

First Grade

Unit 1

Building Blocks of Society

Inquiry Challenge: We can create a stronger community.

About this unit

Students examine how communities function and how roles and actions make them strong. Through texts about families, schools, and civic groups, they examine how roles and responsibilities, individual strengths, shared traditions, and collaboration make communities work at any size.

ELA and social studies integration

Students practice ELA skills within the context of community life, reading stories and informational texts about how people connect, meet needs, and cooperate across differences and traditions. Students read, write, speak, and listen to understand civic life, connecting characters' actions to ideas like cooperation, fairness, and shared responsibility. Texts such as *Hey, Wall and Dinner on Domingos* build social studies knowledge and vocabulary that deepen comprehension. That growing knowledge fuels more purposeful writing, as students use precise vocabulary and concrete examples to inform others. Each new insight makes the next text more accessible, reinforcing understanding, writing, and discussion.

Priority learning goals

ELA Social Studies

Comprehension: Analyze literary and informational texts to identify key details, main topics, and central messages. Use evidence from texts to explain how individuals and communities can be similar and different, connect across traditions, meet needs, and achieve shared goals

Language: Construct, revise, and edit simple sentences using appropriate grammar, capitalization, and punctuation

Writing: Construct, revise, and edit a simple informational paragraph to explain conclusions related to the role of volunteers in Hurricane Katrina, and the construction of the Statue of Liberty

Speaking & Listening: Apply speaking and listening norms to engage in collaborative discussions, explain ideas, ask and answer questions, offer feedback, and build shared understanding to exchange different perspectives with respect

Vocabulary: Use and explain relationships among key terms (e.g., similar, different, culture, respect, tradition, good, service, volunteer, cooperation) orally and in writing

6 Modules
48 Lessons

Topics Covered

- Similarities and Differences
- Shared Traditions
- Goods and Services
- Civic Cooperation

Writing in context

Students start the year developing emergent writing skills to share what they've learned through informative writing. Throughout the unit, they learn to organize ideas around a topic, writing connected sentences that include a clear statement, supporting details, and a concluding idea. Instruction also focuses at the sentence level, helping students understand how words work together to form complete, meaningful sentences that follow basic conventions. Writing begins as a highly modeled, shared process, drafting explanations of how volunteers supported the community after Hurricane Katrina, before students apply their skills independently to explain the cooperation required to build the Statue of Liberty.

Transfer of learning to novel context

In the final module, students apply their learning by reflecting on community life and working together to identify a need or message that could strengthen their classroom or local community. With teacher guidance, they choose an Inquiry Product format that fits their purpose and audience. Students might record a mini podcast, paint a mural, perform a skit, or plan and carry out a simple service project.

Anchor texts

Hey, Wall: A Story of Art and Community by Susan Verde
When Pencil Met Eraser by Karen Kilpatrick and Luis O. Ramos Jr.

Children of the World (Barefoot Books) by Tessa Strickland and Kate DePalma

What Is Culture? Sourced by InquirED

The Sandwich Swap by Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan and Kelly DiPucchio

Dinner on Domingos by Alexandra Katona

Exploring Traditions Sourced by InquirED

Chik Chak Shabbat by Mara Rockliff

Apple Pie Fourth of July by Janet Wong

Job Wanted by Teresa Bateman

Night in the City by Julie Downing

Marvelous Cornelius by Phil Bildner

The Role of Volunteers Sourced by InquirED

In Our Garden by Pat Zietlow Miller

The Power of Cooperation Sourced by InquirED

Let Liberty Rise! by Chana Stiefel