students to consider what those names tell us. To explore names further, below is a collection of sources or activities for teachers to use in ways that will best serve their students.

### ***Source 1: Fiction Read-Aloud***

Literacy is a protected disciplinary space in elementary classrooms and that makes read-alouds an excellent bridge to social studies content. We specifically recommend *The Name Jar* (Choi, 2003), a story about a Korean girl who moves to the United States and considers changing her name to be more American. This story could serve as a springboard to the exploration of names.

Woven into this inquiry are consistent opportunities to complicate cultural representations. When reading *The Name Jar*, for instance, teachers should call into question the perceived need to make one’s name more American. While the main character Unhei does end up finding the beauty and meaning in her Korean name and opts to keep it, it is worth pausing to consider with students why Unhei momentarily desired to change her name. This supporting question is not designed to promote assimilation or the idea that Asian Americans are forever foreigners. Rather, it stands as an example of the cultural significance of names and the challenges some students face when their names sound unfamiliar to peers. Suggested discussion questions for *The Name Jar* are:

- What is important to Unhei?
- What does Unhei learn from her family?
- What does Unhei learn from her new classmates?
- What does Unhei learn about herself?
- Why did Unhei feel like she should change her name? What do you think about that?
- How could you welcome a new student to your classroom?
- Have you ever felt the need to change something about yourself in order to fit in? What was that like for you?
- What did you learn about Korean culture?

### ***Source 2: Critical, Nonfiction Read-Aloud***

While fictional stories can certainly introduce students to different cultures, it is important that even our youngest learners analyze nonfiction and primary sources in order to build accurate understandings. To add a critical element, we recommend *A Kid's Book About Anti-Asian Hate* (Pham, 2021); it was written in response to the Covid-fueled rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans. Kim Pham, the Vietnamese American author, writes about her experience with her name and the importance of cultural pride - even when others see you as “different”. Teachers should find Vietnam on the world map and explain it’s a distinct country in Asia with its own history and cultural traditions. Reading this book aloud will invite the opportunity to talk about discrimination, bias, fear of difference/the unknown, cultural pride, and advocacy. Suggested discussion questions for *A Kid's Book About Anti-Asian Hate* are:

- Why was it a big deal for Thu Kim Pham to choose to go by her middle name?
- Why were people really mean to Kim? What do you think about this?
- What is anti-Asian hate?
- What are Asian Americans like?
- How can you use your voice to stand up against anti-Asian hate?

### ***Source 3: Image Analysis***

Teachers may also choose to lead students (as a whole class, in small groups, or individually) through an analysis of images of life in Korea and Vietnam. When analyzing images, have students complete a chart modeled after the Library of Congress’s Primary Source Analysis Tool (Savage, 2011). This tool guides students through several simple steps in analyzing images or text using the prompts: I see, I think, I wonder/observe. By modeling analysis, teachers can organize this task in a simple “I do, we do, you do” structure. A collection of websites with photographs and maps of Korea and Vietnam and respective cultural artifacts is provided in Appendix B as suggested primary sources for the image analysis. Teachers may choose to select additional or alternative images for the analysis.

### ***Formative Performance Task***

To help students process the content of this supporting question and its sources, they may complete a three-column table. In the first column, students draw themselves, write their names and what it tells about them. In the second, they draw Unhei (from *The Name Jar*) and write what her name tells about her. In the third column, write and decorate Thu Kim Pham’s name (don’t draw her since we don’t know what she looks like) and write what her name tells us. Extension: Create a captioned drawing or written description of standing up to anti-Asian hate.

### **Supporting Question 2: What Can Food Teach Us?**

Before talking through the instructional steps related to this question, it’s important to pause and consider what this question is *not* intended to do. A common approach to multicultural education, particularly with young children, is to implement a “tourist curriculum” that focuses

on food and holidays (Kohl, 1994). In doing so, cultural contexts are overgeneralized and simplified. While our second supporting question is intended to explore cultural cuisine, it is crucial to understand that this is one part of a larger inquiry. Be sure to treat this question as a subsection of the much broader investigation into Asian Americans. Emphasize with students that food is one part of culture, but there is much more to explore. As with question one, there is an opportunity within this question to engage in critical conversations about “othering” and belonging and understanding differences. Lean into this and show students the complexities of identity. To begin this lesson, pose the supporting question, “*What can food teach us?*” and engage in a discussion about favorite foods, family recipes, and cultural traditions related to food to generate interest and activate background knowledge.

### ***Source 1: Fictional Read Alouds***

Capitalizing on the space in K-2 classrooms for literacy, we continue to offer read alouds as valid sources. *The Pho Team* (Do Zuniga, 2020) introduces readers to the ingredients of pho, a popular Vietnamese dish. Reading this book aloud provides the opportunity for students to see Vietnam on the world map and to begin to explore this Asian country with its own culture and traditions. A second book, *Hot Hot Roti for Dadaji* (Zia, 2011), is about an Indian American family and their food. Be sure to differentiate India from Vietnam. Teachers may also supplement these stories with primary sources - images, videos, or food/recipes from Vietnam and India (Appendix C). Suggested discussion questions for the Pho Team

- What ingredients are familiar to you?
- What ingredients are new to you?
- Would you try pho (if you haven’t already)?
- What is great about trying foods from different cultures?

Suggested discussion questions for *Hot Hot Roti for Dadaji*:

- What did you learn about Indian culture?
- How is this family like yours?
- How is this family different from yours?

### ***Source 2: Critical Read Aloud***

*Min Jee’s Lunch* (Kleinrock, 2020) from Learningforjustice.org brings our focus back to Korean culture and tells the story of a child who is ostracized for the Korean lunch she brings to school. This book creates the space to talk about inclusion and advocacy.

### ***Formative Performance Task***

Students complete a captioned drawing of themselves sharing a meal with a character from one of the books. Be sure they label their meal with dishes from the stories (e.g., pho, kimchi jjigae).

Extension: Create a comic strip of how you would stand up for a friend whose food was made fun of in the cafeteria.

### Supporting Question 3: How Can Asian Americans’ Accomplishments Inspire Us?

We designed this inquiry to guide students toward understanding the term “Asian Americans” and to introduce some cultural context. From here, we want students to start to look for Asian Americans in the world, hopefully bringing with them a budding appreciation for the beauty and complexity of Asian culture. Asian Americans are often seen as the compliant and hardworking model minority (Rodriguez & Kim, 2018). This stereotype is harmful and ultimately serves to pit minority groups against each other. Asian Americans have a complex history in the United States that includes exploitation, incarceration, and resistance (Takaki, 2012).

Asian Americans have contributed to U.S. society in outstanding ways. That said, representation matters and Asian Americans are portrayed minimally and also inaccurately in media and pop culture (Rodriguez & Kim, 2018). Therefore, the final supporting question is designed to showcase past and present Asian Americans and their accomplishments. In doing so, we are intentionally including voices that are not typically heard. While some of the people are well-known (e.g., Kamala Harris), we also invite teachers to center the experiences of Asian Americans who are less known, but no less important.

#### Sources

The sources for this question introduce students to a range of influential people, representing various stages of life, career paths, and heritages. We also include a superhero, a clearly fictional character, but an engaging access point for younger students. Released in 2021, *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* is the first Asian superhero movie in the Marvel Universe and is an incredibly significant moment in representation for the Asian American community (Hernandez, 2021). Depending on the ages and abilities of students, a teacher may also ask students to research people on their own after perhaps exploring the biography and accomplishments of one of the individuals listed below. Or, teachers may choose to lead students in a series of read-alouds with various books. If exploring the life and accomplishments of Vice President Kamala Harris, a teacher may also choose to show students her acceptance speech as the 2020 Vice President-Elect. Some of these biographies also invite the opportunity to talk about being mixed race, another distinguishing element of the Asian American Experience (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021).

The following sources are offered for any combination of the learning tasks suggested in this section (see references and Appendix D for full details):

- The story of Olympic diver, Sammy Lee
- Articles and books for young readers about Senator Tammy Duckworth
- Articles and books for young readers about Vice President Kamala Harris
- The story of Shang-chi (a Marvel superhero)
- The story of Rock climber, Ashima Shiraishi

### ***Formative Performance Task***

In small groups, students present information on the individuals they learned about in various formats (written, drawing, acting). These brief presentations should highlight the contributions of each individual in American culture and society.

Extension: Find an accomplished Asian American in the community to interview or write a letter to or invite them to speak to visit your classroom.

### **Summative Performance Task: Closing the Inquiry**

To close the inquiry, students revisit the compelling question, “*Is culture always celebrated?*” They construct an argument using evidence through the mode of their choice (e.g., visual creation or written response). Teachers may choose to close the inquiry by taking informed action in their lives or communities. This could take the form of any of the following:

- Learn more about anti-Asian hate and how to interrupt it.
- Continue to learn about the diversity and contributions of Asian Americans and teach others.
- Continue to learn about Asian countries and cultures.
- Try new foods or Asian cultural experiences represented in your community.

### **Recommendations**

Although this inquiry is one contribution to many potential learning opportunities about Asian Americans, it is our hope that this can be seen as a jumping off point for primary teachers who are interested in combating hate through lessons that center pride, joy, cultural awareness, and empathy. When integrated as a regular part of the school day, learning experiences such as these move us towards a more inclusive, equitable, and justice-oriented curriculum.

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## Appendix A: IDM Blueprint™

Inquiry Design Model (IDM) Blueprint™		
<b>Compelling Question</b>	Is culture always celebrated?	
<b>Standards and Practices</b>	<p>K.H.CH.2 Compare traditions found in communities over time, including those from diverse backgrounds (Human Interactions and Interconnections)</p> <p>1.G.HI.1 Describe how culture and experience influence the cultural landscape of places and regions within their community and state. (Human Interactions and Interconnections)</p> <p>2.G.HI.1 Compare the ways various cultural groups connect and interact within North America. (Human Interactions and Interconnections)</p>	
<b>Staging the Question</b>	<p>Pose the compelling question to the class, discuss, and record answers on chart paper.</p> <p>Use a world map (e.g., <a href="#">map of Asia</a>) to show students where Asia is and name and show the different countries that make up the continent.</p> <p>If accessible, use Google Earth to show Asia and zoom in on countries, asking students to share observations related to diversity of landscapes, architecture, urban/rural areas, etc.</p>	
<b>Supporting Question 1</b>	<b>Supporting Question 2</b>	<b>Supporting Question 3</b>
What can names teach us?	What can food teach us?	How can the accomplishments of Asian Americans inspire us?
<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	<b>Formative Performance Task</b>
<p>When analyzing images, have students complete a chart (adapted from <a href="#">Library of Congress</a>) - I see, I think, I wonder/observe, I reflect (connections to self/others/past learning experiences), I question</p> <p>Venn Diagram with Korean culture/Yunhei</p>	<p>Students complete a captioned drawing of themselves sharing a meal with a character from one of the books. Be sure they label their meal with dishes from the stories (e.g., pho, kimchi jjigae).</p> <p>Be sure to treat this question as a subsection of the much broader investigation into Asian Americans. Emphasize with students that food is one part of culture, but there is much more to explore.</p> <p><i>Extension:</i> Create a captioned drawing or written description of how you would stand up for a friend whose food was made fun of in the cafeteria.</p>	<p>In small groups, students present information on the individuals they learned about in various formats (written, drawing, acting).</p>

Featured Sources		Featured Sources	Featured Sources
<p>Images of life in Korea and Vietnam</p> <p><i>A Kid's Book About Anti-Asian Hate</i> (Pham, 2021)</p> <p><i>The Name Jar</i> (Choi, 2003)</p>		<p><i>The Pho Team</i> (Do Zuniga, 2020)</p> <p><i>Hot Hot Roti for Dadaji</i> (Zia, 2011)</p> <p><a href="#">Min Jee's Lunch</a> (Kleinrock, 2020)</p>	<p><i>The Story of Olympic Diver Sammy Lee</i> (Yoo, 2020)</p> <p>Articles and books for young readers about Tammy Duckworth (see Appendix)</p> <p>Articles and books for young readers about Kamala Harris (see Appendix)</p> <p><a href="#">Shang-chi</a> (Marvel book), available at (see Appendix)</p> <p>The story of rock climber Ashima Shiraishi: <i>How to Solve a Problem: The rise (and falls) of a rock-climbing champion</i> (Shiraishi &amp; Xiao, 2020)</p>
Summative Performance Task	<b>Argument</b>	Revisit the compelling question with evidence from the series of performance tasks (various formats welcome).	
	<b>Extension</b>	Create a captioned drawing or written description of standing up to anti-Asian hate.	
Taking Informed Action	Write a class letter to a respected adult or local elected official sharing what the students have learned, particularly highlighting the contributions of Asian Americans in your school/community.		

**Appendix B: Non-fiction Books on Asian Countries**

- Sobol, R. (2011). *The mysteries of Angkor Wat*. Candlewick.
- Roberts, J.L. (2017). *A kid's guide to China*. Create Space Independent Publishing.
- Roberts, J.L. (2017). *A kid's guide to Thailand*. Create Space Independent Publishing.
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- Go here for a list of travel books by country: <https://kidstravelbooks.com/destinations/>

### Appendix C: Resources for Images of Asian Culture and Geography\*

#### Korea

- <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/geography/countries/article/south-korea>
- <https://www.britannica.com/place/Korea>
- <https://www.koreanculture.org/korea-information-culture-and-the-arts>

#### India

- <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/geography/countries/article/india>
- <https://www.britannica.com/place/India>
- <https://www.india.gov.in/topics/art-culture>
- <https://www.splendidtable.org/bio/vikas-khanna> (food and recipes)

#### Vietnam

- <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/geography/countries/article/vietnam>
- <https://www.britannica.com/place/Vietnam>
- <https://vietnamdiscovery.com/culture-arts/>
- <https://www.vickypham.com> (food and recipes)

\*Note: This obviously is not an exhaustive list of Asian countries or websites. Rather, this list is to accompany the image analysis in Supporting Question 1 of the inquiry plan.

### Appendix D: Articles and Books on Accomplished Asian Americans

- Yoo, P. (2020). *The Story of Olympic Diver Sammy Lee*. Lee and Low Publishers.

Articles and books for young readers about Tammy Duckworth:

- Article: Senator Tammy Duckworth: Living with no limits!
- Stutman, M. (2018, August 23). Senator Tammy Duckworth - Living with No Limits! *InspireMyKids*. <https://inspiremykids.com/senator-tammy-duckworth-living-with-no-limits/>.
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## Using the Mirror-Window Framework to Teach Children's Literature in Elementary Civics

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### Abstract

This article shares curricular ideas for using the mirror-window framework to teach children's literature in elementary civics. It uses the 2020 Notable Social Studies Trade Book, *Follow Chester! A College Football Team Fights Racism and Makes History* (Respress-Churchwell, 2019), to show that by teaching the story of Chester Pierce, a Black college football player from Harvard in the 1940s, students will increase their knowledge of civic virtues and develop a greater respect for diversity and inclusion. At the end of the article, recommendations for students to take informed action are provided.

**Keywords:** children's literature; elementary civics; mirror-window framework; racism; sports

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books. (Sims Bishop, 1990, p. ix)

The mirror-window framework described above can be a useful resource for elementary educators as they teach children's literature in the classroom. The framework helps teachers share new insights and perspectives with students, build children's curiosity, and encourage a love of learning. For elementary social studies education specifically, the mirror-window framework can support civic education and promote social studies learning that is purposeful and powerful (National Council for the Social Studies, 2017).

This article shares curricular ideas for using the mirror-window framework to teach children's literature in elementary social studies. It uses the 2020 Notable Social Studies Trade Book, *Follow Chester! A College Football Team Fights Racism and Makes History* (Respress-Churchwell, 2019), to show that by teaching the story of Chester Pierce, a Black college football player from Harvard in the 1940s, students will increase their knowledge of civic virtues and develop a greater respect for diversity and inclusion. This article's teaching ideas support

second-grade Social Studies Standard 2.C.CV.1 (“Evaluate how civic virtues guide governments, societies and communities”) from the Kentucky Department of Education (2019), as well as Standard D2.Civ.2.K-2 (“Explain how all people, not just official leaders, play important roles in a community”) from the *College, Career & Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). The teaching ideas also address second grade English Language Arts Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.7 (“Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot”) from the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2021). At the end of the article, a completed Inquiry Design Model (IDM) is provided (see Appendix B).

### **Relevance for Teachers/Practitioners**

Using the mirror-window framework to teach *Follow Chester!* has relevance for elementary social studies teachers and practitioners in three ways. First, by using the framework and book together, teachers can help students increase their awareness of democracy and citizenship, engage learners in an exploration of past events, and help students consider how these events relate to their present-day lives. “Young learners do not become responsible, participating citizens automatically. They need to engage in frequent opportunities to make daily decisions about democratic concepts and principles that are respectful of the dignity and rights of individuals and the common good” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2017, p. 187). Using the book *Follow Chester!* can be a meaningful way for teachers to guide students through conversations about civic virtues, as well as assist students in developing skills that align with the purpose of elementary social studies education: “to enable students to understand, participate in, and make informed decisions about their world” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2017, p. 186)

Second, using the mirror-window framework to teach *Follow Chester!* has relevance for elementary social studies teachers because a main theme of the book-- sports-- is relevant to many students’ own lives. In this way, the book can serve as a “hook” to interest young children as they explore topics related to diversity and civic virtues. As McClure and Robinson (2019) explained, “sports are a popular activity in which many students participate...Teaching with sports...can pique students’ interests and engage young learners in the study of different topics, including many of those found in the social studies” (p. 19). By using sports as a springboard to teach elementary social studies, educators may access children’s funds of knowledge and make history learning more relevant to their lives.

Third, using *Follow Chester!* and the mirror-window framework can help elementary social studies teachers build stronger and more inclusive classroom communities. The framework and book encourage students to examine their existing views in order to gain new insights and perspectives. They also promote social justice concepts, such as those that resonate with the Teaching Tolerance (2016) Social Justice Standards. For example, by using the mirror-window framework, students can explore topics related to the Identity, Diversity, Justice, and Action

Anchor Standards and Domains which emphasize learning areas such as developing positive social identities, engaging in respectful interactions, recognizing unfairness and injustice, and expressing empathy. Thus, learning and practicing these important life skills through a reading of *Follow Chester!* can help foster supportive and nurturing classroom and school communities.

### **Context for Teaching and Learning**

#### **Using Children’s Literature in Elementary Social Studies**

The use of children’s literature in elementary social studies is not a new teaching method; teachers have drawn on children’s books to teach social studies for some time. Perhaps one of the reasons children’s literature is so widely used in the elementary grades is because of its ability to help young learners consider new points-of-view. As Torres (2019) pointed out, children’s literature can help challenge students’ assumptions and “[disrupt] the idea that there is only one way to see a situation and only one way to approach a particular issue” (p. 164). Brophy, Alleman, and Halvorsen (2018) suggested that using children’s literature in elementary social studies promotes historical thinking skills by helping students understand historical contexts, explore others’ perspectives, and consider different interpretations of history. Each year, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the Children’s Book Council (CBC) compile a list of recently published children’s books that address a variety of subjects related to social studies education such as biographies, environmentally focused books, folktales, social interactions, world history and culture, and others (see, for example, NCSS & CBC, 2021). These books address NCSS (2010) curricular themes as well.

Although the benefits and methods of using children’s literature to teach elementary students are well known, this article aims to show how drawing on a specific idea to teach children’s literature-- the mirror-window framework-- can help elementary social studies teachers guide students through a meaningful exploration of the past as they learn more about civic virtues, themselves, and the world around them. Using the book *Follow Chester!*, this article offers teaching ideas suitable for a second-grade social studies classroom that support purposeful and powerful social studies teaching and learning (National Council for the Social Studies, 2017). However, the authors contend that this article’s teaching ideas could be modified for social studies classes in other elementary grades as well.

#### **Book Summary of *Follow Chester!***

*Follow Chester! A College Football Team Fights Racism and Makes History* was recognized as a 2020 Notable Social Studies Trade Book by the NCSS and CBC. Written by Gloria Respress-Churchwell and illustrated by Laura Freeman, it tells the story of a hard-working and determined Chester Pierce during his childhood and early adult years in the 1930s and 1940s. The book focuses on Pierce and his Harvard varsity football teammates’ historic game against the University of Virginia (UVA) in 1947 in which Pierce became the first Black college football athlete to play a game south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Pierce and his teammates

lost the game to UVA, but the Harvard football team's decision to support Pierce's participation in the game, and the team's close camaraderie with Pierce in the face of segregation, crossed racial boundaries. Although the book is based on historical events in the life of Pierce, it also describes a fictional "play" that Pierce's white teammates created and used on and off the football field. In the play, the athletes shouted, "Follow Chester!" each time they saw Pierce encounter racism. In doing this, the players showed their support for Pierce in the face of the discrimination he experienced.

The end of the book includes three additional sections: "Author's Note," "Facts About the Mason-Dixon Line," and "Facts About Dr. Chester Pierce and the Historic Game at UVA." These sections provide additional context on events in the book. For example, the section on facts about Dr. Pierce explains that, later in life, Pierce became a renowned psychiatrist and researcher. It also states that Dr. Pierce coined the term "microaggression." Dr. Pierce passed away in 2016, but his life and legacy continue to leave a lasting impact on society.

### **Topic Implementation and Impact: Using the Mirror-Window Framework to Teach *Follow Chester!***

Here we provide teaching ideas for using the mirror-window framework to teach *Follow Chester!* to second-grade social studies students. These ideas aim to support children's civic development, increase students' self-awareness, and help young learners understand the world around them. This section is divided into four main parts: 1) Lesson Materials; 2) Introductory Lesson Activities; 3) Using *Follow Chester!* as a Mirror; and 4) Using *Follow Chester!* as a Window. Following this discussion, recommendations are provided for students to take informed action. The article closes with a brief conclusion.

#### **Lesson Materials**

Below, we provide a list of materials teachers will need to implement the teaching activities described in this article:

- A copy of *Follow Chester!* by Gloria Respress-Churchwell (2019)
- Silver foil cardstock
- Cardboard cut into approximately 4" x 4" squares
- Popsicle sticks
- Hand-held mirrors from home (optional)
- A Mirror-Window Graphic Organizer posted in the classroom (see Appendix A)
- Dry erase markers or regular markers
- A large sheet of construction or easel paper
- Sticky notes

Some of these materials are optional or could be modified to align with a particular classroom's context.

### Introductory Lesson Activities

For second-grade students to use the mirror-window framework with *Follow Chester!*, the teacher will first guide students through three introductory activities to help the young learners understand the framework. Woolfolk (2017) stated that students around 7-11 years of age typically exemplify the “Concrete Operational Stage” of Piaget’s Theory of Cognitive Development in which they tend to think more logically about hands-on problems rather than abstract ones. Therefore, to begin explaining the mirror-window framework to students, tangible mirrors and windows can be used to help the students grasp the concept.

#### *Step 1: Introducing the Mirror Concept (10-20 minutes)*

Before reading the book, the teacher will lead students through a hands-on art activity in which they create personal hand-held mirrors. To do this, the students will cut out a square of silver foil cardstock (a material found at local craft stores), secure the backside of the cardstock to a similarly sized piece of cardboard, and attach the mirror to a popsicle stick. (Alternatively, a teacher may provide students with pre-made, hand-held mirrors, or even invite students to bring in their own hand-held mirrors from home.) After the students create the mirrors, the teacher will explain to the class how to use the mirrors to reflect on the story. Below, a suggested teacher-student dialogue is provided to illustrate one way this explanation could take place.

Teacher: Students, I’d like you to hold up the mirrors you just made and look into them. What do you see?

*(The students offer their responses.)*

Teacher: I heard some of you mention that you saw yourselves in the mirrors. Today, we’re going to learn how reading a book can be like looking into a mirror. When we read a book, we might see pictures of people who look like us, or we might read about people who remind us of ourselves. But do you know what? Sometimes, books can also help us think about things that real mirrors can’t, like the ideas we have inside our heads. What do you think about that?

*(The students offer their responses.)*

Teacher: Those are good observations. When we start reading *Follow Chester!* in a few moments, we’ll pause from time to time and look into our mirrors to think about ways the book reminds us of ourselves. We’ll also ask ourselves questions about the main ideas in the story.

After this conversation, the teacher should ask students to share their own comments and questions about the mirror concept. This exchange not only will serve as a formative assessment for the teacher, but also an opportunity for the teacher to address possible misunderstandings or confusion the students might have.

***Step 2: Introducing the Window Concept (5 minutes)***

After teaching the mirror concept, the teacher will begin to help students understand the window concept. To do this, the teacher and students will gather in front of a physical window and the teacher and students may use the following suggested dialogue.

Teacher: What are some things we see when we look out this window?

*(The teacher provides students with a few moments to look out the window and share their observations.)*

Teacher: Those are some good observations. When we look out our window, we see the world around us, don't we? We see things we recognize, but we might also see things we *don't* recognize, including people we haven't met, or maybe places or things that are unfamiliar to us. Does anyone know what the word "unfamiliar" means?

*(The students offer their responses.)*

Teacher: When something is unfamiliar to us, it means that it's new to us. It's something we haven't seen or experienced before. Other people might have seen or experienced it, but we haven't. But guess what? Do you remember when I told you that a book can be like a mirror? A book can *also* be like a window! It can help us learn about the world around us, including those things that are unfamiliar, or new, to us. What do you think about that?

*(The students offer their responses.)*

Teacher: Now I'd like you to look really closely out our window. In addition to seeing what's outside, can any of you see something else? Can any of you see your own reflection in the glass? Give it a try.

After the students observe their reflections, the teacher will briefly assess the students' understanding in order to gauge their knowledge of the window concept. Similar to step one, this strategy is a formative assessment to identify and address misunderstandings or confusion the students might have. Once the students grasp the window concept, the class will advance to step three.

***Step 3: Putting the Mirror and Window Concepts Together (5-10 minutes)***

For the final component of the introductory lesson activities, the teacher will first briefly remind students that a book can be both a "mirror" and a "window." To do this, the teacher may offer the following explanation.

Teacher: A book can be like a mirror and a window at the same time because, on the one hand, books can remind us of ourselves. On the other hand, books can teach us about

unfamiliar, or new, things that exist around us. As we read *Follow Chester!*, I want you to think about how the story is both a mirror *and* a window. Just like a *mirror*, what can the book help you to see about yourself? Just like a *window*, what can the book help you to see about others and the world around you?

*(At this stage, the teacher will create a simple graphic organizer/t-chart on the board or on chart paper with two columns (see Appendix A). One column will be labeled “Mirror” and the other column will be labeled “Window.” Then, throughout the class read-aloud, the teacher and students will pause from time to time to write notes into the chart and record what they learned.)*

After this brief explanation, the teacher will introduce *Follow Chester!* by announcing the book’s title and asking the class to study the illustration on the front cover. At this time, the students will make inferences and predictions about the story before the teacher reads the book. Importantly, the teacher should spend time discussing what the title words “fights racism” and “makes history” mean in order to help put the story in its proper context. (A teacher also might consider having these words placed on a social studies word wall for future reference.) Incorporating these introductory strategies and activities prior to reading *Follow Chester!* will help the elementary teacher provide a meaningful and challenging social studies learning experience for students (National Council for the Social Studies, 2017).

### **Using *Follow Chester!* as a Mirror (20 minutes)**

After completing the introductory activities, the teacher will conduct a class read-aloud of the book. During this time, the teacher and students should pause periodically to reflect on Chester Pierce’s life and ponder questions that will help students examine their own viewpoints and beliefs. The teacher also should help students connect their observations to civic virtues “such as honesty, mutual respect, cooperation, and attentiveness to multiple perspectives that citizens should use when they interact with each other on public matters” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 33). Below, a suggested teacher-student dialogue is provided that draws on one section of the book *Follow Chester!* as an example of how this conversation may take place.

Teacher: In *Follow Chester!*, the book said the Harvard football team was set to

play a game against the University of Virginia in 1947. Let’s look at a map of the U.S. to find where these two schools are located.

*(Together, the teacher and students locate both schools on a U.S. map.)*

Teacher: The University of Virginia is a school in the Southern United States. Around

Chester’s time, this school was located south of a boundary called the Mason-Dixon Line that divided the U.S. from the North to the South. The book said that in 1947,

“colleges in the South didn’t allow black students” (p. 6). Do you remember learning about the civic virtue of mutual respect earlier this year?

*(The teacher writes the words “mutual respect” on the board or on chart paper for the students to see as the students share their answers.)*

Teacher: People who show mutual respect show kindness and care towards

others, no matter who those people are or where those people are from. Students, can any of you think of an example of someone who shows mutual respect?

*(The students share their responses.)*

Teacher: Did colleges in the South that didn’t allow Black students show mutual respect? Why not?

*(The students share their responses.)*

Teacher: Students, now I’d like you to look into the mirrors you made. As you look into your mirrors, I want you to think about a question: “How do *I* show mutual respect towards others?” After you’ve had time to think about this question, I’d like to hear your answers.

*(The teacher provides students with a few moments to answer the question as they look into their hand-held mirrors. Then the teacher invites the students to share their responses. As the students speak, the teacher writes these responses into the “Mirror” column of the graphic organizer.)*

Teacher: Thank you for sharing your ideas about some of the ways you’ve shown the civic virtue of mutual respect in your own life. As we keep reading, let’s find examples of characters who show mutual respect towards each other in the story.

As the read-aloud continues, the teacher and students will occasionally pause to identify instances of mutual respect that appear in the story and write these instances down in the graphic organizer. For example, later in the book, Chester Pierce’s teammates use the play “Follow Chester!” to show care and kindness towards Chester. The teacher and students should discuss this part of the book to understand how and why the play demonstrates the civic virtue of mutual respect. This discussion also may help students think of ways they could use this civic virtue in their daily lives.

### **Using *Follow Chester!* as a Window (30 minutes)**

Throughout the reading, students also will view story events using the window perspective. Here, a teacher will guide students to consider new perspectives and ideas through prompts and intentional questioning which also will provide the teacher with further opportunities to discuss civic virtues with the class.

For example, while reading the front sleeve of the book to the class, the teacher will encourage students to identify unfamiliar words, phrases, and ideas that they hear. The teacher will then write these words on the board or place them on a social studies word wall for the class to refer back to at a later time. Then, using the information provided in the story, as well as additional resources including the author’s note or the publisher-provided online materials (see Respress-Churchwell, 2019, pp. 28-30), the class will work together to define the terms. After the meanings of the terms are discussed, the definitions and descriptions should be added to the “Window” column of the graphic organizer. Reading becomes purposeful when students pay close attention to the material. This practice helps students become independent learners as they explore civic virtues and interact with others to “[obtain] factual knowledge” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 33).

To incorporate the window perspective to teach *Follow Chester!*, the teacher also will highlight the part of the book that discusses Jackie Robinson. Robinson, the first Black athlete to become a major league baseball player in 1947, might be an unfamiliar historical figure to some second-grade students. Therefore, the teacher should discuss Robinson and his achievements to provide a window into the many struggles Black athletes like Robinson faced during that time. The teacher also should use primary sources, such as photographs, to aid in the discussion. These sources can be accessed through online repositories such as the Library of Congress or the National Archives and can help students understand Robinson’s larger impact on sports and society. They also can help young learners put Chester Pierce’s achievements into historical context. Below, a suggested classroom dialogue is provided to show one way a teacher might link Pierce’s achievements to Robinson’s.

Teacher: Today, we’ve learned important information about Jackie Robinson. In your own words, can anyone describe some of the struggles Jackie Robinson faced?

*(The students share their responses.)*

Teacher: Good work. We also spoke about the views some Americans held about Jackie Robinson and other Black athletes at the time. I want you to think about our conversations about mutual respect. Do you think people treated Jackie Robinson with mutual respect?

*(The students share their responses.)*

Teacher: Now I want you to consider this question: How are Jackie Robinson and Chester Pierce alike? After you’ve thought about your answer, please raise your hand to share it. If you’d like, feel free to look out the window to brainstorm ideas.

*(The students share their responses. After each response, the teacher writes the students’ answers into the “Window” column of the graphic organizer.)*

Teacher: Students, those are some great ideas. While I was listening to your answers, I thought of another question: If Chester Pierce read about Jackie Robinson, do you think he

would feel like he was looking into a mirror or out a window?

*(Students share their responses.)*

Teacher: I think so, too. While we continue reading, I want you to think about other ways Chester Pierce might remind you of Jackie Robinson.

After reading the book with the class, the teacher will lead a post-reading discussion to ask questions such as:

- Did anything surprise you about the story?
- What did you learn from the book?
- What did you learn from the story about the civic virtue of mutual respect?
- How was the story a mirror for you? What did the story teach you about yourself?
- How was the story a window for you? What did the story teach you about history?

A post-reading discussion promotes the civic virtues of honesty, mutual respect, cooperation, and attentiveness to multiple perspectives within the classroom community. This discussion also serves as a useful assessment and provides the teacher with an opportunity to address possible misunderstandings the students might have about the material.

After the post-reading discussion, the teacher will invite students to create a physical classroom reading “window.” Using popsicle sticks or a similar craft material, the class will design a piece of art that resembles a window on a large piece of construction paper. Students will then brainstorm one way that *Follow Chester!* introduced them to a new perspective or idea. Using sticky notes, students will write or draw their answers to the question and place the sticky notes on the window once it is finished. After students share what they wrote, the windows could be displayed on a bulletin board or wall in the classroom.

### **Recommendations: Extension and Taking Informed Action**

The *C3 Framework* (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013) explained that social studies learning should extend beyond the classroom. In order to fully understand civic virtues such as honesty, mutual respect, cooperation, and attentiveness to multiple perspectives, students should “[apply] and [reflect] on them through actual civic engagement--their own and that of other people from the past or present” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 33). To do this, students could conduct a biographical research inquiry project in which they would investigate other famous sports figures whose achievements contributed to greater equity in society. After completing the project, the students could present their findings in an essay, report, or multimedia presentation. “Products such as essays, reports, and multimedia presentations offer students opportunities to represent their ideas in a variety of formats and communicate their conclusions to a range of audiences” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 60). These projects also could be shared with the wider school community at a later time.

Another suggested activity for taking informed action could be for students to create a list of classroom commitments that are guided by civic virtues such as mutual respect. The teacher could help students write a list of “I will” statements inspired by *Follow Chester!* (and the use of the mirror-window framework) that could be displayed in the classroom to promote an inclusive classroom community. The *C3 Framework* (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013) explained that in order to take informed action, students should “use disciplinary knowledge, skills, and perspectives to inquire about problems involved in public issues; deliberate with other people about how to define and address issues; take constructive, independent, and collaborative action; reflect on their actions; and create and sustain groups” (p. 62). Therefore, by creating, and adhering to, a collaborative list of commitments, students could engage in the process of taking informed action in their own classroom and school.

### Conclusion

In the 2016 TEDEd Talk, “The Windows and Mirrors of Your Child’s Bookshelf,” children’s book author and illustrator Grace Lin ended with a powerful quote: “Please look at your child’s bookshelf. Are all the books mirrors? Or are they all windows? Make sure that you have both, because if you do, you’re setting a path for self-worth and empathy.” This article offered teaching ideas for ways that the children’s book *Follow Chester! A College Football Team Fights Racism and Makes History*, written by Gloria Respress-Churchwell and illustrated by Laura Freeman, may be used as both a mirror and a window in elementary social studies education. The book can serve as a valuable resource for young learners to develop greater civic awareness of themselves and the world around them and to increase children’s knowledge of democratic citizenship. In this way, teaching *Follow Chester!* with the mirror-window framework can support powerful and purposeful social studies education (National Council for the Social Studies, 2017), help prepare young students for active citizenship, and guide children in taking informed action and building inclusive communities.

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**Appendix A**

<b><i>Follow Chester!</i> as Mirror</b>	<b><i>Follow Chester!</i> as Window</b>

## Appendix B

Inquiry Design Model (IDM) Blueprint™		
<b>Compelling Question</b>	What can mirrors and windows teach me about civic virtues by reading the book <i>Follow Chester! A College Football Team Fights Racism and Makes History?</i>	
<b>Standards and Practices</b>	<p><b>Kentucky Social Studies Standard 2.C.CV.1:</b> Evaluate how civic virtues guide governments, societies, and communities</p> <p><b>Common Core State Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.7:</b> Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot</p> <p><b>C3 Framework Standard D2.Civ.2.K-2:</b> Explain how all people, not just official leaders, play important roles in a community</p>	
<b>Staging the Question</b>	Students create hand-held mirrors, brainstorm ways that books help readers understand themselves (“mirror”) and the wider world (“window”) and discuss what they know about civic virtues.	
<b>Supporting Question 1</b>	<b>Supporting Question 2</b>	<b>Supporting Question 3</b>
How can <i>Follow Chester!</i> be used as a mirror and a window to learn about the past? (history)	Where was the Mason-Dixon Line and how did it affect Chester’s opportunity to play a football game against the University of Virginia? (geography)	In the book <i>Follow Chester!</i> , what civic virtues did the characters use? (civics)
<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	<b>Formative Performance Task</b>
Categorize the graphic organizer/t-chart (see Appendix A).	Discuss how the game’s location influenced Chester’s opportunity to compete.	List examples of civic virtues that characters used in the story.
<b>Featured Sources</b>	<b>Featured Sources</b>	<b>Featured Sources</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a copy of the book <i>Follow Chester!</i></li> <li>• primary sources from the Library of Congress or the National Archives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a copy of the book <i>Follow Chester!</i></li> <li>• a U.S. map</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a copy of the book <i>Follow Chester!</i></li> </ul>
<b>Summative</b>	<b>Argument</b>	Construct an argument that shows what you learned about civic virtues by using the mirror-window framework to read <i>Follow Chester!</i>

Performance Task	<b>Extension</b>	Conduct a biographical research project on other famous sports figures whose achievements led to greater equity in society and reflected civic virtues.
Taking Informed Action		Create a list of classroom commitments that are guided by civic virtues.

Appendix B was adapted from Grant, Lee, and Swan's (2017) "Inquiry Design Model (IDM)—At a Glance."