

The Choices Program—Brown University

Alignment with Common Core

For more than 25 years, Choices curriculum units have helped students develop the competencies now required in the Common Core Standards. Our materials stress critical thinking, multiple perspectives, and textual analysis. Choices materials address each of the History/Social Studies Standards. In addition, they are an excellent way for social studies teachers to work with ELA educators on Speaking and Listening Standards and Writing Standards. Our resources include texts, videos, lesson plans, and other support materials and are available in print and digital formats. The Choices Program offers two kinds of curriculum units—those focused on a current issue and those focused on an historical turning point. Units in both categories teach history and have relevance for the present.

Current Issues Units

Using units from the [Choices Current Issues Series](#), students typically complete 3-6 lessons and then participate in a role play in which they analyze multiple perspectives on a current international issue. During the role play, students work individually and in small groups to prepare and give a persuasive presentation advocating for one assigned policy option. Students discuss the merits and trade-offs of each option after it is presented. Following the options role play, students participate in a deliberative discussion focused on how they each think about the issue. The unit culminates in an activity in which they articulate their own views on the issue.



China on the World Stage: Weighing the U.S. Response

Lessons found in *China on the World Stage: Weighing the U.S. Response* provide an excellent example of how lessons in our Current Issues Series match with Common Core Standards. While many standards are addressed in each lesson in this unit, what follows is a list of the key standards addressed in each lesson.

The History of U.S.-China Relations Through Primary Sources

In this introductory lesson students analyze the attitudes and perceptions that framed U.S.-China relations during more than a century of interaction.

RH.11-12.1.

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

RH.11-12.2.

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

Standards Key: RH = ELA Standards: History/Social Studies | W = ELA Standards: Writing | SL = ELA Standards: Speaking and Listening
Note that this document aligns lessons with standards for grades 11-12. The lessons align with the same standards for grades 9-10.

RH.11-12.3.

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RH.11-12.5.

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

RH.11-12.6.

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

Looking at China

Students analyze photographs of present-day China, formulate ideas about Chinese life and society, and consider the benefits and limitations of using photographs as a source of information.

RH.11-12.1.

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

RH.11-12.2.

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

RH.11-12.7.

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Art and Politics: Ai Weiwei

Students analyze a work of art, explore the idea of censorship, and consider an artist's response to the situation in China.

RH.11-12.3.

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RH.11-12.7.

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

RH.11-12.9.

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

SL.11-12.2.

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

SL.11-12.3

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

Cross-Strait Relations

Students explore multiple sources of information, including primary sources, statistics, and political cartoons, concerning the conflict across the Taiwan Strait.

RH.11-12.1.

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

RH.11-12.2.

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

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RH.11-12.3.

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RH.11-12.5.

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

RH.11-12.6.

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

RH.11-12.7.

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

RH.11-12.8.

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

RH.11-12.9.

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

SL.11-12.1.

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL.11-12.2.

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

SL.11-12.3.

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

SL.11-12.4.

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

SL.11-12.5.

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

U.S. and Chinese Perspectives

Students read, compare, and analyze contrasting speeches—Chinese President Hu and U.S. President Obama. (This lesson is offered as an alternative to Cross-Strait Relations.)

RH.11-12.1.

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

RH.11-12.2.

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

RH.11-12.3.

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RH.11-12.4.

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text.

RH.11-12.5.

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

RH.11-12.6.

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

RH.11-12.8.

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

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The Choices Role Play and Common Core

At the center of every Choices unit is a role play activity. In a Current Issues unit, students analyze multiple perspectives on a current international issue. In *China on the World Stage: Weighing the U.S. Response* this activity is focused on the current debate on U.S. policy toward China. During a role play, small groups of students prepare a persuasive presentation that will promote their assigned option as the best one to pursue at this time. Each group presentation lasts from 3-10 minutes, and often includes a visual representation of the option. Students discuss the merits and trade-offs of each option after it is presented. After all options have been presented and discussed, students enter into a deliberative dialogue focused on how each thinks about the issues raised by the role play. This dialogue sets the stage for the final lesson in which students articulate their own views.

Role Play – Organization and Preparation

Students work in small groups to prepare a presentation on their assigned option for U.S. policy toward China.

RH.11-12.1.

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

RH.11-12.7.

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

RH.11-12.8.

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

RH.11-12.9.

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

W.11-12.1.

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W.11-12.8.

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

SL.11-12.1.

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL.11-12.2.

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

Role-Play – Presentation and Discussion

Student groups present their assigned options and the class discusses and merits and trade-offs of each.

RH.11-12.1.

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

RH.11-12.3.

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RH.11-12.6.

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

RH.11-12.7.

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

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RH.11-12.8.

Evaluate an author’s premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

RH.11-12.9.

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

SL.11-12.1.

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL.11-12.2.

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

SL.11-12.3.

Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

SL.11-12.4.

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

SL.11-12.5.

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

SL.11-12.6.

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Personal Option and Tracking China’s Future

In this culminating lesson of the role play, students go beyond the options presented to develop their own policy recommendations, based on personally held values and historical understanding. Students critique these recommendations from a variety of perspectives and then predict what issues will dominate relations with China twenty years from now.

RH.11-12.1.

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

RH.11-12.7.

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

SL.11-12.1.

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL.11-12.2.

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

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Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

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Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

SL.11-12.6.

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

W.11-12.1.

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

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W.11-12.2.

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

W.11-12.4.

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.11-12.6.

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

Online Lessons *[to be integrated as appropriate]*

Looking at the Tank Man

Students learn about the protests in Beijing in 1989, consider the concept of censorship, and analyze the merits of censorship versus freedom of information. Students work collaboratively to interpret an image from multiple perspectives.

RH.11-12.1.

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RH.11-12.2.

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RH.11-12.3.

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Xu Wenli and the China Democracy Party

Xu Wenli was a leader in the Democracy Wall movement from 1979 to 1981 and helped establish the China Democracy Party in 1998. For his activities as a dissident, Xu Wenli spent 16 years in a Chinese prison until he was released on medical grounds in December 2002. This lesson challenges students to listen to a video interview with Xu Wenli, consider what defines a political prisoner, and identify point of view.

RH.11-12.2.

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

RH.11-12.7.

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

SL.11-12.2.

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

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Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

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