

Personalize learning with Explore Boards

 ditchthattextbook.com/explore-boards

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Imagine that your students are reading a novel. Or a chapter in a textbook. (You know how I feel about textbooks, but hey ... sometimes, we've got to use them!)

It's good that everyone reads the same baseline text. They all get the same foundation, that same core content.

But your students aren't all the same. They have different interests. Different curiosities.

How can we honor those different interests but still make sure everyone gets the same core material?

Explore Boards.

An Explore Board is a document packed full of resources (articles, videos, PDFs, podcasts ... anything) about whatever you're studying. These resources showing the nuance and variety of what you're learning ... showing that there are many, many sides to the topic.

Students explore the resources that interest them the most. But they're not required to look at all of it.

They get choice. Their interests are valued.

That's the beauty of the Explore Board.

How can you make them? How can you use them? What do they look like?

Let's dive into it ...

So what are Explore Boards?

Holly Clark first introduced me to the concept of explore boards. Before her, the creators of HyperDocs (Lisa Highfill, Kelly Hilton, Sarah Landis) were calling them "multimedia text sets."

The concept has been around for a while! Holly coined the term "explore boards," which I really like.

Here's how Holly describes Explore Boards: **a board of learning choices that help students develop background knowledge**. They are filled with links to a set of different forms of media surrounding a common topic, theme, or issue.

The purpose of an Explore Board is to curate and package high-interest content for students. Explore Boards build and foster curiosity. They extend lessons with more resources that students can go back and explore as the reading unfolds.

The information in Explore Boards is curated by the teacher to help build background knowledge and activate curiosity, not just tasks students have to do.

Here are some key points to remember about Explore Boards:

- Explore Boards are a great way to expose students to a variety of resources from lots of different media sources.
- They can be used to help students develop background knowledge in a variety of subjects, including history, English language arts, math, and science.

- They can be modified for different levels.
- They are not HyperDocs, but they can be used as the explore section of a HyperDoc lesson.

What does an Explore Board look like?

Explore Boards can be created using a variety of tools but Google Docs make are easy to use to create and share Explore Boards with your students. Here are some examples of Explore Boards using Google Docs.



The Outsiders by Holly Clark

Watch: 1960's Pop Culture	Examine: Key Facts about The 1960's 	Historic Tulsa: Tulsa in 1950's	Compare Tulsa Today: Check out Tulsa Today
Tulsa and Oil: Tulsa Secret Underground Tunnels 	What was life like in 1960's Tulsa, OK? Padlet question/reflection goes here. Bonus: Watch the Book Trailer		Learn: 5 Fun Facts About SE Hinton
Listen Popular 1960's Music: Music of the 1960's	Compare: The Fashion of 1967: What we wore in 1967		Check out The Cars of 1960's: The "Tuff" Cars
Read More Fun Facts About The Author and Book 	Preppy/Soc Fashion: Preppy Fashion and Madras shirts Read More	1960's Slang: Check Out 60's Slang	Greaser Subculture: Watch the Video - Greasers
Background: → The 60's Star: Paul Newman → Drive-in Theaters → 1960's Facts			

By Holly Clark, The Inkwell Classroom and Laurie Brady

This Explore Board was created by Holly Clark as a way to introduce students to Tulsa and the 1960's before jumping into reading *The Outsiders*.

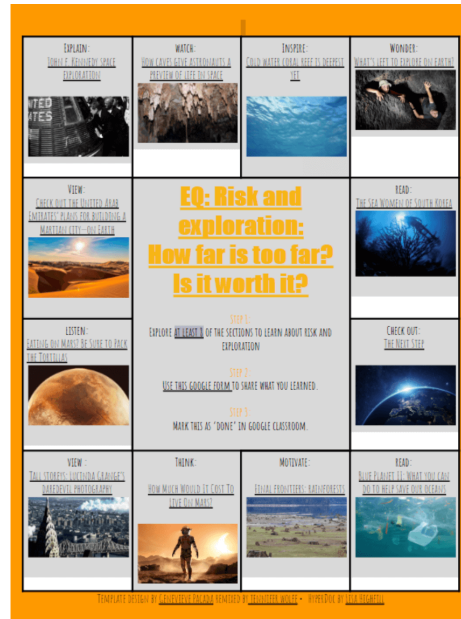
She based it around this essential question: "For *The Outsiders*: What was life like in 1960's Tulsa, Oklahoma?"

Check out this [one minute TikTok video](#) from Holly explaining Explore Boards.

Get the Explore Board and learn more about how it was created here.



Risk and Exploration by Jennifer Wolfe

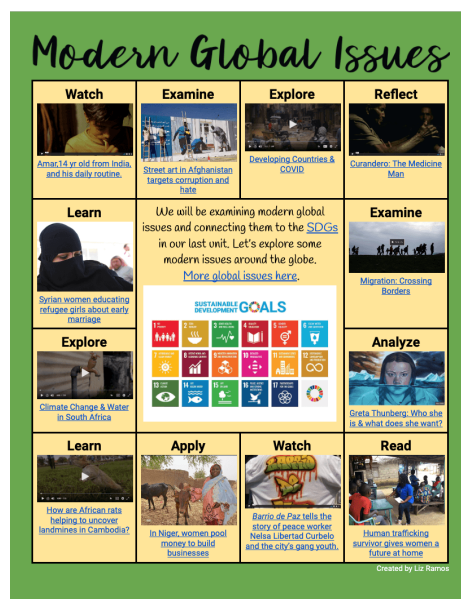


This Explore Board was created by Jennifer Wolfe as a way to explore the textbook unit on risk and exploration. In it students can explore the different stories, articles, videos, photo galleries, and podcasts around the unit.

Get the Explore Board and learn more about how it was created here.



Modern Global Issues Explore Board



This Explore Board was created by [Liz Ramos](#) and shared on Twitter. Liz tweeted *"Sometimes students don't know what they don't know/are curious about. A multimedia text set (MMTS) can be great for SS to peruse and then come up with a Q for inquiry"*.

This Explore Board helps students begin to examine modern global issues and connecting them to the SDGs.

[Get the Modern Global Issues Explore Board here.](#)



Young Ben Franklin Podcast from GZM Media



The Explore Board is a resource for students both before they start and while listening to the podcasts for the classroom from [GZM Media](#).

Young Ben Franklin Synopsis: "Before he was Benjamin Franklin, he was just Ben, a boy in colonial Boston with an adventurous spirit."

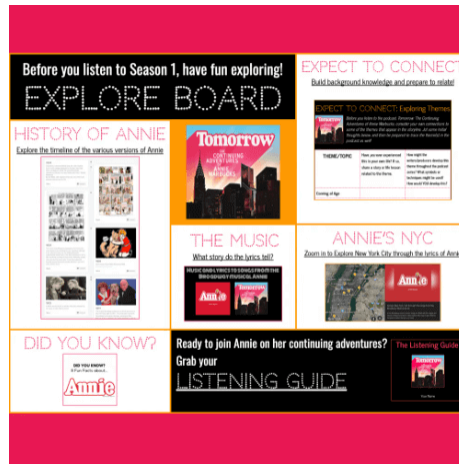
[Get the Explore Board and find out more about Young Ben Franklin here.](#)



[Check out more podcasts and more Explore Boards from GZM Media here.](#)



Tomorrow Podcast from GZM Media



The Explore Board is a resource for students both before they start and while listening to the podcasts for the classroom from [GZM Media](#).

Tomorrow Synopsis: "On the eve of Warbucks' launch of a momentous new business, Annie, now 15, and her orphan friends have to solve a shocking mystery that threatens to cripple Warbucks Industries. A re-imagined sequel to the beloved "Annie" stage play."

Get the Explore Board and find out more about *Tomorrow* here.



How can Explore Boards be used in the classroom?

Explore Boards can be used in a variety of ways to support student learning. They can be used to introduce a new unit of study, provide context for a reading assignment, or support research projects.

One of the reasons I love them: they turn your students into "classroom experts." When a student reads several resources about a certain subtopic in an Explore Board, that student instantly knows more about it than the rest of the class. During a classroom discussion, you can turn to those students -- those "classroom experts" -- because they've studied that subtopic more than the rest of the class.

Here are some ways you might use them in the classroom:

As part of a HyperDoc: Explore Boards are designed to help students develop background knowledge on a particular topic. They aren't HyperDocs by themselves but they can serve as the explore portion of a HyperDoc lesson. Read more: [Use Explore Explain Apply to plan digital learning lessons.](#)

Choice-based learning: Explore Boards provide students with options, which helps teachers promote student choice and autonomy. Students can choose which links to explore based on their interests and learning needs.

Personalized learning: Explore Boards can be tailored to meet the needs of individual students. Teachers can create different Explore Boards for different students based on their interests, learning styles, and abilities.

Extending lessons: Explore Boards can be used to extend lessons with more resources that students can go back and look at as the reading unfolds. This can help students deepen their understanding of a topic and make connections between different concepts.

Creating your own Explore Boards

Here are some tips for creating effective Explore Boards:

Include a wide variety of multimedia: Explore Boards should include a wide variety of multimedia, such as videos, audio, and images. The important thing is to provide learners with the resources they need to build a stronger conceptual understanding of the topic they are about to study.

Add essential questions or learning objectives: Don't forget to add your essential question or learning objective to the Explore Board. This will help students understand the purpose of the board and guide their exploration.

Engage your students: Include links to collaborative activities to reinforce key understanding and ensure all learners are ready for the next step in your lesson. You can also include links to interactive images, Padlet shelves, or tables in Google Docs with hyperlinks.

Explore Board Template

Template directions: Create a list of resources for your students to explore before diving deep into a topic. The resources should build background knowledge, peak their interest in the topic and be varied in their medium.

What to put in your explore board: Check out our post: [**20+ sources of FREE digital content for your class**](#) to find great resources to add to your Explore Board.

[**GET THE EXPLORE BOARD TEMPLATE**](#)

Goal of Exploration:  Title of Resource + Link	Goal of Exploration:  Title of Resource + Link	Goal of Exploration:  Title of Resource + Link
Goal of Exploration:  Title of Resource + Link	Title of Explore Board Essential Question or Learning Objective	Goal of Exploration:  Title of Resource + Link
Goal of Exploration:  Title of Resource + Link	Goal of Exploration:  Title of Resource + Link	Goal of Exploration:  Title of Resource + Link

Parts of the explore board:

- **Title of Explore Board:** This should be what your students are learning about. For example the title of the book you are about to read, the unit of study or topic. Here you can add an image that showcases what they will be studying. Here you can also add an essential question or learning objective.
- **Goal of Exploration:** Are students going to watch a video, listen to an audio file, look at images, read an article. Let me know what you expect them to do with the resource you have provided.
- **Image of resource or icon:** This is a great way to give them a sneak peek into the resource you have curated. This could be a screenshot, a logo, book cover, or an icon that represents the resource.
- **Title of Resource + Link:** Here you will share the resource and add the link. To add the link highlight the text, right click and select “insert link”.



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