



OER PROJECT TEACHING GUIDE

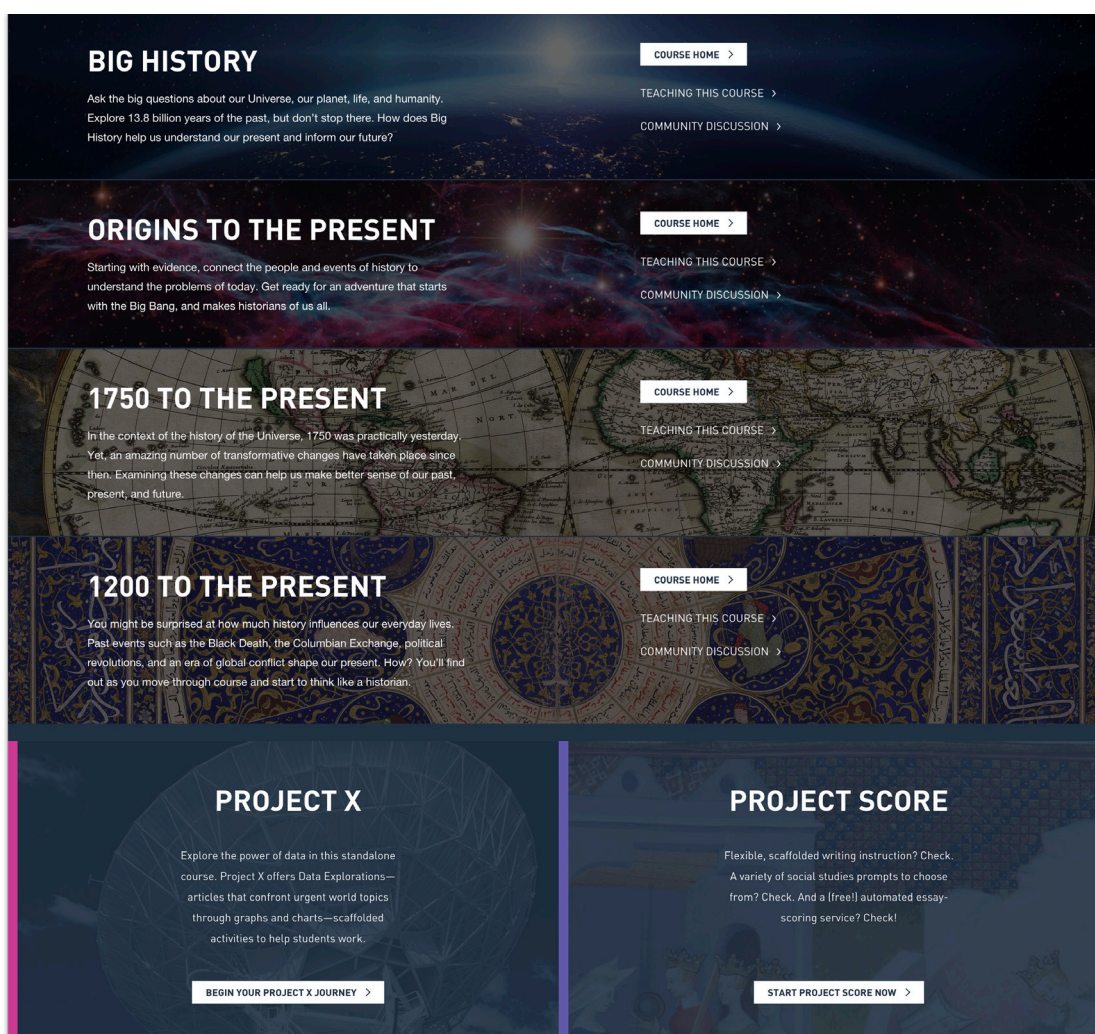
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Welcome to the OER Project

The OER Project is a coalition of educators and historians committed to boosting student engagement and achievement through transformational social studies programs. By empowering classroom teachers with better curricula, content, and a vibrant community, we deliver more compelling, impactful, and usable histories. “OER” stands for *open educational resources*. When you grab a free worksheet off Pinterest for your tenth graders, that’s an OER resource. We recognize the value of OER resources, but want to go beyond the typical content repository approach—we aim to improve OER by providing coherency, support, and community.

Currently, the OER Project offers two courses—Big History Project (BHP) and World History Project (WHP)—both of which are completely free, online, and adaptable to different standards and classroom needs. Unlike textbooks, lesson websites, and other commercial products, everything has been purposely built to truly empower teachers and leave traditional history courses in—sorry for the pun—the past. We also offer short, standalone courses for those who want to try the OER Project approach, but aren’t yet ready to take on a full history course. Our current standalone options include Project X, a course that uses data to explore historical trends to help make predictions about the future; and Project Score, a course that uses writing tools and the use of Score, a free, online essay-scoring service to help support student writing.



OER Project homepage with course offerings: BHP, WHP, Project X, and Project Score

OER Project Framework

In developing our courses, we use research in teaching and learning; knowledge and scholarship of the discipline; and years of experience creating, improving, and managing curriculum projects. Our courses provide a unique, comprehensive, and flexible curriculum that includes a rich set of resources for students and a coherent set of lessons, assessments, and professional development resources for teachers. Experienced teachers, educators, and historians have created articles, lessons, and activities with the OER Project framework in mind, ensuring clarity and cohesiveness to maximize student engagement in our courses.

Specifically, OER Project provides an approach to studying the past through sets of historical inquiry problems—or “big questions”—which we encourage you to examine at multiple historical scales. These big questions organize the courses into a unifying global framework, thus challenging the “one civilization after another” approach that characterizes many world history courses. This approach helps students do the work of historians, making history useable and informative in today’s world, not just a set of stories they’re learning about the past.

Using a wide range of primary and secondary sources in a variety of formats, our courses focus on different interpretations of historical and contemporary events to help students move beyond simple analysis. Our lessons encourage students to do the work of historians by supporting them in learning to analyze and evaluate claims people make about the past, in order to see how that shapes understanding of the present and the future. In short, the OER Project aims to “grow” students’ thinking, writing, and reading practices as well as deepen their understanding of historical concepts and thinking practices. OER Project courses have been aligned to state and national standards, including those found in College and Career Readiness Standards, the C3 Framework, pre-IB, and AP programs.

OER Project courses put student thinking and questioning at the forefront, instead of emphasizing facts at the expense of concepts and world historical thinking. In addition, we push ourselves and our students to examine not just the dominant narrative, but to ask what other people and cultures may have experienced at different times in history. We also encourage our teachers to examine who is missing from the dominant stories, and why they’re not there. We also try to represent a variety of cultures and values in our work wherever possible.

So, how do we do all this?

We ground our student-facing curriculum, assessments, teacher-facing assets, professional development, and the OER Project platform in five principles of action:

1. **Merge core content and disciplinary inquiry practices.**

OER Project merges historical content—the “stuff” of history—with disciplinary inquiry and literacy practices. Our goal is to increase both students’ understanding of historical content and their capacity to use history’s sophisticated thinking, reasoning, reading, and writing practices toward making history “usable.”

2. **Manage students’ challenges through thinking tools and spiraling practice progressions.**

We attend to the challenges students face in understanding historical content and using historical reasoning and thinking practices by using a mix of thinking tools and activities that increase in sophistication and decrease in support over the duration of the course. We refer to these as *practice progressions* in our courses.

3. **Use research to improve the course for teachers and students.**

OER Project’s development team and outside evaluators use research and conduct studies on teachers’ and students’ experiences to design and improve curricula, professional development, the OER Project digital platform, and to understand the relative impact of our courses on student and teacher learning.

4. **Manage teachers’ challenges through an educative curriculum and interactive professional development.**

OER Project attends to and meets the challenges teachers face in developing students’ understanding and

use of historical reasoning and thinking practices through its educative curriculum and a wide range of interactive professional development activities.

5. Foster and support ongoing and active conversations about each of the principles.

For those new to our materials and teaching, the lessons and progressions provide a roadmap and resources for using OER Project curricula. For the more experienced teachers, they provide a common vocabulary to talk through the approach and practices. We continually improve our materials based on the feedback and substance of these conversations. Much of this work happens in our rich and extremely active online teacher community, where our own teacher leaders facilitate and encourage reflective and ongoing conversations about their practices.

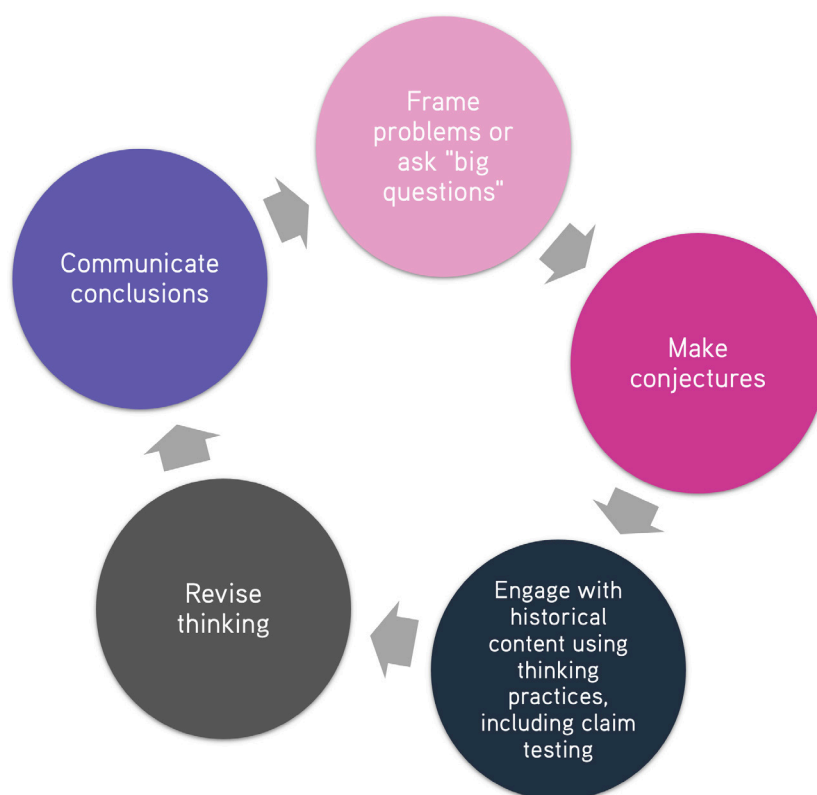
OER Project's Approach to Conducting Historical Inquiry

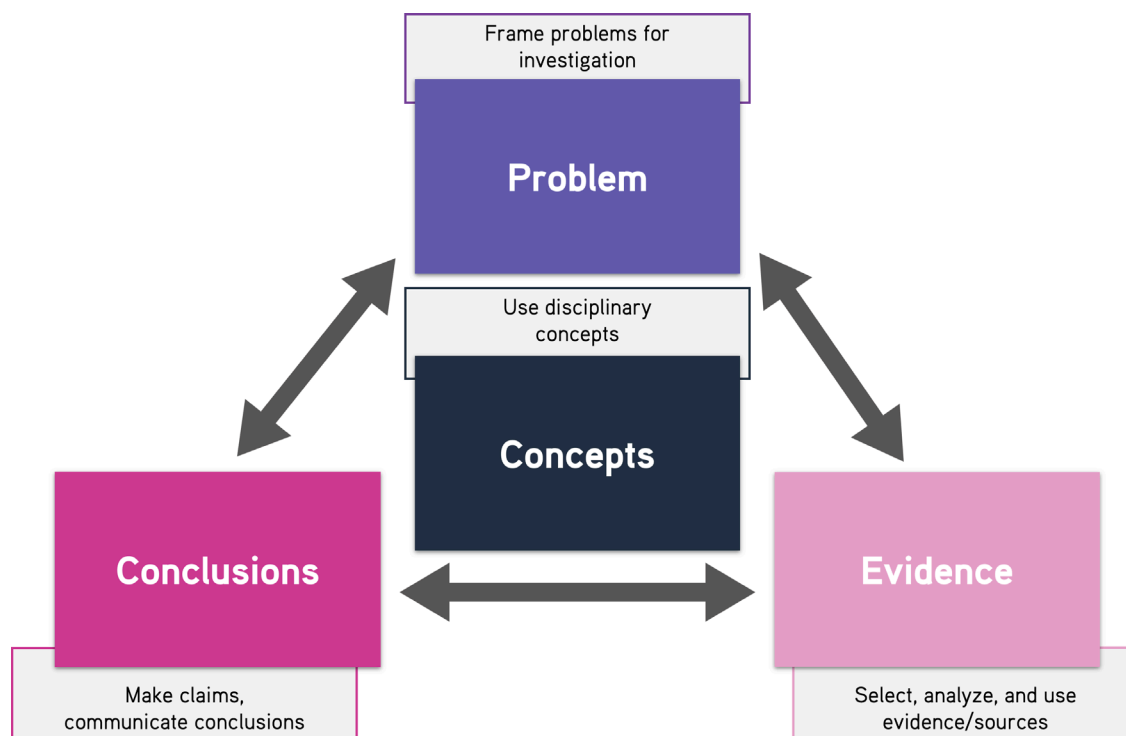
Historical inquiry can be thought of as the backbone of methodology behind how a historian actually “does” or “makes” history. Therefore, at the OER Project, we structure our courses to enable students to engage in a systematic process of inquiry to learn historical content and create historical accounts. In other words, historical inquiry is *how* students learn historical content and do the work of historians. OER's inquiry model aligns with the C3 Frameworks' Inquiry Arc, with its four dimensions:

1. Developing questions and planning inquiries.
2. Evaluating sources and using evidence.
3. Communicating conclusions and taking informed action.
4. Applying disciplinary concepts and tools.

In each unit, OER Project students are given the opportunity to:

- Frame problems for investigation.
- Make conjectures that guide inquiry.
- Select, read, and analyze a wide range of primary and secondary sources.
- Assess sources' claims using a variety of historical thinking practices.
- Use evidence and relevant disciplinary concepts to reason toward and communicate written, spoken, or visual conclusions in the form of narratives, explanations, or arguments.





Practices of OER Project students

The picture above is a visual map of the way the OER Project approaches historical inquiry, and it drives all of our curriculum development. It shows how the work we do in our courses, such as reading a primary source or watching a video, is part of the larger process of investigating a historical problem or “big question.”

Integrating Content and Skills: Practice Progressions and Thinking Tools

Studying the past and conducting historical inquiry is not easy and incorporates a ton of different practices all at once. In order for OER Project students to engage in the work of historians, they read, source, contextualize, and corroborate historical evidence; they evaluate historical interpretations; they engage in causal and consequential reasoning; compare historical developments across and within time; assess continuity and change; contextualize historical events; and make and test claims.

And while *all* the historical thinking practices are critical and interconnected, pedagogically it’s helpful for students if we tease them apart so they’re skilled in each when they put them all together. Therefore, we have broken these thinking practices down into categories to help students master each one while they work through the process of integration. The results of this is a series of activities, our practice progressions, based on one particular historical thinking or reasoning skill, that build upon one another. Each activity in a progression is meant to be more sophisticated than the one before, challenging students along the way but also supporting them as they do this work.

One of the main supports we provide within each progression is what we like to refer to as a *thinking tool*. Some people call these *smart tools*. A thinking tool might be a poster, a rubric, a graphic organizer, a mnemonic device, or a mix of a few of these, which help students attend to the steps they should take to engage in each practice. Over time, students will rely upon the tools less, but they are always there to support them.

So, how do we know when students have learned each practice well enough that they can rely less on the tools and are able to seeing the interplay between each practice? Well, we leave that up to you. Teachers are the best

judges of when and if students can do disciplinary thinking without explicitly using one of the thinking tools. Some students will successfully collapse the steps in a routine, employ disciplinary language, or create a concept map without referencing the tool. In such cases, teachers might not require them to use a tool. However, for other students, often in the same class, teachers will determine there is great value in encouraging or requiring them to use a tool in doing the work of historical thinking. OER Project provides our best guess about each typical learning progression, but gives teachers (who know their students best) the flexibility to modify and adjust our suggested sequence or tool use.

A final note about the disciplinary tools: Some of the tools, such as those for reading, writing, and causation, have a long research and development history. We have drawn on that research and that history to construct well-tested and supported tools to assist students in reading, writing, and determining causation. In other areas, the research is still being conducted, and in those areas, OER Project works closely with teachers and our research team to design and test tools to support student learning.

OER Project's Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The OER Project is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, at every level of our work. Wherever possible, we want students to see themselves reflected in the curricula. We also want OER Project materials to offer a window into peoples, cultures, and times that are unfamiliar to some students, especially those coming from less diverse areas. From the topics that are addressed, to the people who are included in our courses, celebrating individuality is at the core of our value system. Differences are the fabric of our world, making it both varied and unique. And those differences are what tend to move history forward. It is important that a history course demonstrates the power and importance of difference.

We acknowledge that there is still work to be done to make our courses more diverse—and so we continually audit, revise, and update our materials and approach. However, with the hundreds of languages and cultures that can be found in just one single school district, it is nearly impossible to represent and include everyone in the history stories we share. Yet there are other ways to include the faces and voices we don't see and hear beyond just the curricular materials.

We encourage teachers to show students how to question themselves, our world, and our histories. In doing this, we encourage you and your students to regularly ask yourselves these questions:

1. Who is represented in these historical narratives and why? Who is missing and why are they missing?
2. Who holds the power in different situations and why?
3. How do race, class, gender, and sexual orientation and identity impact history?
4. How do our own biases impact our views and interpretations of history?
5. How do we incorporate missing stories into our historical narratives to make them richer, more nuanced, and as a result, more historically accurate?

As we all become more skilled in thinking about how to make our historical narratives more inclusive, this will become a natural part of how students think about the past, and, we hope, how they think about the present and the future. We always welcome suggestions for improvement for how we can weave diversity, equity, and inclusion into our work.

Course Offerings

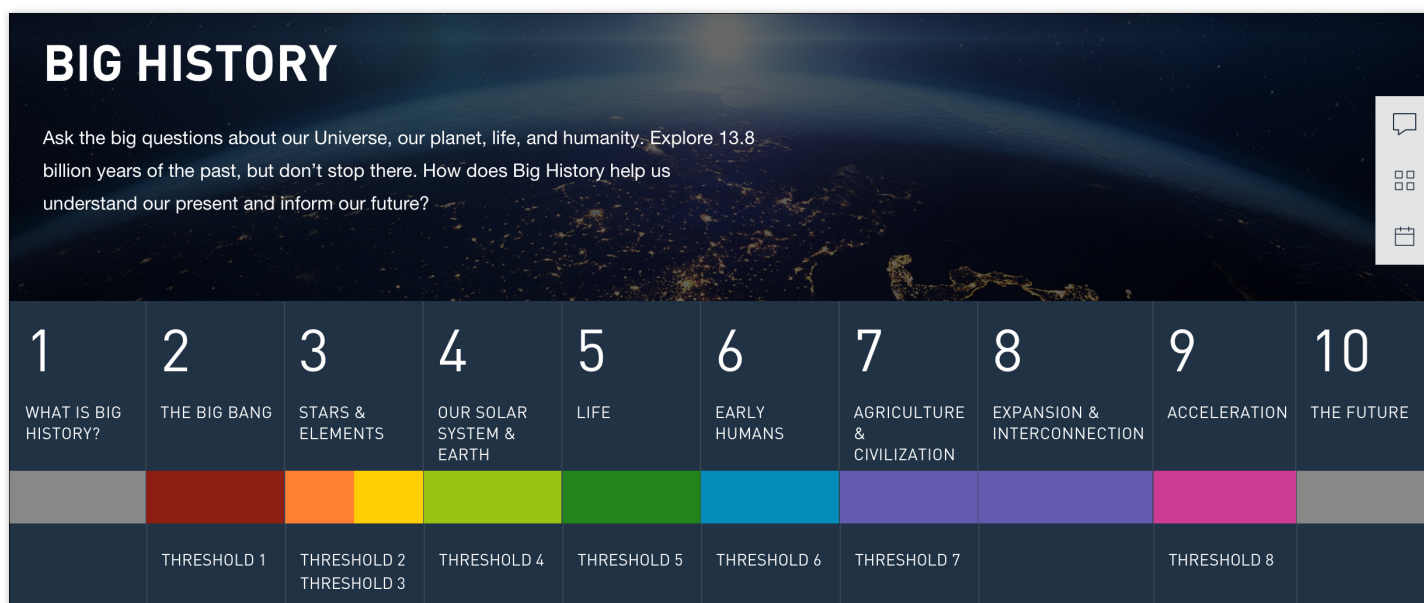
The OER Project offers two cohesive and coherent curricula: Big History Project (BHP) and World History Project (WHP). For more specific information about teaching BHP or WHP please see the associated course guides. Both BHP and WHP share a common DNA and a common approach which features awesome content and a compelling community. Both OER Project courses are completely free, online, and adaptable to different standards and classroom needs.

Big History Project

Big History Project (BHP) is a social studies course that spans 13.8 billion years. It weaves insights from many disciplines to form a single story that helps students develop a framework to organize and connect what they're learning both in and out of school. For an overview, see [David Christian's TED Talk](#).

BHP takes on questions that originate with the dawn of time and gives students a framework to tell the story of humanity's place in the Universe. It's more than a history course. BHP helps students see the overall picture and make sense of the pieces: it looks at the past from the Big Bang to modernity, seeking out common themes and patterns that can help us better understand people, societies, and the world we live in.

BHP was originally designed as a world history course for 9th and 10th graders (14 and 15-year-olds) to directly address the Common Core State Standards. Over the years, it has been increasingly used in middle school settings, therefore modifications have been made so the course can be used with a wider array of students, from 6th-10th grade. Some elementary schools use the BHP course, and some high schools use it as a senior capstone course. The materials are rich and extensive and can support wide range of learners.



BHP timeline

World History Project

World History Project (WHP) is a social studies course geared toward high-school students. It was designed to directly address state standards for world history courses and is generally geared toward tenth-grade students. Launched publicly in the 2019/20 school year, following a year-long pilot program in 2018/19, WHP was created based on our success with BHP and uses the same model for content development and instructional approaches.

Currently, we offer three versions of WHP—Origins to Present, 1200 to Present, and 1750 to Present. Origins begins with the Big Bang, while the 1200 and 1750 courses begin in (you guessed it!) 1200 and 1750, respectively.

ORIGINS TO THE PRESENT Starting with evidence, connect the people and events of history to understand the problems of today. Get ready for an adventure that starts with the Big Bang, and makes historians of us all.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
OUR BIG HISTORY	EARLY HUMANS	CITIES, SOCIETIES, AND EMPIRES	REGIONAL WEBS	THE FIRST GLOBAL AGE	THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY	THE GREAT CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE
	250,000 BP – 3000 BCE	6000 BCE – 700 CE	200 – 1500 CE	1200 – 1750 CE	1750 – 1914 CE	1880 CE – THE FUTURE

1200 TO THE PRESENT You might be surprised at how much history influences our everyday lives. Past events such as the Black Death, the Columbian Exchange, political revolutions, and an era of global conflict shape our present. How? You'll find out as you move through course and start to think like a historian.								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
NARRATIVES AND FRAMES	THE GLOBAL TAPESTRY	TRANSOCEANIC CONNECTIONS	REVOLUTIONS	INDUSTRIALIZATION	EMPIRE & OTHER CONSEQUENCES OF INDUSTRIALIZATION	GLOBAL CONFLICT	COLD WAR AND DECOLONIZATION	GLOBALIZATION
	1200 – 1450 CE	1450 – 1750 CE	1750 – 1914 CE	1750 – 1914 CE	1850 – 1950 CE	1914 – 1945 CE	1945 – 1990 CE	1900 TO PRESENT

1750 TO THE PRESENT In the context of the history of the Universe, 1750 was practically yesterday. Yet, an amazing number of transformative changes have taken place since then. Examining these changes can help us make better sense of our past, present, and future.								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
THE WORLD IN 1750	REVOLUTIONS	INDUSTRIALIZATION	LABOR & SOCIETY	IMPERIALISM	WORLD WAR I	INTERWAR AND WORLD WAR II	END OF EMPIRE AND COLD WAR	GLOBALIZATION
	1750 – 1914 CE	1750 – 1914 CE	1750 – 1914 CE	1750 – 1914 CE	1914 CE – PRESENT	1914 CE – PRESENT	1914 CE – PRESENT	1914 CE – PRESENT

WHP timelines

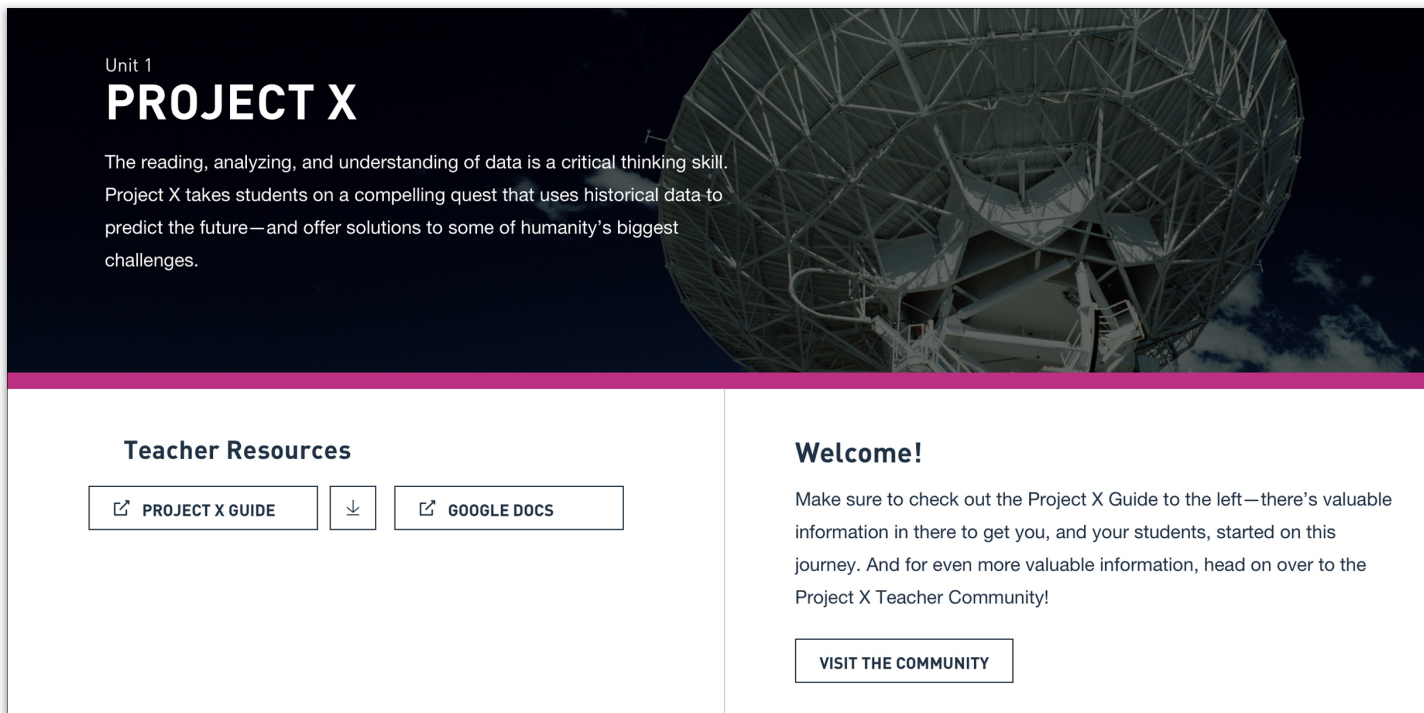
While there are multiple versions of this course that support a range of periodization schemes to help meet a variety of standards, they all explore human history. WHP will help students learn how to use stories about the past to orient themselves to their present moment and prepare for the future. WHP covers a lot of ground but is not a typical march-through-time history class that covers one event after another. Rather, WHP uses a set of overarching inquiry problems and narrative frames, situated at a variety of scales, to organize and facilitate teaching and learning.

Extensions

In addition to BHP and WHP, we also offer extension courses. These are meant to provide an entry point for teachers who want to try out the OER Project approach, but who aren't able to take on the full BHP or WHP curriculum. These extensions—Project X and Project Score—can be used as supplements to extend any existing social studies course. Alternatively, they can be used as short standalone offerings (two weeks for Project Score and four weeks for Project X). For more detailed information on how to use each as a standalone, please see the Project Score and Project X Guides.

Project X

Project X is meant to help students understand and evaluate data that they encounter and to use data in their own arguments. Students are constantly bombarded with representations of data. These charts and maps can be confusing and misleading. As data becomes a bigger part of our lives—just one result of the Information Revolution—students need to learn to be critical consumers of information. That's what Project X is all about. Project X culminates in a final presentation in which students use historical data to predict the future and offer solutions to some of humanity's biggest challenges.



The image shows a mockup of the Project X homepage. The top section features a large satellite dish against a dark sky. On the left, the text reads 'Unit 1' followed by 'PROJECT X' in large, bold letters. Below this, a paragraph states: 'The reading, analyzing, and understanding of data is a critical thinking skill. Project X takes students on a compelling quest that uses historical data to predict the future—and offer solutions to some of humanity's biggest challenges.'

The bottom section is divided into two columns. The left column is titled 'Teacher Resources' and contains two buttons: 'PROJECT X GUIDE' (with a document icon) and 'GOOGLE DOCS' (with a download icon). The right column is titled 'Welcome!' and contains a paragraph: 'Make sure to check out the Project X Guide to the left—there's valuable information in there to get you, and your students, started on this journey. And for even more valuable information, head on over to the Project X Teacher Community!'. Below this paragraph is a button labeled 'VISIT THE COMMUNITY'.

Project X homepage

Project X kicks off with this prompt:

“You are a historian of the future, and data is your crystal ball. As our species confronts the challenges of the twenty-first century, we carry the knowledge and burdens of history. In Project X, you’ll use that knowledge of the past to predict the future. Choose one significant issue and use data to predict how it will change during your lifetime.”

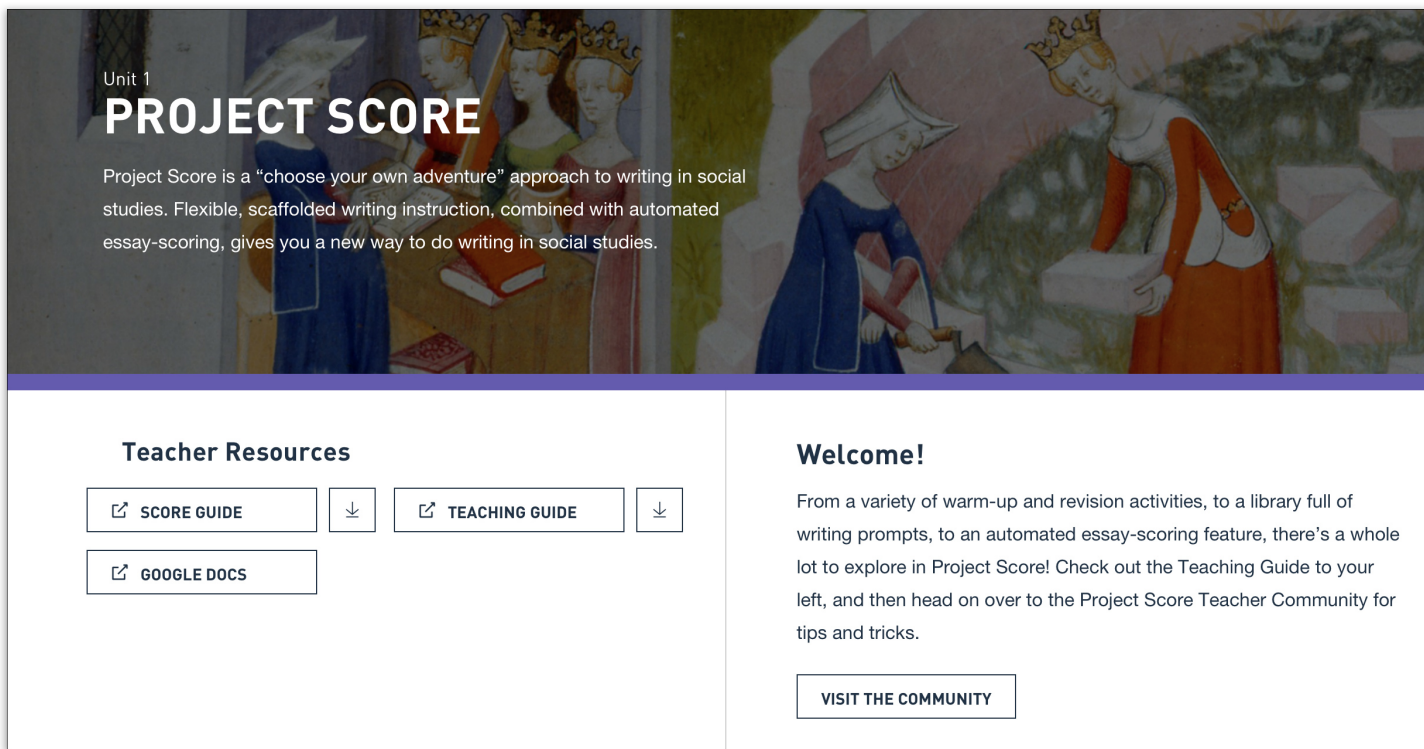
Project X can be taught as a standalone four-week course. It’s also embedded in the WHP courses for those already teaching a full WHP course. We’ve designed materials to guide students step-by-step through reading charts, evaluating data, and making predictions. Project X has three main components:

1. Data Explorations
2. Three Close Reads for Data, an approach to “reading” charts and other means of displaying data
3. Activities that lead to the final presentation

Each component is described in detail within the Project X Guide.

Project Score

Project Score is an OER Project writing extension that can be used to support social studies writing instruction in a wide variety of classrooms. Generally geared towards sixth- through twelfth-grade students, Project Score provides a set of writing activities that have a “choose your own adventure” feel, allowing teachers to make instructional choices based on where their students could use extra writing support.



The screenshot shows the Project Score homepage. At the top, there's a banner with a medieval-style illustration of three figures. On the left, it says 'Unit 1' and 'PROJECT SCORE' in large white letters. Below that, a paragraph describes Project Score as a 'choose your own adventure' approach to writing in social studies. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column is titled 'Teacher Resources' and contains three buttons: 'SCORE GUIDE' (with an external link icon), 'TEACHING GUIDE' (with an external link icon), and 'GOOGLE DOCS' (with a document icon). Each button has a download icon to its right. The right column is titled 'Welcome!' and contains a paragraph of text about the resources available. At the bottom of this column is a button labeled 'VISIT THE COMMUNITY'.

Unit 1
PROJECT SCORE

Project Score is a “choose your own adventure” approach to writing in social studies. Flexible, scaffolded writing instruction, combined with automated essay-scoring, gives you a new way to do writing in social studies.

Teacher Resources

[SCORE GUIDE](#) [TEACHING GUIDE](#) [GOOGLE DOCS](#)

Welcome!

From a variety of warm-up and revision activities, to a library full of writing prompts, to an automated essay-scoring feature, there’s a whole lot to explore in Project Score! Check out the Teaching Guide to your left, and then head on over to the Project Score Teacher Community for tips and tricks.

[VISIT THE COMMUNITY](#)

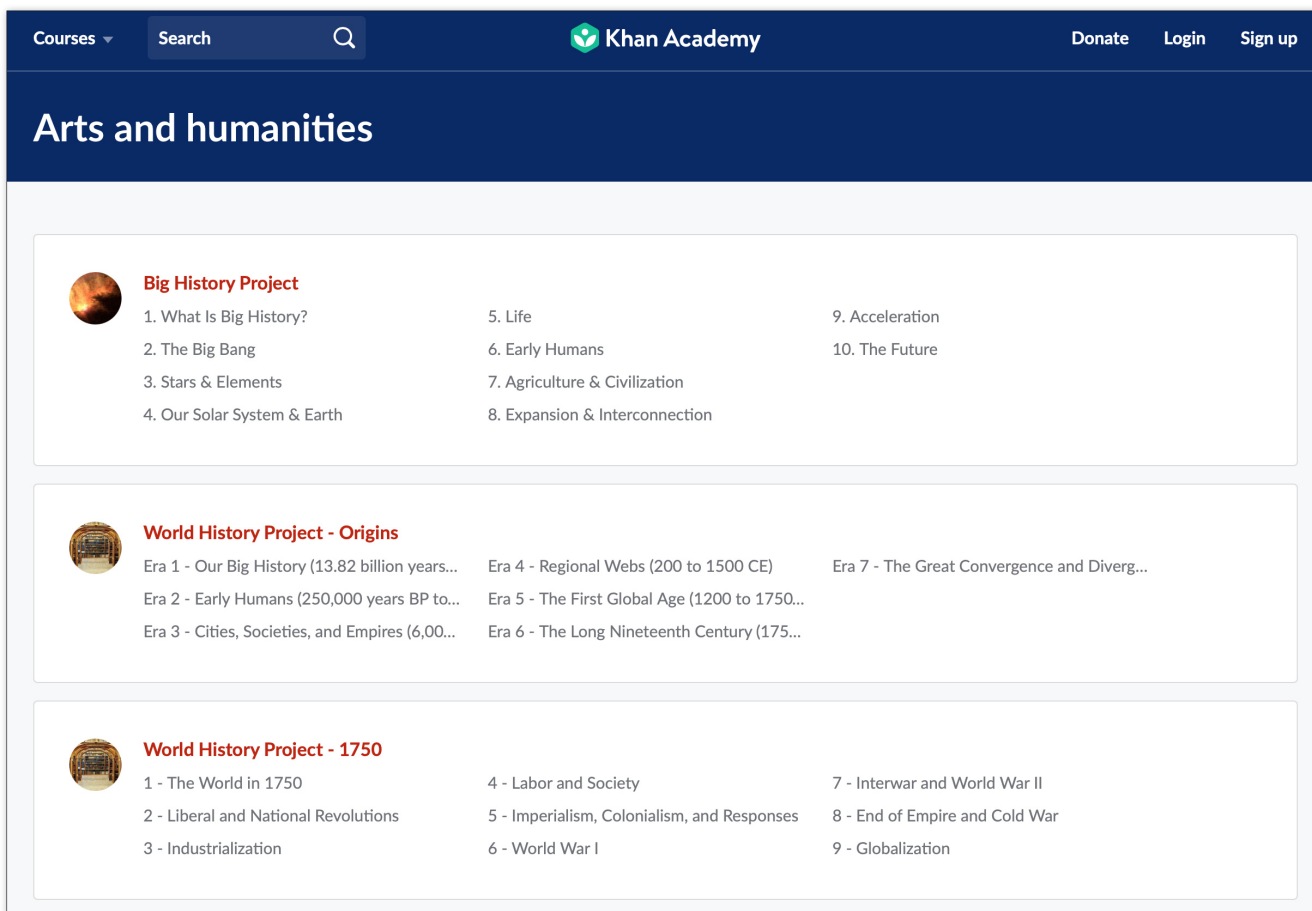
Project Score homepage

Project Score activities provide specific rubric-based strategies to address particular aspects of writing. In addition to the rubric-based strategies, you and your students are given access to Score, the free OER Project automated essay-scoring platform that uses a standard rubric to evaluate student work. The Project Score activities have

been designed to work seamlessly with the Score platform and can be easily incorporated into your classroom instruction. For more detail on Project Score, refer to the Project Score Guide.

OER Project on Khan Academy

The Khan Academy website hosts slightly condensed versions of the OER Project courses. Aimed at individual learners (as opposed to classroom learners), it includes all of the articles and videos from the main course website. Some activities have been modified to serve the individual user. This allows classroom teachers to use the growing set of Khan Academy analytic tools and mobile applications while still delivering the same great courses. Go to Khan Academy to learn more: [BHP](#), [WHP Origins](#), [WHP 1750](#).



The screenshot shows the Khan Academy website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Courses', a search bar, the Khan Academy logo, and links for 'Donate', 'Login', and 'Sign up'. Below the navigation bar, the 'Arts and humanities' category is highlighted. Three course offerings are listed:

- Big History Project**
 - 1. What Is Big History?
 - 2. The Big Bang
 - 3. Stars & Elements
 - 4. Our Solar System & Earth
 - 5. Life
 - 6. Early Humans
 - 7. Agriculture & Civilization
 - 8. Expansion & Interconnection
 - 9. Acceleration
 - 10. The Future
- World History Project - Origins**
 - Era 1 - Our Big History (13.82 billion years...)
 - Era 2 - Early Humans (250,000 years BP to...)
 - Era 3 - Cities, Societies, and Empires (6,00...)
 - Era 4 - Regional Webs (200 to 1500 CE)
 - Era 5 - The First Global Age (1200 to 1750...)
 - Era 6 - The Long Nineteenth Century (175...)
 - Era 7 - The Great Convergence and Diverg...
- World History Project - 1750**
 - 1 - The World in 1750
 - 2 - Liberal and National Revolutions
 - 3 - Industrialization
 - 4 - Labor and Society
 - 5 - Imperialism, Colonialism, and Responses
 - 6 - World War I
 - 7 - Interwar and World War II
 - 8 - End of Empire and Cold War
 - 9 - Globalization

OER Project course offerings on Khan Academy

Course Content

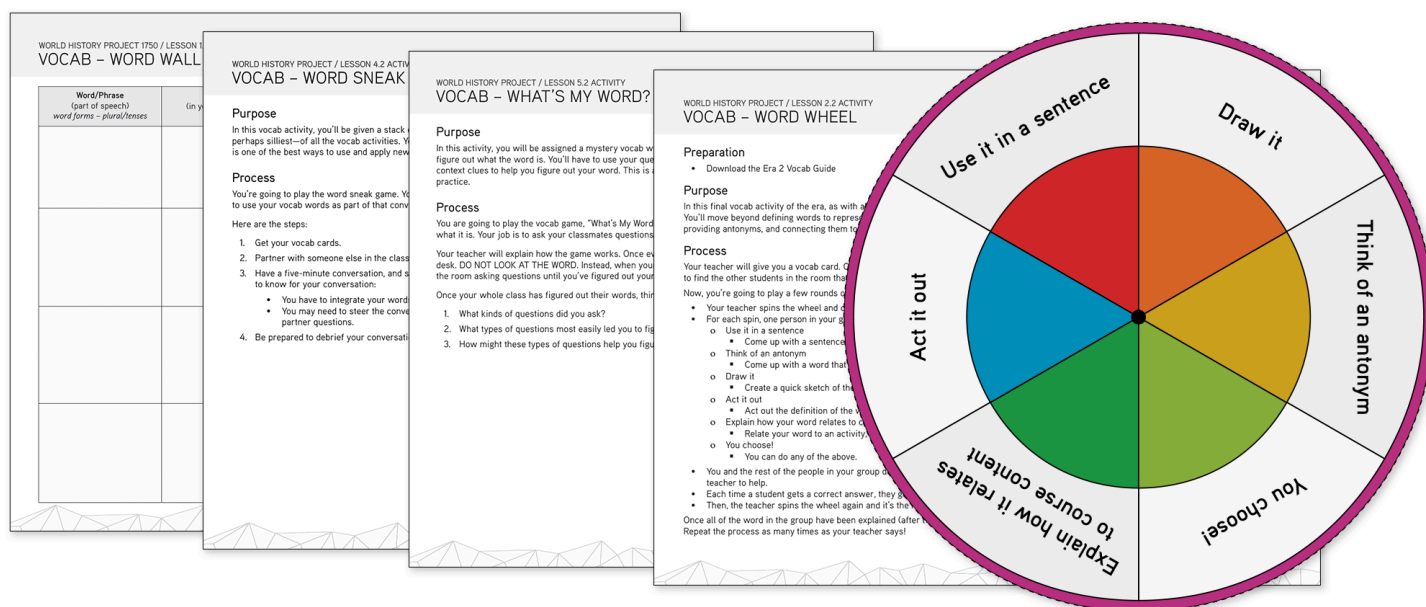
OER Project courses include a wide range of materials and provide a flexible structure for teachers to present the content to their students. We want students of different ages, backgrounds, and skills to be able to use our course content and stay engaged with their work. Therefore, we have a mix of activities, articles, and videos throughout our courses. The articles are offered at multiple reading levels, and the majority have accompanying audio versions. We provide different types of videos because not all learners respond the same media, and variety helps target what works for different students. Activities are widely varied, from more traditional skills work to fun projects, explorations, and problem-based learning units.

We aim to provide an educative curriculum to our teachers, to help explain the “why” behind each asset in the course. Additionally, we have suggested approaches to teaching the skills needed to engage effectively in the course. Social studies teachers have a big job, arguably bigger than most, because not only do they have to teach the history, they have to teach students how to engage with it, not to mention how to read, write, and present ideas! We want our teachers to be armed with all the tools they need to take on this daunting task. However, teaching our courses does not mean you have to use all our approaches, or all our stuff! For those of you who have tried-and-true methods of teaching, by all means, use them—and then share them with our community! And please, modify our assets for use in your local context. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to teaching and learning, so use our work as a launch point and make it yours.

To that end, all course content is available online and can be downloaded for offline use. All resources can also be added to Google Classroom and Google Drive. The courses are divided into units using a variety of periodization schemes. Each unit is divided into a set of suggested lessons, which are typically made up of a mix of articles, videos, and activities. Teachers may use the structure we suggest or incorporate the material into their own lesson plans. Each unit includes the following lesson resources:

Activities

Lessons include both standard activity types (vocabulary activities, for example) as well as customized activities to maximize student engagement and learning. Activity progressions, which focus on particular academic and historical thinking skills (reading, writing, claim testing, and contextualization, for example), take students through a series of activities that help students understand how to do the work of history, and that also organize the content of history in particular frameworks. Each activity progression includes a historical thinking tool, which can be used to support students in their learning. Activities are woven into every unit and are an integral part of every lesson to help students learn, experience, practice, and test concepts covered in the course.

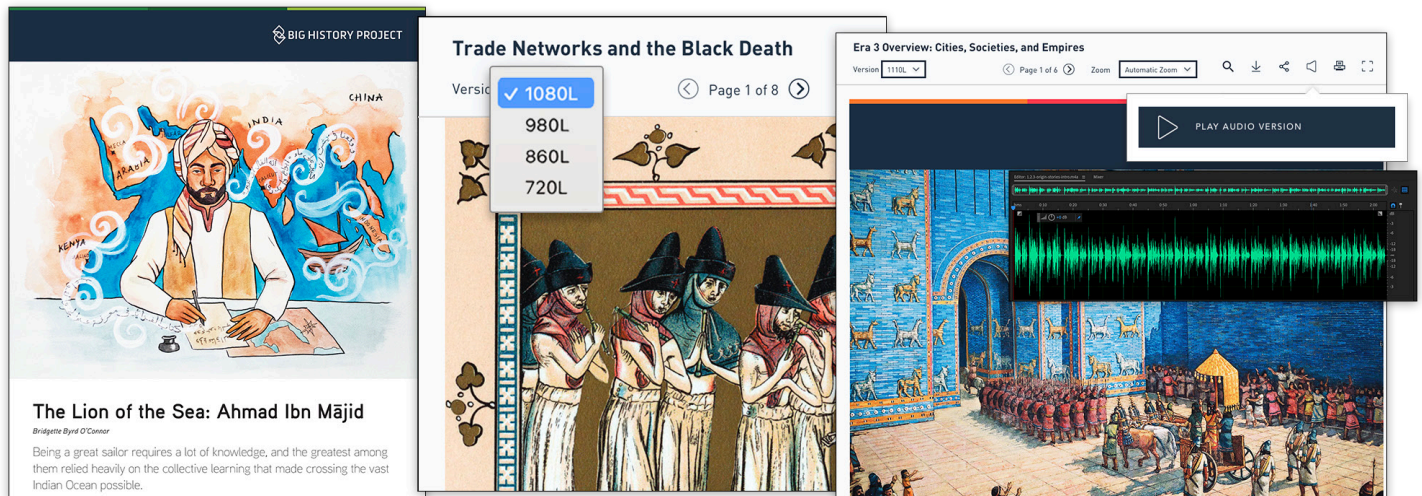


Example of vocabulary activities

Certain activity types are included in multiple units, offering students and teachers consistent practice. Our Opening activities are meant to be quick and fun, activating prior knowledge, revealing student misconceptions, and preparing students for what is coming in that lesson. Closing activities are used for formative assessment throughout the course.

Articles

OER Project articles are written by a diverse range of scholars and OER Project staff. We also include primary source material. All texts in the course—other than those that are part of Investigations or DBQs or are primary source materials—have been Lexile leveled, and each article has three or four versions to accommodate students of all reading levels. Additionally, all articles have an audio version. There is more information on this in the differentiation section.



Samples of articles: PDF (left), levelled readings (center), and audio versions (right).

Videos

OER Project videos feature historians and other noted scholars speaking on a variety of topics. We see video as a great means for providing visualizations of more complex ideas. Additionally, they allow our students to “travel”—some are shot on location so students are able to learn from scholars and experts from around the globe. All of the video assets we can share publicly are available on our [OER Project YouTube channel](#). This makes it easy for teachers and students to reuse and repurpose our content for presentations or other content.



Excerpts from OER videos

Graphics and Images

Our courses include a variety of infographics, image galleries, and other arts-based visuals such as comic-book style representations and other types of graphic histories. Our WHP courses offer graphic biographies—featuring the lives of everyday people throughout history. These graphic representations combine with text to provide a rich learning opportunity, mixing visuals and text in a way that provide more historical contextualization than your average text. Lessons built around these biographies use our Three Close Reads approach, which will help students read both the art and the text critically, enabling them to identify visual and written language, expression, and metaphor. For more about graphic biographies, check out [this](#) blog post or the OER Project Graphic Biographies Guide.



A selection of infographics and graphic biographies.

Assessments

There are opportunities for assessment throughout our courses. Each unit ends with a writing assignment in the form of an Investigation, DBQ, or LEQ. Many of these writing assignments can be input to Score, our automated essay-scoring platform, to allow additional levels of feedback. Each course provides a set of practice problems, which can be used to formatively assess student progress. You can find out more details about our assessments in the OER Project Assessment Guide.

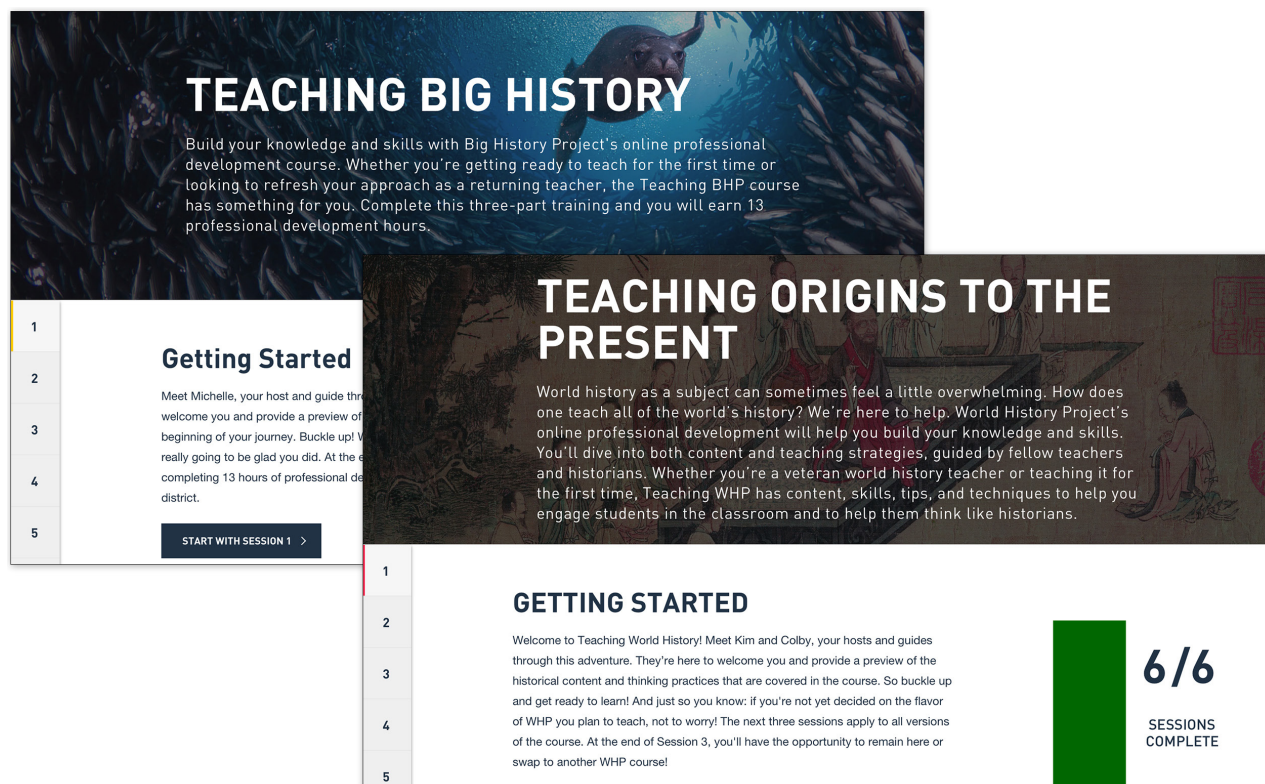
Teaching OER Project Courses

As we said earlier, social studies teachers have a big job. In many ways they're history teachers and ELA teachers rolled into one. We recognize that addressing all the "stuff of history" is no small task. In fact, it may be an impossible task, which is one of the reasons we position the teacher in the role of "lead learner" in the classroom. And OER Project courses have a lot of content, a lot of suggested approaches to teaching that content, and a rich online community where teachers share experiences and resources. It can be daunting to wade through all of this, so we've created various entry points where you can first dip your toes into the world of the OER Project so that you can eventually dive—or cannonball—into it all.

We provide professional learning opportunities to help teachers not only orient themselves to our offerings, but also to understand our approaches to teaching. In addition to course guides, we offer two online, go-at-your-own-pace courses, which offer a structured entry into our course: Teaching Big History and Teaching World History. We also help create and support professional learning communities (PLCs) in districts or regions where there are multiple OER Project teachers. Furthermore, our online teacher community is seen as a resource for just-in-time PD. If you post a question in that community, you will likely hear back from another teacher as quickly as if you walked down the hall and asked someone in your own building a question. And not only is that a place to get your questions answered, you'll also find a wealth of modified lessons, resources, and new ideas to run with and make your own.

Teaching BHP or WHP Online Course

One of the best ways to become oriented with our suggested approaches and the content of our courses is by taking one of our online courses, Teaching Big History or Teaching World History. These were designed to orient you to the big ideas in the courses, the instructional practices, and some program details. Many of the topics covered in this guide are discussed in more detail in the online courses. Additionally, blog posts that detail OER Project teachers' experiences with particular aspects of the course are featured throughout, so you can see how teachers use and tailor our approaches to work with their students. Reading these posts will give you a window into what it really looks like in an OER Project classroom.



Teaching BHP (top) and Teaching WHP (bottom).

Teacher as Lead Learner

OER Project's instructional philosophy is that a teacher's role in the classroom is that of lead learner. Our courses are interdisciplinary and use a wide range of knowledge and methods. We recognize that this can, at times, be overwhelming. Not only are you a history teacher, you're also an ELA teacher, and you might spend some time on

science, economics, politics, and other disciplines. World history courses are indeed, really, really big, and they're growing every day. But you don't have to be an expert on everything to teach them well. You can successfully teach our courses knowing what you already know. The most important thing is teaching how to learn.

Veteran teachers of OER Project courses, and especially Big History, tell us they quickly realized that it would be impossible to have complete command over ALL of history. As one of our OER Project teachers likes to say, "[History just keeps getting longer](#)." So, instead of knowing *everything*, we see a teacher's role in the classroom as a model for how to do historical analysis—a method of systematic and deliberate exploration that seeks to make sense of the past. In our courses, the teacher moves from being the source of knowledge into the role of lead learner.

OER Project courses emphasize how to engage with new ideas and information rather than a single set of concepts and facts. Students have to learn how to hypothesize, ask questions, seek out resources, analyze documents and content, make claims, support those claims, and write clear and cogent arguments. You already know how to do all of these things, and can model how to do them for your students.

You are skilled at all of the intellectual practices needed to help your students be successful historians. As the lead learner, you're not expected to be the holder of all knowledge—instead, you're the leader in *seeking* knowledge. You may not know the science behind how human bones can tell us about cultures of the past, but you can certainly seek out the answers, so you understand the topic better. And, you know how to model finding knowledge. Sometimes, that might even mean finding an expert in a particular field.

You will certainly find a place for the content you love to teach. As you begin to go through course materials and explore course narratives, you'll start to recognize where you could use additional resources such as other primary source materials, or how to weave pieces of literature and art into the narratives. What's important, especially as part of developing your students' twenty-first-century skills, is that students know how to ask questions, find and make sense of information, and apply what they've learned. It is our goal to make history usable. How? By showing students how the past informs the present, and in turn, how it can help us understand and prepare for our future.

OER Project Guide to Reading Texts and Videos

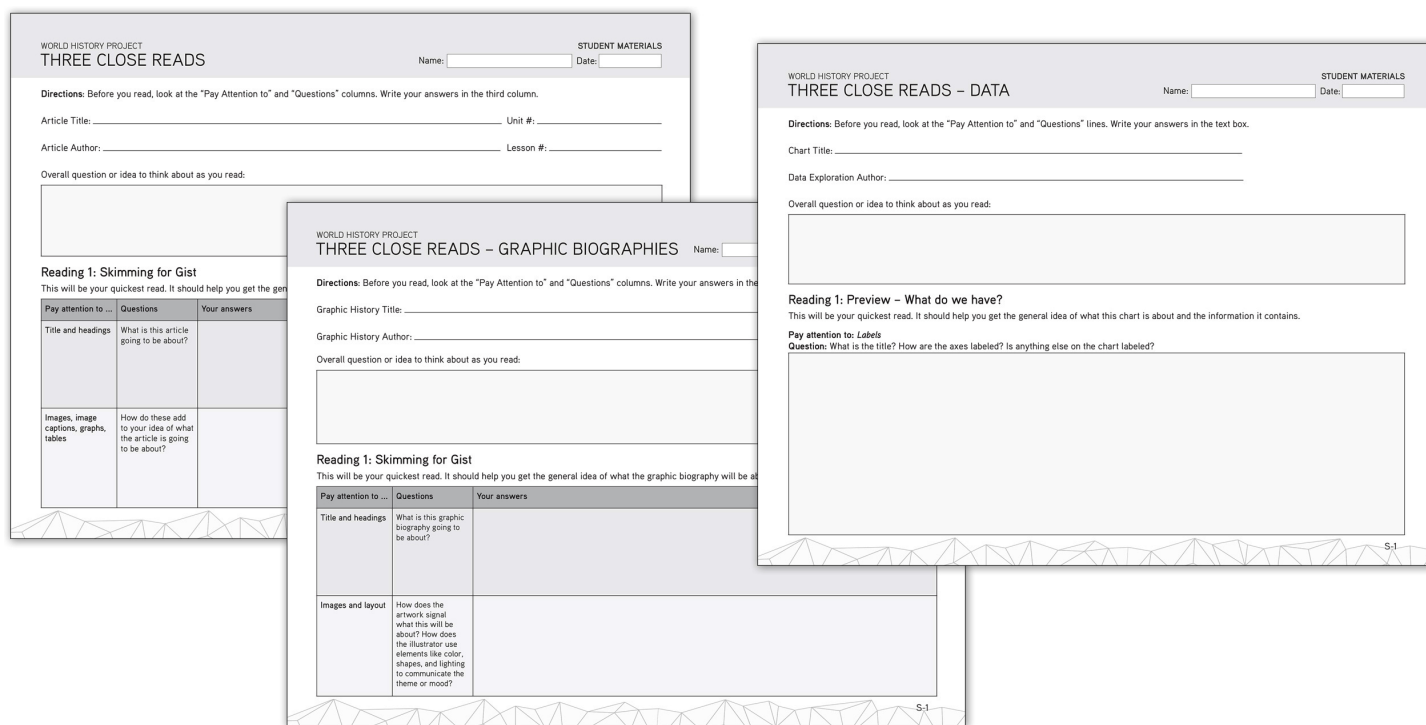
In all of our courses, we seek to improve students' ability to analyze, evaluate, and use a range of primary and secondary sources and video, including arguments about the past in a variety of formats or genres. Specifically, OER Project activities regularly ask students to read sources deeply; to evaluate the roles that evidence, context, and underlying assumptions play in constructing an interpretation; and to evaluate the consequences or significance of one interpretation over another.

As a result, there are many opportunities for reading in OER Project courses, and we use a broad definition of what it means to read. In today's world, the skill set of reading applies not just to articles and traditional texts, but also to videos, data, graphic biographies, and other types of images and data representations. And at the OER Project, we believe in close reading, so students not only decode information, they deeply understand the content well enough to apply it. Without making it through that entire progression of reading, from basic decoding to application, it's difficult to make history usable. So, how do we help students read all this content closely? Through an approach we call Three Close Reads, a practice that's been borrowed from long-established methodologies and best practices for teaching reading.

Students are introduced to this close-reading strategy early in the courses, and then continue to use the process throughout. Reading everything in the course three times might seem like overkill, but you and your students should understand it's more about approaching the reading with three different purposes—not necessarily reading every single word three times over. It's a very helpful tool for getting all the information from the different types of assets students will encounter in the course, and in their research. This can be a difficult routine to establish in the classroom, but it's worth it—it helps students excel,

a finding we can back with research. While this formal approach takes time at first, students will get faster and faster with each reading, and somewhere in the middle of the course they will notice that the three reads take the same amount of time that one used to take. Students will eventually internalize this process and these reading routines, and this formerly formal approach will feel like second nature.

We have a variety of Three Close Reads tools in the course to fit different kinds of materials (standard articles, videos, graphic biographies, data); however, the same principles apply to all three. The first read tends to be a skim, orienting students to what they're about to dig into. The second read tends to be more detailed oriented, making sure students are picking up on the key ideas. The third read goes the deepest, pushing students to think about how the text supports, extends, or challenges what they already know. It also helps them apply what they're learning. So, while specifics of the approach change depending upon the material being "read," the idea of three reads applies across the board.



The image displays three overlapping worksheets for the 'WORLD HISTORY PROJECT' 'THREE CLOSE READS' approach. Each worksheet includes a header with 'Name:' and 'Date:' fields, and a 'STUDENT MATERIALS' section.

Left Worksheet (Articles): Titled 'THREE CLOSE READS'. It includes a 'Directions' section and a 'Reading 1: Skimming for Gist' section. A table with three columns is provided:

Pay attention to ...	Questions	Your answers
Title and headings	What is this article going to be about?	
Images, image captions, graphs, tables	How do these add to your idea of what the article is going to be about?	

Center Worksheet (Graphic Biographies): Titled 'THREE CLOSE READS - GRAPHIC BIOGRAPHIES'. It includes a 'Directions' section and a 'Reading 1: Skimming for Gist' section. A table with three columns is provided:

Pay attention to ...	Questions	Your answers
Title and headings	What is this graphic biography going to be about?	
Images and layout	How does the artwork signal what this will be about? How does the illustrator use elements like color, shapes, and lighting to communicate the theme or mood?	

Right Worksheet (Data): Titled 'THREE CLOSE READS - DATA'. It includes a 'Directions' section and a 'Reading 1: Preview - What do we have?' section. A table with three columns is provided:

Pay attention to ...	Questions	Your answers
Labels	What is the title? How are the axes labeled? Is anything else on the chart labeled?	

Examples of Three Close Reads tools for articles (left), graphic biographies (center), and data (right).

In terms of an instructional progression around reading, keep an ear out for when students start to grumble about the three reads. It might mean that they're ready for a less-scaffolded experience. Use your knowledge of how your students' reading skills are developing to decide when they need less guidance and structure. It's unlikely this will happen in the first unit, or even the first couple of units, but eventually this process will become a habit. Until it does, it's important to use the tools, and early in the course, we recommend modeling the process with your students, first through whole class instruction, then in small group work, and eventually, working independently.

Approach to Reading Texts

Our standard Three Close Reads approach was created to help students unpack the readings in the course as well as any articles they encounter when conducting research. This is also the first type of Three Close Reads that you'll encounter in any of our courses, as students become familiar with the approach. Some of the reading involved in OER Project courses

can be challenging, but it is vital for engaging with the course content. This approach will help your students prepare to discuss each text, complete Investigations and DBQs, and master the key components of conducting historical inquiry.¹

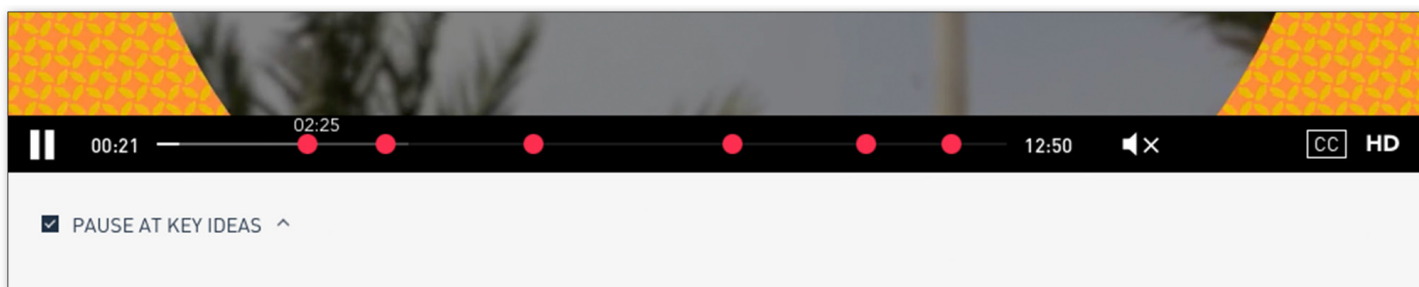
Typically, students should use the Three Close Reads Worksheet to help them analyze an article. In addition to the worksheet, you are provided with more specific questions (with sample answers that appear only in the teacher materials, which you'll find in the lesson view on the website), that can be used to orient your students to particular concepts and rhetorical devices for the second and third reads. The questions provided as part of the activity should be used for class discussions and for checking students' understanding of the reading. The content covered in the reading-specific questions is important for your students to learn, so make sure these questions, which are in addition to those on the Three Close Reads Worksheet, are addressed with your students in some way.

We also offer a few additional resources to help students unpack the texts in the course. First, we provide the Lexile reading level for each article. We also offer each article at multiple reading levels, ensuring that a wide range of readers within one class can access the texts. We even have an audio version of each article (based on the highest Lexile level of the article), which can be used for the first read, or a skim, or which can be used to help specific students who are struggling with reading. Please see the resources in our Teaching Big History or Teaching World History courses for more in-depth information regarding reading articles in our courses.

Approach to Reading Video

While we don't have a specific Three Close Reads Worksheet for videos, we assume that students will "read" video in the course in the same manner they use Three Close Reads to assess text-based readings. The videos in the course are rich with detail and information. Therefore, watching a video once and moving on does not provide the kind of engagement needed for students to comprehend, recall, and apply the details contained in videos. Therefore, we once again recommend the three reads.

First, have students watch the video so that they can get the overall gist (a first watch of a video is often a great homework assignment). Then, have students watch the video more closely, using the questions provided in the accompanying lesson to help them focus on the key ideas. You can also use the video feature "Pause at Key Ideas" to help you and your students check for understanding during the second read. This helps to ensure they are understanding the relevant details from each video. For the final viewing, or third "read," ask students to apply what they learned in the video to see if it supports, extends, or challenges what they already knew about the topic at hand. You can also have students read video transcripts to cut down on the overall time it takes to use each video as part of instruction. *Note:* Videos are not intended to replace instruction in any way; rather, they are a resource that should be used in an interactive way.



Pause at Key Ideas video feature

¹ Note: We have separated Three Close Reads for texts from our approach to sourcing. If you are interested in our approach to sourcing, please see the related tools and progression in our WHP courses.

Approach to Reading Graphic Biographies

All the graphic biographies in our courses are accompanied by the Three Close Reads approach and a specific tool that addresses this type of media in particular. Graphic biographies might look simple at first—after all, they have pictures!—but in truth there are layers of meaning embedded in them. Graphic biographies help students support, extend, and challenge the course narrative by introducing them to lesser-known historical figures. Graphic biographies are a type of secondary source. The art in these biographies can help magnify the viewpoints of the sources they're based on and provide students with valuable historical context.

We provide questions that guide students through three layers of understanding, which helps them fit these human experiences into the wider themes of the courses. This will help students to read both the art and the text of the biographies in a critical way, identifying both visual and written language, expression, and metaphor. Teacher-facing materials also offer an extended written biography, which gives you additional detail for each of the subjects.

Approach to Reading Data

“Reading” data and charts requires different skills than reading text or video. To develop these skills, we created the Three Close Reads for Data tool, which provides students with a method for unpacking the charts they will encounter in this course. Students will see these charts as part of Project X, which exists as a standalone course, or within WHP. The Three Close Reads process will also help them unpack other data representations and visualizations they may encounter as part of their research.

The goal of this approach is to make sure students deeply question the data they encounter, and how that data has been presented. Instead of simply accepting data visualizations as truth, students learn to evaluate the quality of data and the ways that data can be manipulated in charts. This will help them in social studies, but more important, it will encourage them to be thoughtful and inquisitive when they come across visual representations of data in their everyday lives. As with the other Three Close Reads approaches, questions are provided in each lesson to help guide students through each of the three reads.

OER Project Writing Guide

At the OER Project, we encourage students to write. A lot. At times, we want them to write informally, in order to express their initial understandings. At other times, we have them write formally, to solidify their thinking and refine their arguments. All along the way, students will use a single rubric to help them understand what makes good writing. They will write, review, and refine their work multiple times. This will not be easy for them. However, our research has shown that this hard work makes a real difference in the quality of their writing, which is a terribly unsurprising conclusion. Clear, consistent expectations, frequently revisited, is not a magic formula, it's just good teaching.

The OER Project believes that in addition to writing a lot, for students to get better at writing, they also need to understand what good writing looks like. Immediately preceding all end-of-unit writing assessments (Investigations, DBQs, and LEQs) are activities in which students analyze student writing samples using the provided writing rubric. These sets of activities are explained more in the Practice Progression section of each course guide.

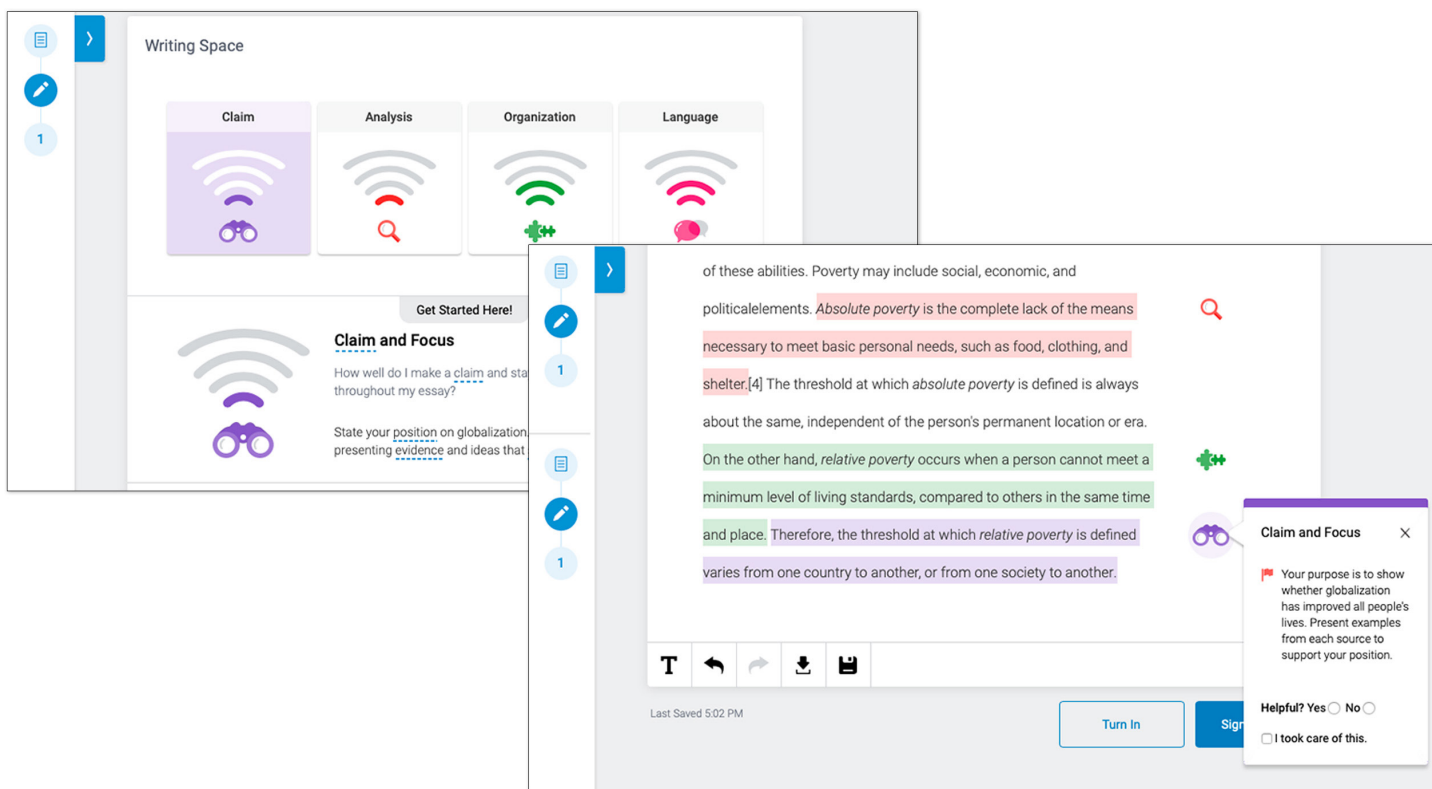
Formal Writing Assessments

At the end of each unit, we ask students to engage in a formal writing activity resulting in an essay. The assessments are often in the form of document-based questions (DBQs). Some are called Investigations, which are often longer than a traditional DBQ, and there are also open-ended long-essay questions (LEQs).

All document-based assessments ask students to analyze and read documents related to the essay prompt. Each writing assessment takes about two days to complete. There is usually one day devoted to document analysis or research and a second day dedicated to writing.

Score

While most people can agree that having students write more will help them become better writers, one big challenge for teachers is all the grading that comes along with more writing. This is why we created Score, a service that provides immediate feedback on student writing for various formal writing assessments in the course. This feedback is NOT intended to replace that of teachers. It is a formative tool that helps students improve the drafts and final submissions you do see. The nature of the service has allowed many teachers to spend more time understanding exactly where their students could use instruction to help improve their writing. This service is entirely free. Score uses Revision Assistant, a product from Turnitin. Please see the OER Project Score Guide for more information about Score.

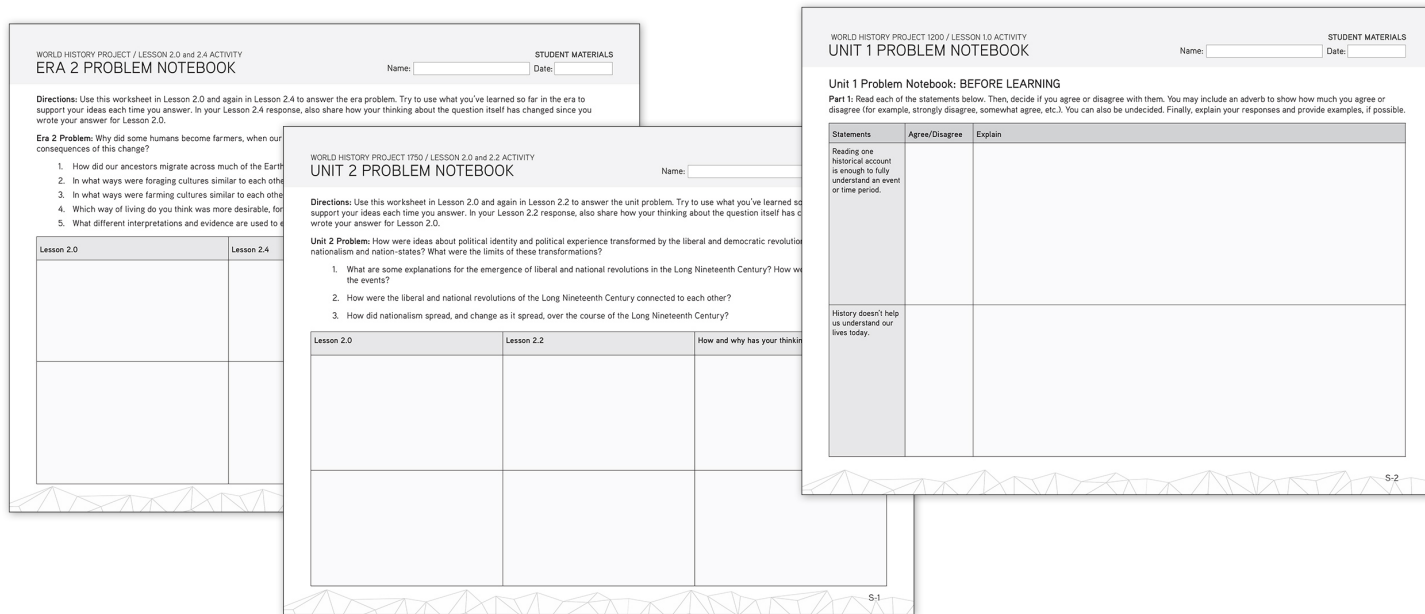


The screenshot displays the 'Writing Space' interface. On the left, a sidebar shows four categories: Claim, Analysis, Organization, and Language, each with a signal strength icon. Below these is a 'Get Started Here!' section with a 'Claim and Focus' prompt: 'How well do I make a claim and state my position throughout my essay?'. The main writing area shows a paragraph of text with various feedback annotations. A 'Claim and Focus' pop-up box on the right provides specific feedback: 'Your purpose is to show whether globalization has improved all people's lives. Present examples from each source to support your position.' The interface also includes a 'Turn In' button and a 'Sign' button.

Sample Score essay feedback

Informal Writing

We feel it's important for students to have the opportunity to engage frequently in informal writing. The emphasis here is for students to gain comfort with writing as they think about concepts and what they've learned, rather than being explicitly focused on formal writing techniques. While there are many options for informal writing throughout the course, we have built in structured opportunities in our DQ/EP/UP Notebooks. In these activities, students visit and revisit the main problems of each unit throughout the course. In BHP, these problems are called Driving Question (DQs); in WHP Origins, they are Era Problems (EPs); and in WHP 1750 and WHP 1200, they are called Unit Problems (UPs).



The image displays three overlapping worksheet templates. The top-left template is titled 'WORLD HISTORY PROJECT / LESSON 2.0 and 2.4 ACTIVITY ERA 2 PROBLEM NOTEBOOK'. It includes a 'STUDENT MATERIALS' header with fields for 'Name' and 'Date'. The main text provides directions for using the worksheet in Lesson 2.0 and Lesson 2.4 to answer an era problem. Below the text is a table with two columns: 'Lesson 2.0' and 'Lesson 2.4'. The bottom-left template is titled 'WORLD HISTORY PROJECT 1790 / LESSON 2.0 and 2.2 ACTIVITY UNIT 2 PROBLEM NOTEBOOK'. It also has a 'STUDENT MATERIALS' header with 'Name' and 'Date' fields. The main text provides directions for using the worksheet in Lesson 2.0 and Lesson 2.2 to answer a unit problem. Below the text is a table with three columns: 'Lesson 2.0', 'Lesson 2.2', and 'How and why has your thinking changed?'. The rightmost template is titled 'WORLD HISTORY PROJECT 1200 / LESSON 1.0 ACTIVITY UNIT 1 PROBLEM NOTEBOOK'. It has a 'STUDENT MATERIALS' header with 'Name' and 'Date' fields. The main text provides directions for using the worksheet in Lesson 1.0 to answer a unit problem. Below the text is a table with three columns: 'Statements', 'Agree/Disagree', and 'Explain'. The table contains two rows of statements for evaluation. The bottom-right corner of the rightmost template is labeled 'S-2'.

Examples of Era and Unit Problem worksheets

The aim of this activity, which appears twice in every unit, is to keep students and teachers connected to the core themes of the course. Additionally, this exercise helps both you and your students assess how their thinking is progressing, where they're gaining mastery, and where they might need additional instruction. While it may seem that your students don't have enough context to respond to the prompts and questions at the beginning of each unit, you can use them as an informal baseline assessment to help gauge what students already know about the upcoming ideas and concepts of the unit or era. Learning scientists called this "activating prior knowledge." Students create a mental model that later allows them to organize the ideas and correct misconceptions they brought into the course, as well as expand on their initial understanding.

OER Project Discussion Guide

One goal of the OER Project courses is to help students communicate and collaborate effectively. We want students not only to think and write like historians, but to talk like historians as well. This involves using key terms in discussion, and knowing how to respectfully disagree and challenge statements. Start with structured discussions at the beginning of the school year, and soon your students will learn to engage in thoughtful, civil, and meaningful discourse without prompting from you.

Goals for Discussion

- Support the development of academic language
- Press for justification and reasoning (that is, use claim testing in discussion)
- Promote rich and engaging discourse

How to Meet These Goals

We don't advise doing all of these things at once. Rather, practice each of the main goals and establish norms around those goals and then add the next goal to your list. Keep in mind that the faster you and your class can master this type of accountable talk the better, but it is more important to do it right than to do it quickly. Finally, the development of rich classroom discourse is a joint effort between you and your students. Make sure to impress upon your students that

getting everyone comfortable with historical and scientific argumentation is a shared responsibility—it isn't easy for anyone, including teachers, to always engage in this way.

Goal 1: Support the development of academic language

No matter what your students' level of literacy and vocabulary understanding, the more you use academic language in the classroom, including glossary terms and key course terms, the more they will understand and use these words.

Start by explaining what academic language is to your students. Ask them: How do scientists talk? How do historians talk? How does this compare to everyday language? Remind them that in this class you are all going to communicate like historians. Keep a word wall in the classroom. Add key terms to this wall throughout the year. Point each other to the word wall when academic language could be used in place of everyday talk.

Point out examples of academic language in both course readings and online videos. Have students annotate text to point out what language is academic and what is not. Or, while watching a video, have students note when a speaker is or isn't using academic language.

Goal 2: Press for justification and/or reasoning (in other words, use claim testing)

The OER Project courses focus on the importance of testing claims, and backing up conclusions or assertions. In using academic discourse in the classroom, we are forced to think about and use the concepts of authority, evidence, intuition, and logic. This holds us accountable for our assertions and moves beyond *what* something is and toward *why* something is the way that it is. There are many ways to ask students "why" questions, but if you can use a specific set of questions and prompts with your students, it's easier to establish norms around these conventions.

We suggest you present the following list of questions to your students (and post these permanently in the room). You might even discuss how each question connects to one of the claim testers, and then have the students ask you and each other these questions until they are part of everyday discourse.

- Does your answer seem reasonable? Why or why not?
- Would you describe your method and explain why it works?
- How would you prove that? What can you say or show that would convince us your conclusions make sense?
- Do you agree with what you've just seen and heard? Why or why not?
- Do you have a reason why you don't agree?
- Did anyone else draw the same conclusion but have a different way to explain it?
- Can you convince the rest of us your answer makes sense?

Goal 3: Promote rich and engaging discourse

We hope that we've created lessons and activities in our offerings that support rich and engaging discourse. To foster discussion, it's important to create a classroom climate in which students feel comfortable sharing their thinking, and also graciously giving and receiving constructive feedback. It's also important to create an atmosphere where students have equal opportunity to share their thinking. Not all students are comfortable with whole-class discussion, so it's important that while you are working on this type of discourse, you provide a variety of venues for participation. Some possibilities:

1. Turn and talk

Students turn and talk to the person next to them about the topic at hand. We encourage you to have students physically turn to one another in these types of discussion. Body orientation and eye contact matter for engaged discussion.

2. Think, pair, share

Similar to turn and talk, but allows students time to reflect on a topic or question before talking to a partner, and allows them to validate ideas with someone else before sharing with the entire class. This process often works well for students who like to have more time to formulate their thoughts before presenting to the class. Research suggests that it's a good idea for students to write down their initial thoughts as part of the "think" portion of the activity. Students can also share their partner's ideas, which encourages effective listening and communication during the "pair" portion.

3. Role assignment

Students are assigned a position to represent. For example, each student might be assigned one of the pressing-for-justification questions and they are then responsible for using those questions to ensure accountable talk is taking place. Or, each student takes on the role of one of the claim testers and uses authority, evidence, intuition, or logic.

OER Project Vocab Guide

Vocabulary is vital to supporting the work students do in our courses. While it may seem simple or elementary, without a solid grasp of vocabulary, we create a barrier for students in terms of accessing, understanding, and applying what they need to do the work of a historian. A routine focus on vocabulary is a small practice that will go a very long way.

But how do we teach vocabulary in a way that makes it memorable and useful? Well, vocabulary has to be more than just a list of words students memorize and bemoan. These words represent big (and sometimes medium-sized) concepts critical to the unit, to the lesson, and to the individual readings and videos. And, it turns out, just memorizing the definition doesn't always help students understand what a word means. To really understand—and be able to use—a word, you need to see the word in a variety of contexts.

Also, it's not just about ensuring your students are learning the words. It's about you—and your students—identifying which words they *should* learn. As a starting point, the OER Project has reviewed all course assets and identified words within each that are vital to understanding the content, and that might also be unfamiliar to a lot of students. However, this approach won't meet the needs of every student. As with everything we do, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Regardless of what's in the course glossary, the words your students are familiar with will change from student to student, class to class, and year to year. And there is no way you can track all of this, so, perhaps more than anything in the course, students have to take some responsibility for their own vocab needs.

Given these varying needs, we address vocabulary in three ways in the course. The first way, Word Wall, addresses the disciplinary vocabulary that we think all students using our courses will need, depending upon where they are in the course. The second, Vocab Tracker, is the most personalized approach to vocabulary, where students really have to take charge of their learning. The last way is focused on applying new vocabulary. We encourage you to use all of the activities listed below, and to add your own vocabulary practices. Ideally, focus on what works best for your students, keeping in mind the individual needs of each.

Word Wall

Word Walls are the broadest, and in some ways, the most generic approach to learning vocabulary in our course. These activities, found in the first lesson in each unit, focus on the words we have identified that we feel most students will need to learn to successfully engage in the content. We make a variety of suggestions about how to create and work with Word Walls and hope that classrooms build on these throughout each unit. The lists we provide are suggestions—feel free to use different words!

WORLD HISTORY PROJECT / LESSON 1.0 ACTIVITY

VOCAB – WORD WALL

STUDENT MATERIALS

Preparation

- Download the Era 1 Glossary

Purpose

Vocabulary has to be more than just a list of words to memorize and groan about. These words represent big (and sometimes medium-sized) concepts critical to the era. And, it turns out, just memorizing the definition doesn't necessarily help you understand what the word means. To really get the meaning of each word, you need to see it in a variety of contexts. In this era, as in each era in the course, there are three types of vocab activities. Early in each era, there's a word wall (such as the one here), which will help you become familiar with the words for that era. Later in each era, there's a second activity that's a deeper exploration of some of those words. In this era, for example, that second activity is live concept mapping. Finally, every era includes a vocab tracking activity, where you can keep a personalized list of words that are new to you.

Practices

Reading, writing

This activity is focused on helping you learn course vocabulary, which is one way to ensure you're able to fully engage with the WHP course content. This is especially true for the readings in the course. If you don't understand the words you're reading, you won't be able to glean the main ideas of texts, and therefore may miss out on important aspects of the topic you're studying. Additionally, as you build up your vocabulary, you will become an even better writer.

Process

In this activity, you'll work with your class to create a word wall using the Era 1 vocabulary. You're going to do this throughout the era by adding one word at a time so you don't get overwhelmed with a big list of new words all at once.

Your teacher will assign a vocab card to each of you. Once you get yours, pretend that you have the MOST important word to help you understand Era 1, and prepare to argue why that is. Look at your vocab word and take a few minutes to look it up in the Era 1 Vocab Guide and then examine the era itself. Click around and quickly skim the content to see where in the era your word might be most applicable. Once you've done your research, get ready to argue for why your word is the "best" one to start with. After everyone has given a pitch on their word, you'll all decide which word should make it onto the wall first.

Your teacher may add some fun twists to this assignment, so be sure to listen closely for directions!

WORLD HISTORY PROJECT / LESSON 1.0 ACTIVITY

VOCAB – WORD WALL

STUDENT MATERIALS

Name: _____ Date: _____

Word/Phrase (part of speech) word forms – plural/tenses	Definition (in your own words)	Synonyms	Antonyms	Use in a sentence
Adapt (v.) adapting, adapts, adaptations, adaptor, adapter, adaptable, adaptation, misadaptation, adaptive, adapted, adaptability	Make (something) suitable for a new use or purpose; modify.	Modify, alter, change, adjust; convert, transform.	Conform, misfit, misapply; misadjust, stay.	Any life form must adapt to and interact with its physical environment.

Vocab - Word Wall

Vocab Tracker

Whereas the Word Wall provide a universal approach to vocab, the vocab tracker is much more a personalized, attending to individual student's needs to offer differentiation. It is meant to be used daily and throughout the course. The vocab tracker is a graphic organizer that provides a place for students to keep their own personal vocabulary list. These lists may include everyday words or disciplinary words. They will likely include Word Wall words. We refer to the vocab trackers in our Three Close Reads process to encourage them to engage in vocabulary practices while reading. Early in the course, it may be important to carve out class time for individual vocab tracking. Getting students into the habit of identifying and learning what they don't know will help them more successfully engage with the content, and it is also a good practice for them to engage in all their classes, not just social studies. You can find the tracker in every unit as well as in Teacher Resources.

WORLD HISTORY PROJECT / LESSON 1.0 ACTIVITY

VOCAB – TRACKING

STUDENT MATERIALS

Purpose

As you know, there is a glossary of words for this course that all students need to know to be able to take part in the course. However, there are a lot of words in the course, so it's highly likely you're going to come across a bunch of words you don't know that are not in the glossary. This repeated activity will help you become more familiar with a process for how to independently learn the meaning of new words.

Process

Throughout the course, you'll very likely encounter new and unfamiliar words. Some of these words will be addressed as part of the whole class vocabulary activities; however, many more of those words will not. Take out the Vocab Tracker and follow your teacher's directions about how to look up that word. Any time you encounter a word you don't know in the course, add it to this tracker! By the end of the year, your personal lesson will be huge, you'll be a better writer, and you'll very likely be better prepared for standardized tests.

WORLD HISTORY PROJECT / LESSON 1.0 ACTIVITY

VOCAB – TRACKING

STUDENT MATERIALS

Name: _____ Date: _____

Word/Phrase (part of speech) word forms – plural/tenses	Definition (in your own words)	Synonyms	Antonyms	Use in a sentence
Adapt (v.) adapting, adapts, adaptations, adaptor, adapter, adaptable, adaptation, misadaptation, adaptive, adapted, adaptability	Make (something) suitable for a new use or purpose; modify.	Modify, alter, change, adjust; convert, transform.	Conform, misfit, misapply; misadjust, stay.	Any life form must adapt to and interact with its physical environment.

Vocab - Tracking

Fun Activity

We've already mentioned that vocab should not just be a list of words to bemoan and memorize. So, we've tried to include some fun activities for learning and applying vocab. This is not your run-of-the mill Sesame Street type fun (although there is nothing wrong with *C Is for Cookie*)—we hope this kind of fun helps engage students with vocabulary. Towards the end of the first five units of each course, we have included a vocab activity that is typically more creative and active than the word walls or vocab trackers. These activities often use unit level words, but you can adjust as you see fit for your students, especially if you want to include words from vocab trackers. While we don't have fun vocab everywhere, the activities can really be used anywhere in the course. These activities include live concept mapping, word wheel, word relay, word sneak, and the What's My Word? activity. As you come up with other fun ways to help your students learn and apply vocabulary, please share those methods with other OER Project teachers in our community.

WORLD HISTORY PROJECT 1200 / LESSON 4.2 ACTIVITY
TEACHER MATERIALS

VOCAB – WORD SNEAK

Preparation

- Download the Unit 4 Vocab Guide
- Create vocab cards for your students, making sure there are enough for each student to have four (you can repeat words as needed).

Purpose

In this vocab activity, students are given a stack of vocab words to "sneak" into a conversation with a fellow classmate. This is probably the most difficult—and perhaps silliest—of all the vocab activities. Students have to incorporate Unit 4 vocabulary as seamlessly as possible into a conversation. Although difficult, this is one of the best ways to use and apply new vocabulary—in context.

Process

Ask your students if they've ever seen the "word sneak" game on Jimmy Fallon. If not, and you feel it's appropriate, you can [show them this clip](#) which models how the game works. Otherwise, you can kick off the activity by telling them you're going to play the word sneak game. The idea is that students are given a stack of about four vocab cards, and asked to have a casual conversation with a classmate. Their job is to use their vocab words as part of that conversation, sneaking them in wherever appropriate.

Here are the steps:

- Give each student in the class four vocab cards.
- Partner them with someone else in the class. Tell them not to share their words with their partner.
- Have them engage in a five-minute conversation, and see how many words they can sneak into the conversation while they are chatting. There are two things they need to know for their conversation:
 - They have to integrate their words in a legitimate way that makes sense.
 - They may need to steer the conversation in a different direction as a way to get to their words. One good way to do this is by asking their partner questions.
- Have students debrief their conversations with the class at the end of the activity.

Here are some optional ways to change up this activity. Choose whichever ones work best for your students.

- If any student pairs are willing, have them model this process in front of the class, fish-bowl style.
- Some students might need an initial prompt to get the conversation going. The Unit Problem could work well for this, or perhaps use a current event or other topic from the unit.
- Instead of one conversation to cover all the cards, you could have students engage in lightning rounds, just sneaking in one or two words per conversation. One simple way to do this is to have students create two circles: half the class is the inner circle; half is the outer circle. Students in the inner circle stand facing out, while those in the outer circle stand facing in. After each round, the inner circle can rotate one student to the right, changing up their partner for each round.

Word Sneak fun activity

OER Project Assessment Guide

The OER Project values a comprehensive approach to assessment. We embed assessment throughout the course; every activity is developed for students and teachers to gain insight into their understanding. The course gives teachers many opportunities to review student work both formally and informally, and find opportunities for improvement and enrichment. However, all assessments are optional and to be used at the teacher's discretion. More details about specific ways to use certain types of assets in the course for assessment are detailed later in this section.

We provide a lot of assessment opportunities so that student understanding and mastery can be evaluated in different ways. It's important to provide students with multiple pathways to success, and it's hard to do this if you only offer one kind of assessment. If you don't use varied methods to assess student understanding you may only assess a sliver of what your students know and are able to do. For example, lots of studies have shown that multiple-choice tests are really good at assessing student's test-taking skills, but not what they know about the content. But we know that asking a teacher to assess students in a bunch of different ways is a lot to ask...so we have tried to offer varied assessments to ease that burden.

We encourage the use of formative assessment (or, as we find it helpful to think about it, informative assessment—assessment that informs). Instead of making every quiz, test, or paper a one-shot opportunity—à la summative assessments—giving students the chance to revisit and revise their work is one of the best ways for students to learn. That’s why students can take our multiple-choice practice questions over and over again, and that’s why we offer answer rationales, so students understand why an answer is or is not correct. Practice questions are not about scoring 100%—they’re about learning content.

The importance of assessment goes far beyond the teacher: If a student does not have insight into assessment processes and outcomes, the results are only providing the teacher with information about how to change instruction. Students should also monitor their own learning, strengths and weaknesses, and course expectations. Throughout the course, students should reflect on their own work and learn to provide constructive feedback on the work of peers. We encourage this type of reflection through student use of rubrics and peer review, in addition to the daily assessment that comes through using the OER Project approach to discussion.

One thing we do not provide is guidance about how to grade students. The bottom line is we want to leave it up to you. There are too many factors related to local context, your school, and your students that we don’t know about and cannot anticipate. It wouldn’t be fair or reasonable to suggest how you should go about assigning grades. We realize it’s awfully tempting to directly convert Score results into a grade, or use the multiple-choice practice questions as a percentage in the gradebook—but we urge you to think about YOUR overall assessment approach in the course and decide how YOU want to grade rather than defaulting to some of those simpler options. Additionally, we don’t expect you to use every asset in the course, so if we provide you with a particular grading framework, we’re also making instructional decisions for you by asking you to use the assets we deem worthy for your students. **You know your students best** and are without doubt in the best position to assess them fairly.

Rubrics and Tools

We stress the use of rubrics throughout the course. We have a consistent set of rubrics to grade student writing and presentations. We also provide a standardized set of “thinking tools” to help students understand the goals and targets of each activity. We provide a standardized set of resources for a few reasons. First, consistent standards and goals give students a clear understanding of how to meet the expectations and be successful in the course. This helps them understand the elements of an assignment and what’s expected of them. Additionally, using the same rubrics and tools throughout the course helps students track their own improvement, helping them to be metacognitive about their own learning. Assessment outcomes should not just be used for driving instructional decisions, but for helping students to take ownership of their own learning. This is especially true in OER Project courses where we are asking you, the teacher, to take on the role of lead learner. This lead-learner role gives students a lot of agency and power, but it also means they have to take ownership of their own learning, and that includes assessing their own understanding.

Closings

Most lessons in the OER Project curriculum close with an assessment activity. These come in many forms and may include quick activities such as a class vote or an exit card, a small group or whole class discussion, or a peer review. They may also be more formal assessments, often in the form of a final paper or project.

For the most part, the assessment activities are intended to serve as formative assessments, so that both you and your students can regularly monitor their understanding of the concepts in the course. Depending upon how your students respond and perform in these various activities, you may choose to reinforce certain concepts as needed.

Writing Assessments

Throughout the course there are formal writing assessments in the form of formal research papers, and document-based writing. Writing assignments are one of the most important activities in OER Project courses. Not only do students improve their general writing, a skill that is of paramount importance, but they also learn how to write historical and scientific papers. As part of these assessments, students learn to ask important questions, hypothesize, conduct research, synthesize

information, and justify their claims. In assessing student writing, you will not only get a sense of how your students are developing these vital skills, but you will also be able to gauge their understanding of the course material at a deeper level. In addition, when students peer review others' writing in the course, they will gain an even deeper understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses.

Practice Questions

At the end of each lesson you will find practice question sets. These questions were written following extensive guidelines—developed with Khan Academy—to create questions that effectively and fairly assess student knowledge by keeping learning outcomes and key vocabulary as the focus. One thing to keep in mind with these practice questions is that in many cases, they are better used as a class exercise than a typical assessment. The answers are not difficult to find—students could create a teacher account on the OER Project website and get all the answers they need. Rather than using practice questions as a typical assessment, try using them as a group activity. You will get a great sense of what your students have learned, what they're struggling with, and what kinds of practices they need to improve upon. They're great for homework, studying, small group, and whole-class activities.

OER Project Differentiation Guide

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to education, and it's rare to have a classroom of students who all need the same thing. Some students need more support, some students need to advance more quickly, and some require specific mandated accommodations. We try to consider a wide range of learners when creating curricular materials, and we provide a variety of differentiation opportunities to support and engage learners with different needs. While we do have suggestions for differentiating OER Project materials, we are not SPED or ELL experts. We recommend you contact those specialists in your school so that you can tailor instruction to meet the needs of those students according to their IEP or other individualized learning plan.

Because most of the materials in our courses are articles, videos, and activities, we have focused on student differentiation and support within those three general buckets.

Article Support

All of our articles have been leveled, or Lexiled, by Newsela, an organization that provides nonfiction news articles at varying reading levels. Newsela's editors helped us create three or four versions of each article, ensuring that students at all reading levels have access. While those readings at a lower Lexile level may not have as much detail as those at higher levels, enough is retained for all students to participate in work or classroom discussions about each topic. For each article, we also provide a set of questions that follows our Three Close Reads approach, helping to structure a student's reading experience. These questions are helpful for supporting students as they learn to decode and comprehend articles. An additional way to scaffold for struggling readers is to provide them with sample answers (provided in the teacher view of the course website) and ask them to find the supporting information in the texts. For advanced readers, we suggest you give them the highest Lexile level texts, and make sure they are responding thoroughly to the questions provided for the third close read—those are the most difficult.



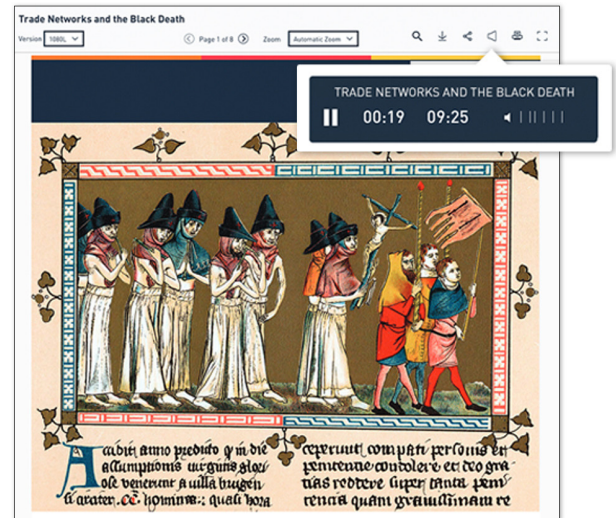
Example of a leveled article

We provide audio versions of all our readings. All audio versions are provided at the highest Lexile level because research shows that students can often access ideas aurally that they may not be able to access by reading. See our [blog post](#) on best practices for using audio to learn more about audio retention and classroom management related to use of this feature.

Video Support

There are a few different ways to support the use of video in your classroom for a variety of learners. Some of these are built into our platform, and some are instructional suggestions. In terms of built-in features, there is a Pause At Key Ideas button for each video in the course. If you check this box, the video will automatically stop at the main ideas in the video, or at those concepts that we think students need to understand and retain from each video. Key ideas are identified as red timestamps along the video track so you or your students can easily go back and review these sections, if needed. When the video gets to one of these points, it pauses, and a key question appears below the video for your students to think about. These key ideas are identified below the video along with sample answers for easy teacher viewing. The other built in feature is closed captioning. Click the CC icon to turn it on and click again to disable it. Some teachers prefer to have these on all the time, so do what works best for your students!

We also provide full transcripts for each video. Many of our teachers like to download these and have students read them before watching the video. Some of our videos move fairly quickly, and this is a good way to prime students so they don't feel lost while viewing. To find these, click the download icon and select Download Transcript from the listed options.



Example of audio support

North American Empires in 1800

- Spain
- United States
- France
- Great Britain
- Russia
- Comanche

The Comanche were an indigenous nation

00:34 12:43

☐ PAUSE AT KEY IDEAS

Comanche Empire

Historians debate whether the Comanche were an empire. Maybe that's because Comanche society of most empires. Maybe it was because blind to the idea of empires created by exactly counts as an empire? Like the M. Empire was formed by nomadic pastoral raid, and fight, the Comanche Empire be supported a robust trading network.

Transcript

WORLD HISTORY PROJECT

00:01 ROBERT KEITH COLLINS: This is a map of North America around 1800. According to some historians, this map is a fiction. Why? Because it leaves out what has been described as the Comanche Empire. The Comanche were an indigenous nation and they exerted a lot of power in the center of the continent. They had a massive economic influence in the land described as Comancheria, controlling border markets and long-distance trade.

00:44 But was the Comanche Empire actually an empire? It did have some imperial characteristics, like power over a large territory, hierarchies between the core and periphery, areas where resources were extracted, cultural domination, and assimilation of multiple ethnic groups. But it didn't have other ingredients common to empires, like firm geographical boundaries, a central political authority, a unifying belief system, or a large subjugated population. And they didn't build huge monuments.

01:24 The thing is, these ideas about what makes something an empire are loaded with assumptions. Our own checklists can underestimate the diversity and innovation of human societies—including those that don't build their empires in stone. It may sound like a contradiction, but empires can be built by people on the move. Historically, there are plenty of examples. From the plains of Central Asia, to the West African Sahel, and in North America, pastoral and nomadic people have indeed built empires.

02:04 One of the most well-known was the Mongol Empire, created by pastoralists in the 13th century. And just like the Mongol Empire, the Comanche Empire was made up of nomadic, independent bands.

02:52 Today, one thing most people know about the Comanche is that they could ride horses better than anyone. Known as Numunuu or "The People" in their language, the Comanche changed from hunters, gatherers, and small farmers to masters of horse husbandry and bison hunting between 1600 and 1725. It was their advanced horsemanship that earned the Comanche the nickname "Horse Lords of the Plains."

This story also tells us how community, trade networks, and economics enabled this great nation to dominate the Southern Plains in the land that became the United States. Yes, the Comanche were great horse riders, but there is so much more to understand about their history. Their society can challenge our perception of what makes an empire, and overturn some of our ingrained misunderstandings about indigenous Americans of the Southern Plains.

So, the Comanche lived in this area, though most maps don't give you a sense of their presence. Their community wasn't always in the Southern Plains. According to a Comanche medicine woman named Sanjia, there was a large indigenous community that lived in what is now Wyoming, and they ultimately split into two groups: the Comanche and Shoshone. The Comanche migrated south and east and set up new communities. What did Comanche communities look like?

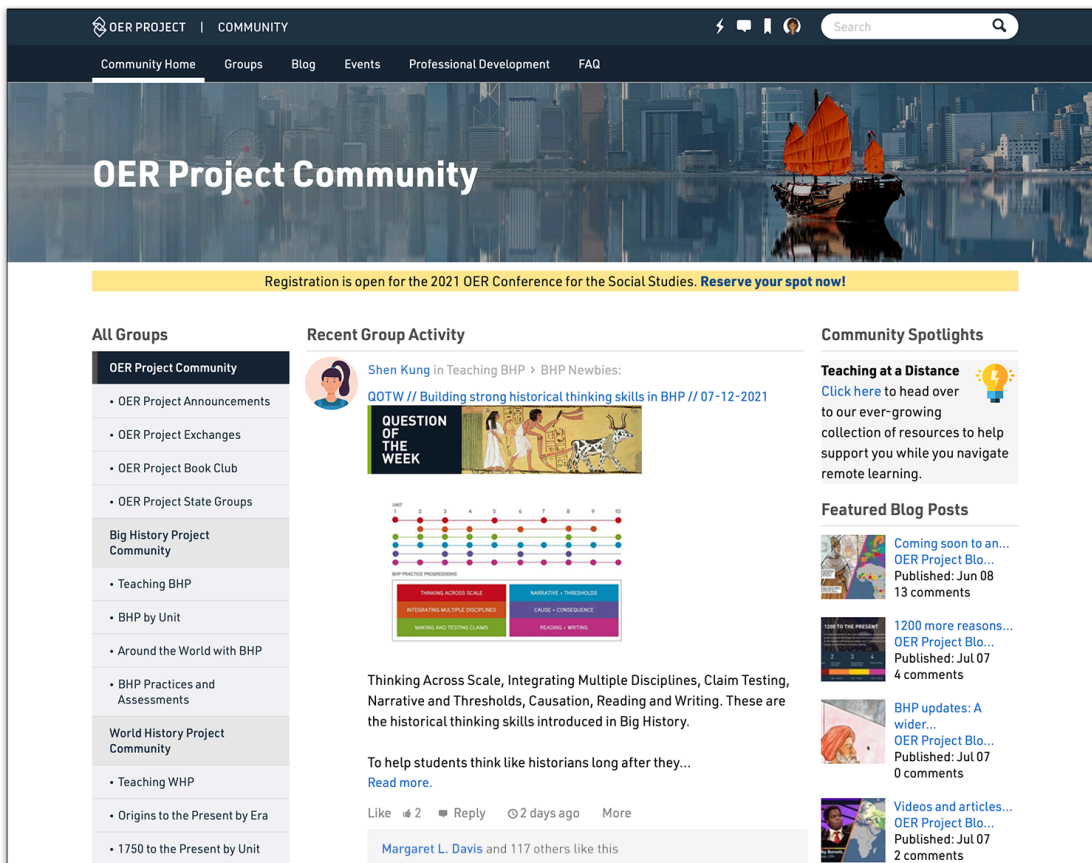
Example of video support

Progression Activity Support

All progression activities include a tool to help support students as they learn new skills and move through the progression. However, the activities themselves suggest a release of scaffolding, or support, from the start to the finish. The idea is that by the end of the course, students will have internalized the practices and won't need the tools. However, this isn't always realistic. We recommend that you keep an eye on how students are doing using each tool and practice, and only release these supports when they are ready. This may mean continuing to model the use of tools during whole-class instruction or having students work in small groups or pairs until they are prepared for more independent work. Another way to scaffold progression work is to provide students with partially filled out tools, using the provided sample answers in the teacher materials for the activity, as they dig into these skills. For more advanced students, you may introduce them to the tools early and then take them away sooner than the progressions suggest.

Community

Our courses are driven by an engaged group of educators. We have a rich and active OER Project Online Teacher Community that we believe really defines and embodies who we are as a group. We are constantly in awe of our teachers and how they use this space to ask and answer hard questions, share experiences, and demonstrate vulnerability. It's a space to reflect on both wins and losses in your classroom, lesson ideas, new research, and more. It is truly an endless wealth of information. If you pose a question to your fellow community members, we'll bet you next week's lunch money that you'll have an answer the next time you log into the community platform (and probably even sooner!).



The screenshot shows the OER Project Community homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links to Community Home, Groups, Blog, Events, Professional Development, and FAQ. A search bar is also present. The main header features the text "OER Project Community" over a background image of a city skyline with a traditional Chinese boat. Below the header, a yellow banner announces that registration is open for the 2021 OER Conference for the Social Studies, with a link to "Reserve your spot now!".

The page is divided into three main sections:

- All Groups:** A list of groups including OER Project Community (with sub-links for announcements, exchanges, book club, state groups), Big History Project Community (with sub-links for Teaching BHP, BHP by Unit, Around the World with BHP), BHP Practices and Assessments, World History Project Community (with sub-links for Teaching WHP, Origins to the Present by Era, 1750 to the Present by Unit), and 1750 to the Present by Unit.
- Recent Group Activity:** A post by Shen Kung in Teaching BHP, titled "QOTW // Building strong historical thinking skills in BHP // 07-12-2021". It includes a "QUESTION OF THE WEEK" image and a diagram titled "BHP PRACTICES PROGRESSIONS" showing a timeline from 1750 to 2021 with various practices like Thinking Across Scale, Integrating Multiple Disciplines, Claim Testing, Narrative and Thresholds, Cause & Consequence, Reading & Writing, and Making and Testing Claims.
- Community Spotlights:** A section highlighting "Teaching at a Distance" with a link to a resource collection. Below this, "Featured Blog Posts" are listed, including "Coming soon to an... OER Project Blo...", "1200 more reasons... OER Project Blo...", "BHP updates: A wider... OER Project Blo...", and "Videos and articles... OER Project Blo...".

At the bottom of the activity post, there are options to Like, Reply, and a timestamp of 2 days ago. A comment by Margaret L. Davis is visible, stating "Margaret L. Davis and 117 others like this".

OER Project Community homepage

We draw much of our instructional content from the best practices shared by OER Project veteran teachers in the community. By contributing feedback and suggesting new ideas, current teachers play an immensely important role in the continual improvement of our courses.

The community is truly a space for everyone. We have groups for teachers new to our courses, groups for each of our courses, groups for each unit, groups for homeschoolers, the list goes on and on. Looking for something in particular? Use the search feature and you'll probably find more information about a topic, unit, activity, or article than you could have imagined. Wondering how to teach a new activity tomorrow? Ask, and you shall receive. And, in most cases, you won't simply receive ideas, you'll get ready-to-go lesson plans with thoughtful implementation suggestions to boot. It is truly a remarkable space.

In addition to the grassroots and emergent nature of the community, we also provide structured engagement opportunities for community members. For example, we host asynchronous exchanges with scholars outside of the community, who spend three days responding to teacher questions about specific topics within their expertise (want to know more about astrophysics? We have an expert for that!). We also have a weekly series, "Mentor Monday," where one of our veteran teachers shares a snapshot of a recent lesson they implemented, and answers questions from their fellow community members. Finally, we regularly publish OER Project blog posts that examine historical topics, instructional practices, or current events. These are written by OER Project staff, teachers, and friends of the OER Project.



Mentor Monday session with Rachel Hansen.

We cannot encourage you enough to join us and your fellow educators in the OER Project Online Teacher Community to share your ideas and help shape the courses. For frequently asked questions about how to navigate the community platform, please see our community FAQ. We look forward to connecting with you there!

Course Improvement and Evaluation Efforts

It is important that OER Project courses stay relevant and useful. Therefore, teacher feedback is incredibly valuable as we assess our courses and plan for updates. To gather this feedback, we engage in ongoing research and

evaluation efforts. The goal of these efforts is to help us answer the following questions:

1. What are the reactions of students and teachers to OER programs and materials?
2. What is the impact of the OER Project on student reading and writing abilities?
3. What can be done to improve the quality of the OER Project materials and program?

To provide insight into these questions, we ask teachers and students to complete a set of brief surveys as well as a series of short assessments. All data collected is stored anonymously, in accordance with the requirements of the IntegReview Institutional Review Board.

We collect a variety of data throughout the year based on our feedback needs for different projects and programs. Please watch out for short surveys that you might see on the website, in the online community, or linked in OER Project emails. We encourage you to take the short surveys included in Teaching Big/World History and the OER Project extensions. Most surveys are short and some offer a small incentive for your participation. Without this kind of feedback, it is difficult to make informed changes to our programs.

For both BHP and WHP we administer a writing assessment and start-of-year and end-of-year surveys to better understand student learning and teacher and student experiences with and perceptions of our courses. We will provide more information about specific deadlines through the website and via OER Project emails.

If you have any questions about the evaluation program or any other topic related to the OER Project, please contact us at help@oerproject.com.