

# Historical Inquiry with Charts Toolkit

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## Authors

Eva Johnston, Senior Economic Education Specialist  
Genevieve Podleski, Senior Librarian

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## Grade Level

6-12

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## Introduction

Historians are experts at assessing and analyzing documents to build a narrative but may be stymied by numbers. Charts (tables, graphs, maps, diagrams, and so on) provide a graphical view of information and can be a powerful way to display evidence. This toolkit provides a series of resources for students to read, interpret, and think critically about charts in textbooks and historical documents. It has three main parts: (i) the Glossary of Charts Terms, (ii) the Glossary of Chart Types, and (iii) Historical Inquiry Questions for Charts. It also includes a suggested procedure for how to use the Toolkit. Keep the Toolkit resources bookmarked to use each time you come across a chart for study.

NOTE: If you would like to suggest a term or chart to enhance our glossaries, please contact [eva.k.johnston@stls.frb.org](mailto:eva.k.johnston@stls.frb.org) and we will consider adding it.

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## Toolkit Resources

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Historical Inquiry Questions for Charts.....	Page 4
Also available online; <a href="https://www.stlouisfed.org/~media/Education/Lessons/pdf/Historical_Inquiry_Charts_Questions.pdf">https://www.stlouisfed.org/~media/Education/Lessons/pdf/Historical_Inquiry_Charts_Questions.pdf</a>	
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Glossary of Chart Terms, available online; <a href="https://www.stlouisfed.org/~media/Education/Lessons/pdf/Historical_Inquiry_Charts_Glossary_Terms.pdf">https://www.stlouisfed.org/~media/Education/Lessons/pdf/Historical_Inquiry_Charts_Glossary_Terms.pdf</a>	
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## Historical Inquiry with Charts Toolkit Procedure

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### Objectives

Students will

- identify and define a chart using the toolkit provided and
  - apply historical inquiry questions to evaluate the chart.
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### Materials

- Internet access and computers for students to access the links to the following:
    - Glossary of Chart Terms; [https://www.stlouisfed.org/~media/Education/Lessons/pdf/Historical\\_Inquiry\\_Charts\\_Glossary\\_Terms.pdf](https://www.stlouisfed.org/~media/Education/Lessons/pdf/Historical_Inquiry_Charts_Glossary_Terms.pdf);
    - Glossary of Chart Types; [https://www.stlouisfed.org/~media/Education/Lessons/pdf/Historical\\_Inquiry\\_Charts\\_Glossary\\_Types.pdf](https://www.stlouisfed.org/~media/Education/Lessons/pdf/Historical_Inquiry_Charts_Glossary_Types.pdf);
    - Historical Inquiry Questions for Charts; [https://www.stlouisfed.org/~media/Education/Lessons/pdf/Historical\\_Inquiry\\_Charts\\_Questions.pdf](https://www.stlouisfed.org/~media/Education/Lessons/pdf/Historical_Inquiry_Charts_Questions.pdf)
  - Any textbook, article, or reading containing a chart
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### Procedure

1. Identify a chart to be studied.
  2. Share the three links (in the Materials section) with the students for the Glossary of Terms; Glossary of Chart Types; and Historical Inquiry Questions for Charts.
  3. Direct the students to the two glossaries. Instruct them to find the type and general purpose of the chosen chart in the Glossary of Chart Types and to reference the Glossary of Chart Terms as needed to understand the chart.
  4. Direct the student to the Historical Inquiry Questions for Charts. Instruct them to work in pairs and write answers to the questions.
  5. Discuss the answers in class.
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### Closure

6. Explain that charts can be used and even misused as evidence.
7. Discuss the following about the chosen chart:
  - Does the chart make sense?
  - Does the chart prove the point the author is trying to make?
  - Has the information been compromised?
  - Is the source of the information credible?
  - In what context is this chart used?

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### Assessment

8. Instruct the students to each write a blog post summarizing their findings and providing evidence gathered from this inquiry and classroom learning that supports their findings. (*Answers will vary depending on the chart chosen.*)

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### Extension Activities

The Glossary of Chart Terms and Glossary of Chart Types provide source lists with links to the original sources. Students can explore the links and dig into the primary source materials for further study.

Use the activity “Historical Inquiry with 75 Years of American Finance” (<https://www.stlouisfed.org/education/historical-inquiry-with-75-years-of-american-finance>) for an in-depth review of the 1936 historical infographic (timeline), “75 Years of American Finance: A Graphic Presentation, 1861 to 1935” by L. Merle Hostetler, a section of which is shown in Example 15 in the Glossary of Chart Types.

## Historical Inquiry Questions for Charts

### Observe

1. What information does the title provide about this chart?
2. What is the source of the information for this chart?
3. What do the legend or axis labels indicate about this chart?
4. What do you first notice about this chart?

### Reflect

5. Who or what was counted on this chart?
6. Why do you think this chart is important?
7. How might this chart be biased?
8. What can be learned from examining this chart?
9. Is there anything significant missing from this chart?

### Question

10. What do you see on the chart and does it make sense?
11. What does this chart indicate about the United States and the world at that time?
12. Why was this chart made?
13. Where could I find additional information related to these data?

### Analyze

14. How has the United States changed since this chart was made?
15. Does the information on this chart show implications for the future?
16. Did the creator of this chart make his or her point?
17. What background information can provide historical context to the information in this chart?

## Standards and Benchmarks

### College, Career & Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards

#### Dimension 2. Applying Disciplinary Tools and Concepts

- **Historical Sources and Evidence: By the End of Grade 8**

D2.His.11.6-8: Use other historical sources to infer a plausible maker, date, place of origin, and intended audience for historical sources where this information is not easily identified.

D2.His.12.6-8: Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to identify further areas of inquiry and additional sources.

D2.His.13.6-8: Evaluate the relevancy and utility of a historical source based on information such as maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.
- **Causation and Argumentation: By the End of Grade 8**

D2.His.14.6-8: Explain multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past.

D2.His.15.6-8: Evaluate the relative influence of various causes of events and developments in the past.

D2.His.16.6-8: Organize applicable evidence into a coherent argument about the past.
- **Historical Sources and Evidence: By the End of Grade 12**

D2.His.11.9-12: Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

D2.His.12.9-12: Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.
- **Causation and Argumentation: By the End of Grade 12**

D2.His.14.9-12: Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

D2.His.15.9-12: Distinguish between long-term causes and triggering events in developing a historical argument.

D2.His.16.9-12: Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.