

6C: The Chocolate Collection

In this unit, students explore the world of chocolate, using primary documents and conducting independent research to understand the diverse range of roles that chocolate has played in cultures around the world. Students have access to primary and secondary articles, artifacts, and images that cover the 3,700 year history of chocolate and take students on an odyssey that includes ancient times in Mexico, as well as the Olmec, Mayan, and Aztec peoples and their cultures, through to current day issues in chocolate production, including the movement for better labor practices and reduced habitat destruction. Students build information literacy skills, learn how to craft and then answer a research question, and collaborate to conduct a Socratic seminar. They learn how to construct an evidence-based argument and use those skills to write a short piece aimed at convincing readers that *their* favorite kind of chocolate is the best, debate whether or not chocolate should be included in school lunches, and draft a persuasive letter to a local candy store owner.

Throughout these activities, students learn to build their knowledge by identifying and researching source documents, and to construct explanations and arguments based on solid, relevant evidence and information. As students reach the end of the unit, they synthesize all of the skills they've developed to tackle a culminating research project—part essay, part interactive timeline.

Core texts your student will read:

- Excerpt: "Prehistoric Americans Traded Chocolate for Turquoise?" from National Geographic News by Christine Dell'Amore
- Letter from Lord Rothschild to Laurence Fish
- "Pilot Dropped Candy into Hearts of Berlin" by ABC News
- Excerpt: Appendix C Statement from *Labour in Portuguese West Africa* by William A. Cadbury
- "Is It Fair to Eat Chocolate?" from *Skipping Stones* by Deborah Dunn
- "Eat More Chocolate, Win More Nobels?" from *Associated Press* by Karl Ritter and Marilyn Marchione
- "Can Chocolate Be Good for My Health?" by Katherine Zeratsky,
- Excerpt: "Dark Chocolate: A Bittersweet Pill to Take" from *USA Today* by Mary Brophy Marcus
- "Chocolate" from *American Smooth* by Rita Dove
- Excerpt: Act I, Scene Eight from *Così fan tutte: English National Opera Guide*
- Excerpt: *Chocolat* by Joanne Harris
- Excerpt: *The Dharma Bums* by Jack Kerouac
- Excerpt: "The Sweet Lure of Chocolate" by Jim Spadaccini
- Excerpt: "The Tropics" from *The Story of Chocolate* by National Confectioners Association's Chocolate Council
- Excerpt: "Good Harvest" from *All Animals* magazine by Karen E. Lange

What my students will do/learn:

- Students conduct fun and “low-stakes” scavenger hunts to become familiar with the range of texts and images included in this unit. Students learn how to construct research questions and identify appropriate and relevant websites and Internet sources for answers.
- Students write an argumentative letter, persuading a local candy store owner to consider the ways in which their chocolate is produced.
- Students work in groups to research the health pros and cons of chocolate, prepare arguments, and debate whether chocolate should be included in school lunches.
- Students continue to use key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used details or evidence.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing an idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to one of the following prompts:
 - a. Research Option 1: Chocolate and Slavery: When did slavery become a part of chocolate production? Is slavery still used on cacao plantations today? Write an informative essay about the history of slavery in the production of chocolate.
 - b. Research Option 2: Chocolate = Happiness...or Does It? Can eating chocolate affect your mood? Your brain chemistry? Is it addictive? Study the scientific research on chocolate and determine what experts have found. Research the texts in the Collection and on the Internet to find the information you need.
- Students also develop an interactive timeline to share their essay research with the class.

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

1. As you worked to evaluate sources, what did you notice about the credible websites? What advice might you give a friend looking for information on the Internet?
2. What is plagiarism? What steps can you take to avoid it?
3. What are some new facts that you’ve learned about chocolate from the readings in this Collection? Does anything you read change the way you buy or eat chocolate? Can you share with me an argumentative piece of writing or part of your debate argument? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, “I like how you explain how many children in the Ivory Coast have to pick cocoa beans for 12 hours a day rather than go to school. That is great evidence to make someone think about where their chocolate comes from.”)