

The People and Governments of Massachusetts



How do the people and governments in Massachusetts influence their communities?

Framing the Unit

The unit is organized into three clusters of lessons. The first cluster focuses on the forms of government in Massachusetts. Students explore tribal, town, and city government structures, the people they represent, and how they influence one another.

The second cluster focuses on the people of the students' town or city, both past and present. This cluster involves extensive individualized research specific to the school's town or city done by the teacher.

The third cluster focuses on how people, including students themselves, can get involved in their communities. Like Cluster 2, this cluster requires advance preparation done by the teacher in order to organize opportunities for students to hear from community members.

The Summative Assessment asks students to apply what they have learned to create their own community plan of action, initiative, or event. Students engage in collaborative planning and then write and illustrate their ideas.

Important note about this unit: Lesson 6 in Cluster 1 and all the lessons in Cluster 2 involve individualized research about the town or city where your school is located. The lessons in Cluster 3 involve organizing opportunities for your students to learn about and hear from local community members, including building relations with their local Tribal Councils and governments. It is recommended that you begin preparing as soon as possible. Start by reviewing the **Unit 5 Teacher Guidance and Resources**.

Prepare to teach this unit by exploring the [Background Brief: The People and Governments of Massachusetts](#), which was designed to help you build content knowledge through a variety of resources. The brief also highlights current perspectives and research—along with potential misconceptions and any debates you should know about—so you can present this unit with confidence.

Unit Overview*Enduring Understandings*

1. Different forms of local government have distinct roles and responsibilities and provide different ways for people to participate in them. They represent the people in the community and often make decisions on their behalf.
2. Populations in communities can change over time due to reasons such as colonization and immigration.
3. There are many different ways to make a difference in a community. People of all ages can participate in and contribute to the well-being and improvement of their community, including by influencing the local government.

Connections to Current Events and Issues

Connections to today's world and students' lives are built into this unit. Other contemporary connections could be added or developed for various topics of study within this unit, and we encourage you to take advantage of opportunities to connect students' learning to contemporary local, national, and global developments that may arise as you teach this unit. Some ideas for linking this unit to current events and issues include:

- This unit on community involvement is a part of building students' civic knowledge early in their academic journey. Harvard Graduate School of Education's resource, "[How to Help Kids Become Skilled Citizens](#)," has a collection of videos, articles, and websites to help build students' civic identities.
- The *M-A Chronicle*'s article "[Students Write Letters to Political Representatives](#)" shares some examples of students in Massachusetts speaking out and being part of decision-making.
- Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation has a [Save Tomorrow](#) (7:21) about 9-year-olds in Lexington, Massachusetts, getting involved in their town government and successfully helping change a town law.

*Vocabulary (in order of appearance)***Tier 3 Vocabulary**

sovereignty

Tribal Council

elect

Priority Tier 2 Vocabulary

represent
seal
town

city
geographic feature
landmark

immigrate
population
responsibility

Lesson Clusters

Cluster 1: Massachusetts Governments (Lessons 1-8)

How do the different forms of government in Massachusetts and the people they represent influence one another?

Focus Standards: 3.T1.3, 3.T1.3b, 3.T1.3c, 3.T1.3d, PS 1, PS 3, RI.3.5, SL.3.1, W.3.2, W.3.8

Cluster 1 focuses on three forms of government that exist in Massachusetts: tribal, town, and city governments. The cluster builds on students' learning about government in Massachusetts during the American Revolution in Unit 4 and introduces them to current governments, who they represent, and what they are responsible for. Students engage with a video and short texts and practice recording information in a graphic organizer.

Important note about this unit: Lesson 6 in Cluster 1 and all the lessons in Cluster 2 involve individualized research done by the teacher about the town or city where your school is located. The lessons in Cluster 3 involve organizing opportunities for your students to learn about and hear from local community members, including building relations with their local Tribal Councils and governments. It is recommended that you begin preparing as soon as possible. Start by reviewing the **Unit 5 Teacher Guidance and Resources**.

Cluster 2: Our Town or City (Lessons 9-13)

How have the different groups of people living in our town or city influenced the community over time?

Focus Standards: 3.T1.1, 3.T1.2, PS 3, RI.3.5, RI.3.7, SL.3.1, W.3.2, W.3.8

Cluster 2 focuses on the students' specific town or city in Massachusetts. Students use various resources including maps, articles, and online databases in order to learn about the history, current populations, and local government of their town or city. Students focus on identifying what aspects of their town or city have changed and what aspects have remained the same over time throughout the cluster's cycle of inquiry.

*Reminder: The lessons in Cluster 2 involve individualized research done by the teacher about the town or city where your school is located. It is recommended that you begin preparing as soon as possible. Start by reviewing the **Unit 5 Teacher Guidance and Resources**. It is also suggested that you create a Teacher Version of the Cluster 2 Formative Assessment at the beginning of the cluster. Each town or city will dictate its own specific responses within the assessment.

Cluster 3: How Communities Take Action (Lessons 14-20)

How can we participate in and contribute to our communities?

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Focus Standards: 3.T1.1, 3.T1.2, 3.T1.3, 3.T1.3a, 3.T1.3b, 3.T1.3c, 3.T1.3d, 3.T1.3e, 3.T1.3f, PS 1, PS 3, PS 7, RI.3.7, SL.3.1, SL.3.3, W.3.1, W.3.2, W.3.8

Cluster 3 focuses on how individuals and groups make a difference in the students' local communities. The cluster begins with a read-aloud of the picture book *Just Help!* by Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor and brainstorming ways people help in their communities. Through participating in in-person interviews, watching videos, and reading articles, students learn about specific people in their local communities who are working to help make things better for themselves and others. A focus of the cluster is linking how and why people participate in and contribute to their communities. The unit concludes with students brainstorming, writing, and illustrating their own proposals for projects, initiatives, or events that would benefit the community.

*Reminder: The lessons in Cluster 3 involve organizing opportunities for your students to learn about and hear from local community members, including building relations with their local Tribal Councils and governments. It is recommended that you begin preparing as soon as possible. Start by reviewing the **Unit 5 Teacher Guidance and Resources**. It is also suggested that you create a Teacher Version for the Formative Assessment Task towards the end of the cluster. Each classroom's experiences with interviewees, discussions, and written resources will dictate its own specific responses to the Formative Assessment Task questions.

Summative Assessment: The People and Governments of Massachusetts (Lessons 21-22)

Focus Standards: 3.T1.1, 3.T1.2, 3.T1.3, 3.T1.3a, 3.T1.3b, 3.T1.3c, 3.T1.3d, 3.T1.3e, 3.T1.3f, PS 1, PS 3, PS 7, SL.3.1, W.3.1, W.3.2

The purpose of this Summative Assessment is to assess students' understanding of the various forms of government in Massachusetts and their local community. Students synthesize their learning from Clusters 1–3 and apply it to the creation of a proposal for a local community action, initiative, or event. Students engage in collaborative planning and write and illustrate their ideas.

Unit Focus Standards

Content Standards

- **3.T1.1:** On a current map of Massachusetts, use cardinal directions, map scales, legends, and titles to locate and describe the city or town where the school students attend is located, its local geographic features and historic landmarks, and their significance.
- **3.T1.2:** Research the demographic origins of the town or city (e.g., the Native People who originally lived there or still live there, the people who established it as a colonial town, its founding date, and the free, indentured, and enslaved women and men who contributed to the well-being of the town). Explain that before the mid-19th century most of the settlers were of Native American, Northern European, or African descent;

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describe the current population and immigrant groups of the 20th and 21st centuries and interview family members, friends, and neighbors to obtain information about living and working there in the past and present.

- **3.T1.3:** Explain why classrooms, schools, towns, and cities have governments, what governments do, how local governments are organized in Massachusetts, and how people participate in and contribute to their communities.
 - **3.T1.3a:** classroom and school governments provide a way for students to participate in making decisions about school activities and rules
 - **3.T1.3b:** city and town governments provide a way for people to participate in making decisions about providing services, spending funds, protecting rights, and providing community safety
 - **3.T1.3c:** Massachusetts communities have either a city or a town form of government (e.g., cities are governed by elected mayors and city council members; towns are governed by an elected group of people, in many towns called a “select board,” appointed town manager, and elected town meeting members or an open town meeting in which all citizens can participate; public schools are governed by elected or appointed school committees or boards of trustees)
 - **3.T1.3d:** people can participate in and influence their local government by reading and responding to news about local issues, voting, running for office, serving on boards or committees, attending hearings, or committee meetings)
 - **3.T1.3e:** people can volunteer (give their time and knowledge) to the community and neighborhood by activities such as monitoring river water quality; growing and distributing produce from a school or community garden; running errands or shoveling snow for neighbors; welcoming newcomers and helping them learn English, helping new neighbors register to vote
 - **3.T1.3f:** people who own property, such as a house, condominium or commercial building, in a city or town contribute to community services by paying taxes, which fund services such as public schools and libraries, city/town/regional planning, street maintenance

Practice Standards

- **PS 1:** Explain the purpose and function of local and state governments, including the avenues they offer individuals for participation and influence.
- **PS 3:** Use provided categories to gather and/or sort information based on a topic or inquiry question.
- **PS 7:** Describe a range of local, regional, and/or global issues, and explain how different actions taken by students and others would help address these issues.

Literacy Standards

- **RI.3.5:** Use text features and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information about a given topic efficiently.

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- **RI.3.7:** Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words, numbers, and symbols in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).
- **SL.3.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **SL.3.3:** Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.
- **W.3.1:** Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting an opinion with reasons.
- **W.3.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- **W.3.8:** Recall information from experiences or gather information from print or digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

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Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Unit Overview

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