

Inquiry Blueprint

We the People: Expanding the Teaching of the US Founding

Compelling Question **How do we reckon with a history full of complexities and contradictions?**

Staging the Compelling Question

Students will be introduced to the themes of the compelling question by responding to a quote from James Baldwin (“American history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful, and more terrible than anything anyone has ever said about it”) to spark their initial thinking about the complexities and contradictions within United States history.

Supporting Question 1

What does the Declaration of Independence state about the nation’s founding ideals?

Formative Task

Students will complete a Sketch to Stretch activity to illustrate the nation’s founding ideals.

Featured Sources

Reading: [The Declaration of Independence Excerpt](#)

Handout: [The Ideals of the Declaration Graphic Organizer](#)

Supporting Question 2

What contradictions existed between the ideals and the reality of the founding of the United States?

Formative Task

Students will hold a silent discussion using the Graffiti Boards teaching strategy to explore the contradictions that existed between the ideals and the reality of the founding of the United States.

Featured Sources

Video: [The Revolutions: The Future of America’s Past](#) (0:50–8:00)

Video: [The Invasion of America](#)

Video: [“The Story We Tell,” from the film Race: The Power of an Illusion](#) (0:43–5:34)

Readings: [An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man, 1833 \(Unabridged | Abridged | Heavily Abridged\)](#)

Supporting Question 3

How did groups excluded from power at the time of the founding use the language of the founding ideals to assert their own rights?

Formative Task

Students will create a found poem using primary sources to illustrate the nation’s founding ideals as expressed by individuals excluded from certain rights and freedoms during the founding era.

Featured Sources

Reading: [Petition for Freedom to the Massachusetts Legislature, 1777](#)

Reading: [“On the Equality of the Sexes” by Judith Sargent Murray, 1790](#)

Reading: [Quote from Rosemary Bray](#)

Reading: [Creating a Found Poem Handout: “Absconded from the Household of the President of the United States”](#)

Supporting Question 4

How should we remember the nation’s founding?

Formative Task

Students will use the Stories thinking routine to discuss how we should remember the nation’s founding.

Featured Sources

Image: [Portrait of George Washington on the Dollar Bill](#)

Image: [“Absconded from the Household of the President of the United States” \(2016\) by Titus Kaphar](#)

Handout: [Image Analysis Procedure](#)

Reading: [Quote from Titus Kaphar](#)

Reading: [Quote from Sophia Rosenfeld](#)

<p>Summative Assessment</p>	<p>ARGUMENT “How do we reckon with a history full of complexities and contradictions?” In a format of your choice (e.g., digital presentation, poster, paragraph), discuss the complexities and contradictions in the history of the founding of the United States and how we should remember and respond to those complexities and contradictions today.</p>
<p>Taking Informed Action</p>	<p>UNDERSTAND Accomplished through the supporting questions and formative tasks.</p> <p>ASSESS Building on the ideas explored in supporting question 3, identify someone who is not typically regarded as a founder of the United States, but who nonetheless made important contributions to democratic ideals such as self-determination, freedom, and human rights. The following is a list of suggested historical figures to consider, but you may pick a figure who is not on this list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Apess • Pontiac • Mary (Molly) Brant • Abigail Adams • Judith Sargent Murray • Phillis Wheatley • Benjamin Banneker • Ona Judge <p>Once you’ve chosen a figure, research answers to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why should this individual be remembered as an important historical figure in US history? What contributions did they make? What struggles or opposition did they face? • How did this person contribute to democratic ideals such as self-determination, freedom, and human rights? What tools or lessons have they left for those who wish to achieve democracy more fully today? <p>ACT In a medium of your choice (e.g., spoken word poem, blog/social media post, school exhibition, mural, performance), communicate your conclusions about your selected figure to a broader audience.</p>