

Inquiry Bursts

Critical Thinking in the Middle School Social Studies Classroom

Stations A variety of resources set up as stations for students to explore in pairs or independently.

Two example sets for exploration:

U.S. History - Immigration/Urbanization

Station #1: Tenements in the Eyes of Jacob Riis
Station #2: Settlement Houses & Jane Addams
Station #3: The Poetry of Angel Island Immigration Station
Station #4: You Decide: Ellis Island Arrivals

Civics - Political Processes

Station #1: Third Parties
Station #2: The Electoral College
Station #3: Political Ideology
Station #4: Political Processes Vocabulary

- Covers a large amount of content in a shorter amount of time -- great for unit introduction to provide vocabulary and build prior knowledge or for review at the end of a unit.
- Exposes students to a variety of resources keeping them engaged
- Creates opportunity for repetition of skills, such as writing responses or citation
- Adaptable to most any content and easy to differentiate to meet student needs

Research Skills Incorporate information literacy skills into everyday lessons.

Research Smackdown - Quick and easy research lessons to use as warm-ups, exit tickets, or homework assignments.

Images - Teacher posts an image related to the current content area. As a warm up, students write down questions they have about the image or write a sentence explaining it's connection to the content. Given enough information, students can practice writing citations, as well.

Top 5 - Given a short set of resources (such as the Top 5 results from a Google or database search), students determine which resources would be appropriate for answering a given question.

Cite Your Current Event - If students are required to gather current events, make the initial part of their assignment include posting a citation of the selected article on the class's blackboard site, providing experience citing a variety of types of resources. The teacher or librarian could provide individual feedback on the citations to guide students. Could be adapted to work on paper/index card/post-it or with a Google form.

A Google A Day - Using the website [A Google A Day](#), students can practice answering increasingly complex research questions. Once they've answered a research question, they can also practice citing the source of their information.

Daily Questions - Teacher posts a topic relevant to current curriculum. Students develop a thoughtful question about the topic. Questions can be used for daily/weekly discussions.

Notes:

Search Term Relays - Teams of students take turns, relay style, creating additional search terms for a basic topic. A fun way to end class that helps summarize the activities of the day in addition to practicing an important skill.

Thesis Rewrite - After an in-depth lesson on thesis writing, students practice revising poor thesis statements. Teacher posts bad thesis statements weekly. Brief discussions to help students see the rewrite process modeled.

Additional Research Lessons

Evaluate Sources

[The 5W's of Web Site Evaluation checklist](#)

Teacher demonstrates web site evaluation with a website and then gives students a website related to lesson content. Students work in pairs to evaluate the site, using the checklist. Students write a statement explaining why they would or would not use that site. Continue to practice the skill as a warm-up or homework assignment. Other options:

- Valenza's documents are more extensive.
 - [Handout](#) | [Checklist](#) | [Reminder](#)
- 21st Century Influence Fluency [Evaluation Wizard](#) takes students through the process step by step.

Bias Lesson

Compare three different sources about the same topic. Determine what, if any, evidence there is of the source's bias. Students write a statement explaining why they would or would not use the sources. Can be used for current or historical events.

- EX: [current campaign information on Governor's race in VA](#) (articles from two different newspapers and from candidate's own website)
- EX: exploring primary sources from a different perspectives on the same event or time period (excerpt from Anne Frank's diary, an interview with a WWII American soldier, and newspaper archives from Germany)

Plagiarism and How to Avoid It Practice with different skills to help students avoid common mistakes that lead to plagiarism.

Case Studies

Working in groups with [real-world examples](#), students review a scenario, formulate opinions, and decide consequences. Class reconvenes for a discussion on all examples.

For acceleration, students could research the case studies to find newspaper or magazine articles about the events or find new examples and supporting evidence to use as future case studies.

Mock Twitter Feed

Using [Padlet](#), teacher creates a topic for discussion or sends students to a link. Students respond using brief notes. Brief format encourages students to write in clear, concise language. Could be modified to have students write single sentences responses, or create thesis statements on a given topic.

Paraphrasing & Summarizing

Students are given a general topic and asked to narrow it down. (Ex: given a topic of **climate**, they could narrow it down to a specific country's climate.) Students search in 3 different sources for info and select and copy one quotation from each source (inc. the citation). Students then paraphrase the quotes and use the three paraphrased passages to write a paragraph about what they learned.

- EX: [Constitutional Amendments](#)
- EX: [Important People from the 1920s](#)

Citation Races

Pairs of students compete to correctly complete a common citation. Using [Google Docs](#) projected on a screen allows everyone to see the citations as they are built. Citation Races can also be adapted for use with manipulatives or written out with traditional pen and paper.

If time

- Questions?
- Research Rehab - let us help you make your research better
- Explore stations you didn't get to earlier

For more information, please visit our web site:

www.inquirybursts.com/social-studies.html