

RESEARCHERS' WORKSHOP

Included in each Inquiry Guide is a Researchers' Workshop offering three options for extending the inquiry within the unit. Each option varies in the amount of teacher direction and student independence required. Whichever choice you make, you will find teaching support in the form of lesson plans, a Resource List, blackline masters, and links to the [Inquiry Mini-Lessons](#) in the online Inquiry Tools

Option 1: Independent Reading

Points of inquiry are sub-topics derived from the preliminary exploration of the general topic. For example, in the *Water Works!* inquiry unit, the general topic and framing question focus on clean water. Points of inquiry from this general topic may include water conservation, water pollution, and water usage. The points of inquiry help narrow the focus for research.

In this option, students follow the procedures and behaviours already established for Independent Reading. They choose “just right” texts to read independently, read for a sustained period of time, respond to the text, and meet with others to discuss what they have read. The only change you will need to make to your regular Independent Reading session is to provide a collection of resources based on the points of inquiry or the questions students have posed. As usual, the collection of reading materials should include both fiction and non-fiction texts. Ensure a wide range of readability in the materials so they are appropriate for the range of readers in the classroom. For specific titles pertinent to each inquiry unit, see the “Resource List” contained within the Researchers' Workshop section of each unit guide.

As students will be extending their understanding of the unit topic through inquiry-based reading, have students choose a question to answer and focus their text selection and research on answering their question.

During your literacy block, follow the lesson framework for Independent Reading which includes: Mini-Lesson, Text Talk, Reading Time, and Sharing and Reflection.

Process	
Mini-Lesson (5–10 min.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide mini-lessons designed to assist students in working productively during Independent Reading time.• Provide very specific instruction on reading strategies and skills.• Introduce a strategy or skill, give one or more clear examples of its use, and ask students to generate additional examples, remind students to apply the strategy/skill while reading independently.• Create a chart for student reference.• Refer students to the wonderings/questions on the class activating organizer or see the Reflection on Learning in each unit.• Help students to choose a question to answer through their reading.

Process	
Text Talk (3–5 min.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce one or two examples of the text in the classroom collection. • Provide a brief “commercial” for each text to pique students’ interest and awareness of materials in the collection.
Reading Time (20–30 min.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ample time for students to read independently, to record information gained about their topic/question, and respond to their text. • Instruct students to log the texts they are reading. • Confer with individual students or conduct guided reading groups.
Sharing and Reflection (5–10 min.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students meet with a partner to discuss what they are reading and what they have learned about their topic/question—meeting time builds accountability. • Hold a group sharing session at times to allow students to hear ideas and perspectives of others. • Provide time for students to complete the culminating task for the unit and to share their learning with others.

As indicated in the above framework, this option allows you to continue with guided reading groups while students are actively engaged in pursuing the inquiry topic.

Option 2: Whole-Class Inquiry

This option continues the guided inquiry model. During whole-class sessions, students will gain necessary skills and tools for self-initiated inquiries by being guided through the inquiry process. Often students don’t have the necessary background knowledge to pose their own questions or they lack understanding in identifying a question worthy of investigation so a large-group approach is helpful. The whole-group approach prepares students to work collaboratively, to listen and respond to each other, and to ask good questions. It gradually leads students to independent learning.

From the topics explored in the whole-group sessions in Part 1: Launching the Inquiry, students discuss the areas they would like to pursue in more depth and then come to an agreement on a topic of interest for a whole class inquiry. For example, during the *Water Works!* Inquiry unit, students may have become interested in water conservation methods and would like to delve deeper into this topic. Together, students would pose questions about water conservation methods and research and present their findings.

You will conduct a variety of mini-lessons to provide timely support to the whole class. The mini-lessons that you choose for each stage of the Inquiry Process are located in the online Inquiry Tools.

Inquiry Process

Choose a Good Question

- Ask the class, “What do you want to learn more deeply about?” Decide on a topic which falls under the umbrella of the “framing question.”
- Have students brainstorm questions for this topic.
- Conduct a mini-lesson for choosing a good question—one that is researchable.
- Discuss possible ways of gathering information.
- Promote the idea of a “community of learners” where each student contributes to the knowledge base of others and to the development and exchange of ideas.
- **Assessment Strategy:** contributions and participation in whole-group sessions

Investigate My Question

- Collect a variety of resources about the topic/question and share them with students. Ensure a wide range of readability in the materials so that all students can read something on the topic.
- Teach a mini-lesson, for example, on how to evaluate sources.
- Decide on a method to keep track of information (e.g., use a graphic organizer, write in Inquiry Notebooks).
- Provide ample time for students to locate resources and read information.
- **Assessment Strategy:** Assessment Strategy: observe students and examine work samples for note-taking skills

Analyze and Interpret My Findings

- Teach basic inquiry skills that help students interpret facts and organize ideas:
 - recall what has been read, heard, or observed and make connections to prior knowledge; noting what fits or contradicts present understanding
 - summarize by selecting important points, facts, and themes from information and putting the ideas in a meaningful order
 - paraphrase content in own words
 - extend information by making connections and by forming new understandings
- Have students read in pairs to support each other’s understanding of the texts.
- Divide class into Inquiry Circles (4 students in each group) to practice collaboration skills necessary for more independent inquiry.

Inquiry Process	
Analyze and Interpret My Findings <i>(continued)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model expectations and behaviours for involvement during Inquiry Circle conversations. • Assign roles to students in each group: Messenger, Quiz Kid, Connector, and Interpreter. The roles represent one aspect of inquiry that students need to practice. • Provide time for students to discuss the texts they have read during Inquiry Circles. • Assessment Strategy: participation in Inquiry Circles
Share My Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the culminating task for the unit. • Hold a discussion about various ways students could express their learning and answer the framing question. • Assist students in choosing one of the representations of their learning. You may want to narrow the choices or have all students complete a similar project, depending on whether students require modelling and direction for completing the task. • Provide an opportunity or event for students to share and celebrate their learning. • Assessment Strategy: creation of project and participation in sharing event
Reflect on My Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide strategies and tools for students to self-assess their participation in the inquiry unit. • Ask, “What have you learned? What was your greatest challenge? What would you do differently next time?” • Assessment Strategy: self-reflection activities

Option 3: Student-Led Inquiry

In this option, students make most of the decisions and work collaboratively with partners or in small groups on independent investigations. They select their own questions and co-operatively conduct research and share findings with others. Although inquiry is student-led, it is teacher supported and facilitated through direct instruction of mini-lessons, conferencing with groups and individuals, and monitoring of student progress.

The mini-lessons that you choose for each stage of the Inquiry Process are located in the online Inquiry Tools. Observe and assess students as they work through the inquiry process to provide timely support through mini-lessons for whole class or specific groups. You can also encourage students to request mini-lessons when they feel the need for specific help.

Inquiry Process

<p>Choose a Good Question</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiate points of inquiry with class so that the combined research from groups helps to answer the framing question. • Form Inquiry Groups based on students who are interested in each of the points of inquiry (4 or 5 students per group). • Ensure groups have a researchable question. • Post charts with students' questions as a reference. • Provide time for students to meet in groups to discuss their formative thinking. • Conduct mini-lessons to aid students in finding a researchable question. • Assessment Strategy: contributions to whole-group and small-group sessions.
<p>Investigate My Question</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect a variety of research materials including: books, videos, Websites, etc. for points of inquiry and display in the classroom. • Assist students/groups with choosing resources. • Confer with each group to ensure students have readable materials. • Dialogue with students about ways of learning more about the topic (e.g., talking with experts, fieldtrips, community events). • Help students to refine and adjust initial plans. • Teach mini-lessons to assist students in honing their inquiry focus and working collaboratively. • Assessment Strategy: participation with group and examine work samples
<p>Analyze and Interpret My Findings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confer with each group as to progress they are making with research. • Encourage sharing, participation, and co-operation with others. • Strategically teach mini-lessons that target students' needs with respect to describing patterns, analyzing information, and drawing conclusions from a variety of sources. • Assessment Strategy: participation in inquiry groups and examine work samples

Inquiry Process	
Share My Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the culminating task. • Hold a discussion about quality work in regards to the culminating task and set criteria with students. • Confer with each group and discuss how they are going to share their learning. • Help groups to find an audience for type of presentation, demonstration, or product. • Provide large blocks of time for students to complete the culminating task. • Create opportunities for students to celebrate their learning. • Assessment Strategy: project created and sharing of learning
Reflect on My Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief the process used in inquiry and ask what things students/groups would do differently next time. • Use strategies and tools for self-reflection and group reflection. • Hold a whole group session to list questions students now have about the topic and discuss how they differ from the questions at the beginning of the inquiry. • Discuss the importance of this learning to students' understanding of the world. • Assessment Strategy: reflection activities

Considerations for Providing Resources

Articles, Books, and Magazines:

Ensure that the material students have is accessible so they can comfortably access information independently. Select texts with detailed, pictures, photographs, and diagrams. You may want to create your own diagrams.

Provide articles from magazines, or adapted from the Internet. Paste them onto the front and back of poster board or on file folders.

Make sure you don't have too many books and magazines for students to research from. Be selective in the ones you provide. This will ensure students don't spend all their time with the selection process. It will give them more time to actually research and discover.

To make it easy for students to locate information, tab specific pages of books and magazines that contain important information. Students need to spend quality time researching, not trying to locate information.

If students from previous years have produced publications on the topic, save some of these publications to add to your list of resources.

Internet/Websites:

Internet research needs to be monitored to assure that relevant information is easy to locate. You may wish to create links in topic-labelled folders on your classroom computers to make it easy for students to access appropriate information.

Provide online sites that are kid friendly and easy to navigate. Narrow down the field of available Websites on the topic being explored. Adding the words “for children” when you type in the topic name, will help narrow down the field considerably. Bookmark Websites and any relevant video clips so that students are not overloaded with too many sites.

Pictures, Photographs, and other Visuals:

Collect and laminate a variety of visuals from magazines, books, and Websites for students to use.

Encourage students to discuss what they are viewing with each other. Be sure to check in with them from time to time to make sure their thinking has not gone astray

Audio:

Apart from the audio provided, making your own audio CD’s is a great way to assist students with their inquiry. Narrate and record sections of an article or book that might be too difficult for students to read independently. This is a good way to assure that students “discover” important information that will answer their wonderings.

You could also have students practise reading a specific text and then record them.

Have students listen to small parts of the audio, stop and talk, then ask themselves if what they are hearing is helping them with their inquiry. By breaking up the listening, students will become more discerning and not overwhelmed with large volumes of information in one session.

DVDs:

Bookmark video clips on the Web or locate commercially produced DVD’s that support the inquiry.

As with audio resources, have students view small portions of the DVD then stop and ask themselves if what they are seeing and hearing is helping them with their inquiry.