

# Chapter 5

## **Who Takes Care of Our Trash? Scaffolding Inquiry Questions, Sources, Tasks, and Action for Our Youngest Learners (Dimension 2: Economics and Civics)**

Alexa Quinn, James Madison University

**Figure 1.** *People Unloading Trash to Sell to a Retail Junk Company*



**Note.** Collins, M. (1942). *Washington, D.C. Scrap salvage campaign, Victory Program. People unloading trash to sell to a retail junk company* [Photograph]. Library of Congress. [www.loc.gov/item/2017825378/](http://www.loc.gov/item/2017825378/)

<b>Who Takes Care of Our Trash?</b>		
<b>C3 Disciplinary Focus</b> Economics and Civics	<b>C3 Inquiry Focus</b> Student-generated questions, analyzing oral histories, and scaffolding informed action	<b>Content Topic</b> Daily life, skills, and challenges experienced by community workers
<b>C3 Focus Indicators</b>		
D1.4.K-2. Make connections between supporting questions and compelling questions.		
D2.Eco.3.K-2. Describe the skills and knowledge required to produce certain goods and services.		
D2.Eco.6.K-2. Explain how people earn income.		
D2.Civ.6.K-2. Describe how communities work to accomplish common tasks, establish responsibilities, and fulfill roles of authority.		
D3.1.K-2. Gather relevant information from one or two sources while using the origin and structure to guide the selection.		
D4.7.K-2. Identify ways to take action to help address local, regional, and global problems.		
<b>Pedagogical Approach</b> Scaffolding		
<b>Suggested Grade Level</b> K-2	<b>Resources</b> Library of Congress Occupational Folklife Project (OFP); see Appendices	<b>Time Required</b> 2-3 class periods

# Introduction and Connections to the C3 Framework

Economics in elementary social studies, when included at all, often features isolated instruction about wants and needs, spending and saving, or categorizing types of resources. NCSS (2010) Theme 7 reminds educators that “social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people organize for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services” (p. 82). Learning about occupations addresses each of these aspects, and the daily relevance of this topic for all students makes it ripe for exploration from a young age. By ages 6–7, for example, most children understand that people work to make money and have some clarity in understanding the employer-employee relationship (Seefeldt et al., 2010).

Economics content is codified in most state standards; however, it often competes for time with other subjects (Meszaros & Evans, 2010). As a result, learning about jobs in elementary school often involves a brief overview of a variety of occupations. This is a missed opportunity, because students likely already have access to general information about different jobs through experiences outside of school and in the media (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). In contrast, this chapter provides an example of using inquiry to take a close look at a particular industry. This level of depth supports engagement with Theme 7 while allowing for student disciplinary knowledge building and skill development. It also presents a fertile opportunity to scaffold inquiry for younger learners.

The outlined approach uses a Library of Congress Occupational Folklife collection to highlight an occupational sector that is sometimes perceived in a negative way yet is vital to public sanitation and health. Students are encouraged to drive the inquiry by generating supporting questions about waste management after analyzing photographs. Then, teachers help students answer their questions by guiding analysis of audio recorded interviews that highlight the necessity of taking care of trash and the variety of ways people are involved. Finally, students share their learning and advocate for sanitation workers in the school or community. Through scaffolded experiences, lower elementary students have the opportunity to build deep conceptual understanding about economic and civic topics and then take informed action.

## Scaffolding Inquiry in Elementary Classrooms

Scaffolding is a term used frequently in elementary teacher education. It is, in essence, a construction metaphor, eliciting a visual of temporary framing that allows access to a structure while work is being done and then eventually taken down (Clark & Graves, 2005). In education, scaffolding implies a short-term support that is gradually removed as students develop the knowledge and skills to engage independently.

Scaffolds can support many learners—emerging bi/multilingual students, students with disabilities, and/or students who are experiencing reading difficulties. Scaffolding becomes differentiation when students access or have access to scaffolding only when needed. Scaffolds that are provided to the whole class might be appropriate and necessary, but whole-class scaffolds are not differentiation.

Scaffolding can be used across the inquiry process. For example, scaffolds might support students when making sense of sources, such as graphic organizers to focus thinking, targeted questions, and time for reflection and discussion. This chapter will provide examples of scaffolding aligned with each dimension of the inquiry arc.

# Inquiry Arc

## Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries

Teachers using inquiry in elementary classrooms often develop questions for their students to engage with as part of a structured inquiry (Swan et al., 2019). This is practical for planning purposes: Sources and tasks often stem from these questions, and teachers are often trying to prepare these in advance of introducing new content to students. Yet Dimension 1 of the C3 Framework includes indicators related to the *construction* of questions. What might it look like to engage in more authentic inquiry with elementary students? What if teachers drew on Library of Congress resources as inspiration for students to generate their own questions?

This chapter gives one example of how teachers might approach this task. Economics is fruitful ground for this work. Elementary economics topics tend to repeat with growing complexity in a way that provides a base from which to build, and most students have connections and prior experiences with economics content through their own participation in a market economy (Meszaros & Evans, 2010). This background knowledge, if accessed successfully, is likely to support students in asking their own questions.

Within the domain of economics, and specifically occupations, a model like the one outlined in this chapter can be applied to a variety of jobs based on student interests. The Library of Congress [Occupational Folklife Project](#) is a valuable resource for showcasing the rich diversity of occupations in the United States. The collections feature primary sources from dozens of industries, many of which are frequently overlooked in elementary education. Occupations featured include fresh produce workers in Arizona, ironworkers in the Midwest, and dairy farm workers in New York.

This chapter draws on the collection [Trash Talk: Workers in Vermont’s Waste Management Industry](#) to address the compelling question “Who takes care of our trash?” The collection, a project of scholar and documentarian Virginia Nickerson, features the occupational stories and experiences of more than two dozen people engaged in different sectors of the waste

management chain, including trash collection, sorting, marketing, processing, administration, and regulation. Audio interviews and photographs showcase a wide variety of roles that include an electronic parts recycler, workers involved in ecological educational programs, and a private trash hauling company that uses horse-drawn vehicles. “Trash workers discuss their daily routines, the challenges and rewards of their jobs, and their interactions and relationships with their neighbors and communities in small-town and rural Vermont” (Trash Talk, 2019).

**Figure 2. A Selection of 25 Occupational Folklife Project Collections**

<a href="#">Agricultural Aviation: Crop Dusters in Rural America</a>
<a href="#">The Big Top” Show Goes On: An Oral History of Occupations Inside and Outside the Canvas Tent</a>
<a href="#">Boeing Aircraft Factory Workers in and around Wichita, Kansas</a>
<a href="#">Cement Workers in Pennsylvania’s Lehigh Valley</a>
<a href="#">Ethnic Grocers in the Urban Midwest</a>
<a href="#">Finding Roots: Asian American Farmers in Contemporary America</a>
<a href="#">Fresh Produce Workers in Arizona</a>
<a href="#">The Green Book: Documenting African American Entrepreneurs</a>
<a href="#">Hairdresser and Beauty Shop Culture in America</a>
<a href="#">Homeless Shelter Workers in the Upper Midwest</a>
<a href="#">Illuminating History: Union Electricians in New York City</a>
<a href="#">Independent Professional Wrestlers in Central Appalachia</a>
<a href="#">Kitchen Workers in Central Ohio</a>
<a href="#">Multigenerational African-Descended Farmers of the Midwest: Surviving Erasure</a>
<a href="#">Production Potters of the Midwest</a>
<a href="#">Ranger Lore: The Occupational Folklore of Park Rangers</a>
<a href="#">Ransomville Speedway: Dirt Track Workers in Western New York</a>
<a href="#">Recent Immigrant Workers in Iowa’s Meatpacking Industry</a>
<a href="#">Stable Views: Stories and Voices from the Thoroughbred Racetrack</a>
<a href="#">Taking Care: Documenting the Occupational Culture of Home Health Care Workers</a>
<a href="#">Teaching in Wisconsin Classrooms</a>
<a href="#">Trash Talk: Workers in Vermont’s Waste Management Industry</a>
<a href="#">Washington State Workers</a>
<a href="#">Women Architects</a>
<a href="#">Working the Port of Houston</a>

To scaffold the skill of developing questions for inquiry, a teacher might lead a community walk or select [Library of Congress photos, prints, and drawings](#) that highlight the purpose of a specific job. For example, teachers could show pictures of unsorted trash or different






workers carrying out tasks (see an example set in Figure 3) and invite student questions based on what they see. The [Library of Congress Primary Source Analysis Tool](#) could be used to provide additional structure for interacting with the images.

The teacher could invite student questions about the selected occupation, taking note of all student questions and then leading a discussion. The teacher might scaffold the skill of asking questions by prompting students to consider what they would ask a person who had this job; asking questions of a person may feel more natural to students than posing questions about a topic.

With a list of student questions posted, the teacher could offer a checklist to serve as a scaffold for identifying which questions might be strong supporting questions for an inquiry and answerable with evidence from available sources. For example:

- Does this question require more than “yes” or “no” to answer?
- Do we need more information to answer this question?
- Are we interested in the answer to this question?

**Figure 3. Potential Photo Set for “Who Takes Care of Our Trash?” Inquiry**

	
<p>Photograph of Macey Ross compressing trash in back of Thornapple Farm/Draft Trash wagon, Nick Hammond in background.</p>	<p>Photograph of Richard Hudak turning and shaping active compost pile. Steam is from heat generated by the decomposition process, or compost cooking.</p>
	
<p>Photograph of recyclables mixed with trash and scrap metal before being pre-sorted on tipping floor of T.A.M. MRF.</p>	<p>Photograph of sign outside the Chittenden Solid Waste Districts EduShed, which houses their on-site education activities.</p>
	<p>Photograph of Shirley Warden emptying her recyclables into a container at the Barnet Recycling Center.</p>

**Note.** All images were created by Virginia Nickerson for the Occupational Folklife Project (2018–2019). For an alternative image set using historical images, see [Appendix B](#).



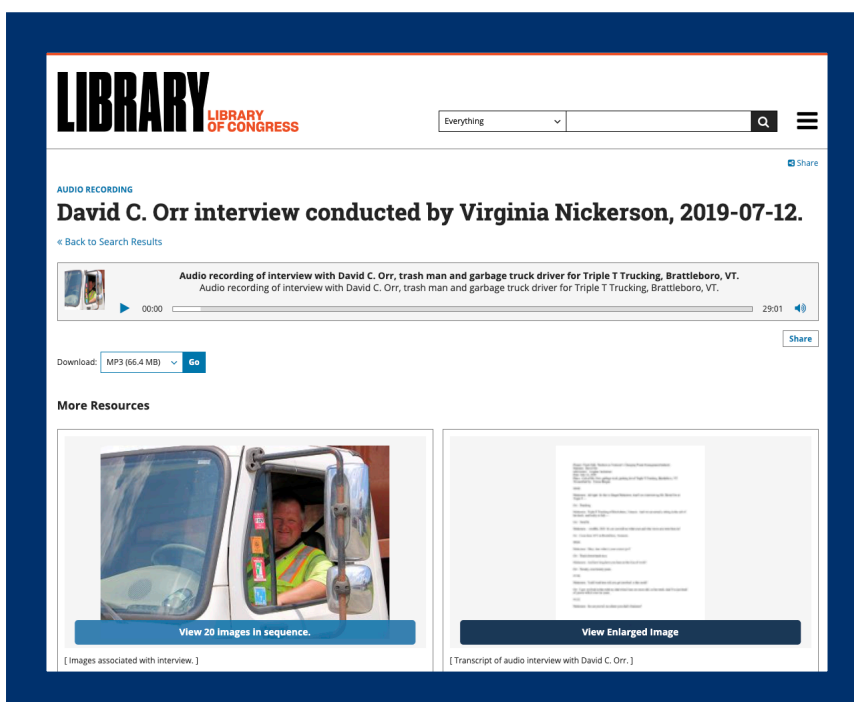
## Dimension 2: Connections to Disciplinary Concepts and Tools

Indicators in Dimension 2 of the C3 Framework can help teachers connect student questions to broader themes of the discipline. Teachers might use the indicators to strategically organize student-generated questions and orient discussion around these themes. Within the waste management example, this would look like creating opportunities to identify the knowledge and skills required to provide waste management services (D2.Eco.3.K-2); reinforcing the work needed to accomplish common tasks like taking care of trash, keeping communities clean, and preserving resources by recycling (D2.Civ.6.K-2); and explaining that society is organized to compensate people for doing this important work (D2.Eco.6.K-2).

With the big picture in mind, teachers can draw on the audio recordings, transcripts, and photographs in the [Occupational Folklife Project](#) collections to seek answers to student questions. After selecting an occupation to explore deeply, or several to compare, teachers should review the sources available in the collection. Each item generally includes an audio recording of an interview with a worker, a transcript of the interview, and a collection of photographs of the job in action with detailed captions (Figure 4).

For an elementary inquiry focused on sanitation workers and waste management, the [Trash Talk collection](#) is a strong example of featuring a variety of jobs within one industry. Table 1 includes descriptions of four interviews that might be used to showcase this diversity of roles.



Figure 4. Screenshot of Source in the Trash Talk Collection





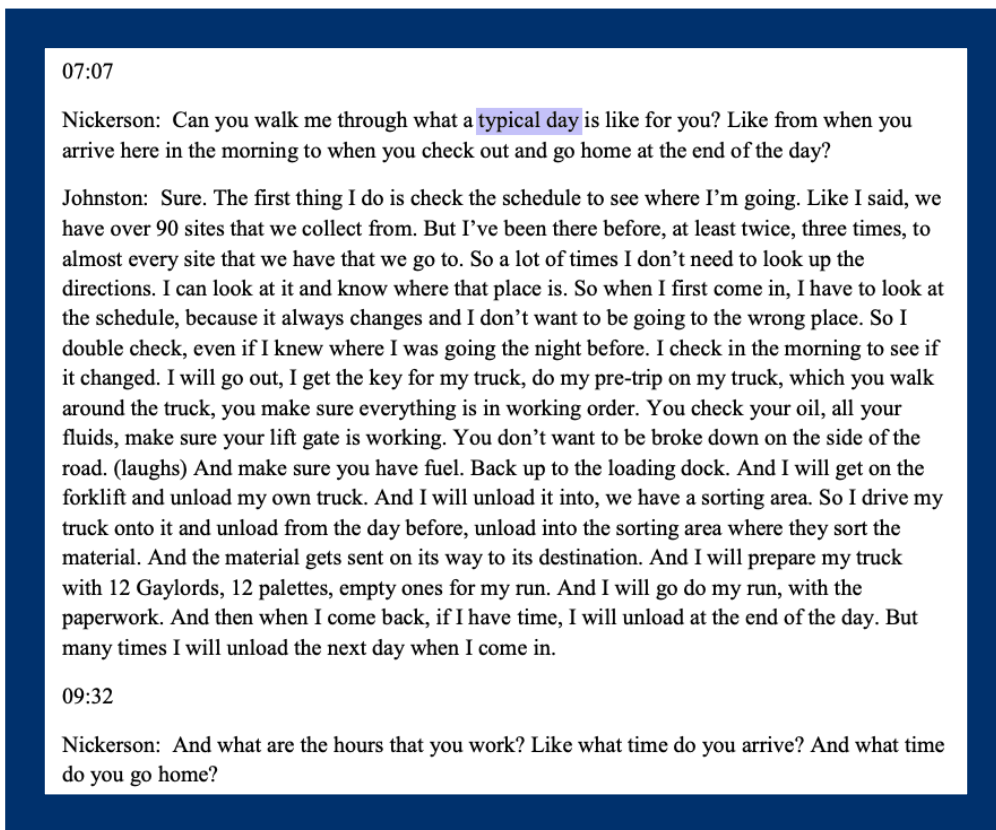
**Table 1. Sample Items From the Trash Talk Collection**

Item Details	Item Summary from the Trash Talk collection
 <p><b>Trash Collecting</b></p> <p>Nickerson, V. (2019). Interview with David C. Orr. Library of Congress.</p> <p><a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655489/">www.loc.gov/item/2020655489/</a></p>	<p>David Orr describes his experiences working over 20 years in the trash collecting business. He started out at six-years-old helping with his father’s part-time trash route. Later, he and his brothers had their own trash and recycling collection business. They had 300 customers and three trucks until they sold it to Triple T Trucking, the company that Mr. Orr and one brother still work for today. He talks about the long hours of a typical day, the challenges of dealing with traffic, the strong odors on hot days, and having to deal with ice and snow in the winter. He describes making small children happy when they see the garbage truck, and how rewarding it is when customers acknowledge his work and show their appreciation. An active second lieutenant with the local volunteer fire department, Mr. Orr is very involved with his community and well-known by all the customers on his route. He also discusses working on a dairy farm for 29 years and driving a dump truck for road construction.</p>
 <p><b>Recycling</b></p> <p>Nickerson, V. (2019). Interview with Shirley Warden. Library of Congress.</p> <p><a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655490/">www.loc.gov/item/2020655490/</a></p>	<p>Shirley Warden says that her passion is recycling. Seventy-nine years old at the time of this interview, Ms. Warden was one of the early coordinators for Barnet Green Up—a day in May when every community in Vermont picks up trash from roadsides, streams, and public places. She currently operates the trash compactor at the transfer station. In this interview, she describes starting an all-volunteer recycling program for six towns in 1989; the transition from town dumps to transfer stations; being on the first board of the Northeast Kingdom Solid Waste District and the recycling cooperative when it started; and the Association of Vermont Recyclers. She talks about the current Barnet recycling shed; a typical day at the recycling shed; how her passion for recycling stems from growing up in a rural area and having to make do; how her commitment to not wasting resources extended to renovating a house that was slated for demolition; her craft business; her thoughts on the utility of Act 148 (Vermont’s universal recycling law) for rural communities; and some of the dangerous items people have put in the trash compactor.</p>

Item Details	Item Summary from the Trash Talk collection
 <p data-bbox="145 430 283 459"><b>Composting</b></p> <p data-bbox="145 494 525 585">Nickerson, V. (2019). Interview with Marie Frey and Richard Hudak. Library of Congress.</p> <p data-bbox="145 620 467 649"><a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655487/">www.loc.gov/item/2020655487/</a></p>	<p data-bbox="551 166 1200 513">Richard Hudak and Marie Frey, married co-owners of Hudak Farm and compost facility, describe the compost operation they run on their farm for the regional solid waste district. They talk about how they got into farming; how the compost business began; how it is a natural enterprise for a farm; their dedication to stewarding nutrients and natural resources; keeping materials out of the landfill; making good compost; and their relationship with the solid waste district. They also discuss challenges, such as plastic contamination, and juggling multiple enterprises and roles as a small family-run business.</p>
 <p data-bbox="145 929 384 958"><b>Electronics Recycling</b></p> <p data-bbox="145 993 498 1083">Nickerson, V. (2018). Interview with Crystal Johnston. Library of Congress.</p> <p data-bbox="145 1118 467 1147"><a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655481/">www.loc.gov/item/2020655481/</a></p>	<p data-bbox="551 668 1200 987">Crystal Johnston describes working as a truck driver, client service representative, and eBay seller for Good Point Recycling, an electronics recycling company. She drives a large box truck, collecting pallets of electronics to be recycled from over 90 sites throughout Vermont. Johnston describes what it is like being a woman in the industry and how people respond to her moving a 300-pound television by herself at a Transfer Station. She also describes electronics collection events, and industry changes since Vermont mandated that electronics cannot go in the landfill.</p>

Teachers facilitating inquiries using these sources should use these item summaries (second column in Table 1) to support their planning. Each summary gives an idea of the types of experiences described in the interview source. Based on student questions, the teacher might seek out specific parts of the interview. For example, most interviews in these collections include interviewees being asked to describe a typical day. Using the Control+F (Command+F on a Mac) function to search within the text of the transcripts can be a helpful strategy to find excerpts of the longer interviews to share with younger children (see Figure 5). Time stamps in the transcripts make it possible for teachers to scrub to a certain part of the audio track. In their classrooms, teachers might open multiple tabs with the audio cued up to certain pre-selected points (see Figure 6).

Figure 5. Screenshot of Interview Transcript With Search Term Highlighted



**Note.** Excerpt from Nickerson, V. (2018). Interview with Crystal Johnston. Library of Congress. [www.loc.gov/item/2020655481/](http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655481/)

An important step to preparing oral history sources for elementary students is to select *brief but rich* clips to share with students. For example, if a teacher were selecting an excerpt about challenges of the job, they might search for “challenge” and then use the arrows to skip to parts of the transcript where this word is used. They might copy and paste text into a new document and make pedagogical choices as they prepare it for the classroom. In the excerpted interview with David Orr below, a teacher might decide to start with the second question, posed by Nickerson at 9:28, since it is broader, encapsulates more ideas about challenges, and still includes the traffic issue mentioned in the initial response.

08:37

**Nickerson:** So can you talk about some of the challenges of doing curbside pickup?

**Orr:** What are you looking for there?

**Nickerson:** Oh, just—

**Orr:** Curbside pickup versus backing into a driveway saves you about eight minutes. You're bing, bing, bing, bing, done. You can go right down the street and it's boom, boom, boom, boom. Where you've got to stop, as you saw today, you've

got to stop, wait for traffic, pull out, back in. But the time you do that, you could have already done four or five stops. It's much faster. It's much faster.

09:28

**Nickerson:** And what are some other challenges to this job? Things that people might not think about or understand?

**Orr:** If you have a dumpster, having stuff right tight to it, so you've got to walk around that to hook the cable up [is a challenge]. [When people do] Not shoveling the snow away from them so you can get into them, or you've got to pull them out, you've got to shovel the snow anyway just to move them. Simple little things that can slow you down. Can add 15, 20 minutes to a half an hour a day, to your day. Traffic. The biggest thing, first thing in the morning there's no traffic. You can start and go. When you get into the rush hour traffic, beginning of the day traffic, that slows you down a little. As you saw coming out of Keene this afternoon, that traffic was much heavier than it was this morning. Much heavier. Other than that, I don't know what more I can tell you as far as going faster or slower.

10:44

**Nickerson:** So what time of day do you typically end? (Nickerson, 2019)

Then, a teacher might choose to streamline the excerpt by removing the reference to something the interviewer observed (“As you saw coming out of Keene this afternoon...”), since it is a potentially confusing detail about the same challenge. The teacher could then use the timestamp to navigate to this part of the audio interview, listen to make sure the audio is clear, and adjust the transcript as needed.

**Figure 6. Screenshot of Library of Congress Audio Player Cued Up to Specific Time Stamp**



For example, to prepare for use by students, the excerpt has been trimmed down (see [Figure 7](#)), the interviewer and interviewee roles are clearly labeled, the explanatory asides have been adjusted (removed label of “challenge,” added referent to “garbage can”), and paragraphing has been added for readability. With excerpts selected and formatted for students, teachers can then support students to engage with the audio source and use evidence to answer questions.

**Figure 7. *Trimmed and Formatted Interview***

**Interviewer (Virginia Nickerson):** And what are some other challenges to this job? Things that people might not think about or understand?

**Garbage Truck Driver (David Orr):** If you have a dumpster, having stuff right tight to it, so you've got to walk around that to hook the cable up.

Not shoveling the snow away from them (garbage cans) so you can get into them, or you've got to pull them out, you've got to shovel the snow anyway just to move them. Simple little things that can slow you down. Can add 15, 20 minutes to a half an hour a day, to your day.

Traffic. The biggest thing, first thing in the morning there's no traffic. You can start and go. When you get into the rush hour traffic, beginning of the day traffic, that slows you down a little.

### **Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence**

Individual lived experiences can be a powerful source, especially when learning about daily life and work. However, the interviews about occupations available through the Library of Congress collections can be complex. Listening to the texts helps make them more accessible to emergent decoders, but audio texts still include technical vocabulary and challenging sentence construction.

Engaging with sources that include complex text requires scaffolding. The Library of Congress teacher's guide for [Analyzing Oral Histories](#) can support this process. This guide prompts specific aspects to observe (e.g., "Did you hear any background noise?"), to reflect on (e.g., "Is it more personal or historical?"), and to ask questions about (e.g., "What do you wonder about how...?"). These questions can be used to scaffold student analysis of audio sources.

Scaffolds can be organized as supports provided to students before, during, and after engaging with the source (Clark & Graves, 2005). Before asking students to listen to an excerpt of an interview, the teacher might set a purpose for listening (e.g., one or two key student questions for the class to listen closely for answers to) or define technical vocabulary that students will hear in the interview with pictures to help them visualize what is being discussed.

While listening to the audio recordings, teachers might pause frequently to clarify meaning and address any misconceptions. Students might be given a copy of the transcript text for reference, and many may benefit from slowing the speed of the audio. This can be accomplished by downloading the .wav or .mp3 audio file and adjusting the playback speed (.75 or .50 works well) using the default audio player on a computer or other device.

Teachers might also play the recording excerpt multiple times so that students can attend to different aspects of the primary source with each listen. If using prompts from the [Analyzing Oral Histories](#) guide, the teacher might ask students to notice only one or two details at a time. For example, a first listen might focus on identifying new or unfamiliar

vocabulary, followed by a second listen to visualize the challenges being described. In a final listen, a teacher might ask students to pay special attention to the tone of the speaker’s voice and make inferences about how the interviewee might be feeling.

After listening, teachers might encourage students to work with a partner to summarize their takeaways, answer specific questions, or process what they heard through drawing or acting out a skit. Table 2 provides examples of scaffolds before, during, and after reading in the context of the “Who Takes Care of Our Trash?” inquiry.

**Table 2. Scaffolding Before, During, and After an Audio Clip**

<p><b>Before</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set a purpose for listening: Listen for <b>three challenges</b> that make a garbage collector’s job difficult.</li> <li>• Preface that when Mr. Orr says “you” he is referring to garbage collectors.</li> </ul>
<p><b>During</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post or provide copies of a prepared transcript for students to follow along (see example in Figure 7).</li> <li>• Pause after the first sentence to clarify why “having stuff right tight to it” would make it “hard to hook the cable up.”</li> <li>• Use a picture from the collection to support, such as this photograph of a dumpster being lifted into the garbage truck.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="534 846 1010 1164" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="346 1174 1161 1271">Nickerson, V. (2019). [Photograph of a dumpster being lifted into the garbage truck] [Photograph]. Library of Congress. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/resource/afc2018031.afc2018031_05260_ph/?sp=11">www.loc.gov/resource/afc2018031.afc2018031_05260_ph/?sp=11</a></p>
<p><b>After</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask students to identify the three challenges and clarify as needed.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Items left close to dumpsters or trash cans</li> <li>2. Snow blocking access to cans</li> <li>3. Traffic (lots of cars on the road)</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Ask students to discuss which of the three challenges they might be able to take action to support. <i>(This also provides scaffolding for Taking Informed Action!)</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Throughout (as needed)</b></p>	<p>Make available the photographs from the collection (that students have explored earlier in the inquiry) to provide visual support.</p>



## Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action

There are many possible avenues for taking informed action following an inquiry about occupations. The questions, sources, and tasks outlined in this chapter could lead to multiple approaches, from actions related to conservation and environmental sustainability, to the treatment of community workers, labor conditions, and more. Elementary learners will also likely need scaffolding when thinking about taking action following learning. There are powerful resources available online to support this process. One framework, Be a Citizen: Civic Action Project Guide, provides resources to guide students through the process (Figure 8).

Figure 8. *Be a Citizen: Civic Action Project Guide*



**Note.** BeACitizen.org. (n.d.). Be a citizen: Civic action project guide. <http://beacitizen.org/project-guide> (Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License)

To plan for action, students must consider the people affected, the people who can bring change, and the people who can help (Muettterties & Swan, 2019). Then, students can consider different actions to take and different places to share their action.

Here is a sample application of Muettterties and Swan’s framework in the context of an inquiry about jobs:

1. Work with students to understand the issue and assess what might be done. Using an interview as a source, search for problems or challenges faced by the people in this occupation. For example, trash collectors like David Orr sometimes don’t feel seen or



appreciated (Nickerson, 2019, 20:12).

2. Use lived experiences from the selected interview to introduce one or more problems to students. (Students might also identify these independently over the course of the inquiry!) Note evidence of what the interviewees say is already being done (e.g., David Orr describing interactions with kids who are appreciative; Nickerson, 2019, 22:37).
3. Have students suggest possible solutions to these problems or ways that they might help by encouraging others to change their behavior. Young learners are likely to have many creative ideas; prepare locally relevant examples or questions from the guide in [Figure 8](#) to scaffold as needed.
4. Support students in planning for informed action; consider actions to take to be informed, be engaged, be a leader, or be the change; and consider places to share in the classroom, school, or community (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Examples of Possible Actions**

Be Informed	Be Engaged	Be a Leader	Be the Change
Draw a picture of a student correctly sorting recycling	Volunteer to help shovel snow around trash cans and dumpsters	Organize an appreciation day for school sanitation workers	Present ways to improve conditions for sanitation workers to school or community leaders

**Note.** Examples created based on framework by Muetterties & Swan (2019).

Taking Informed Action also presents an opportunity for students to bring a critical lens to the inquiry, which can be accomplished through Taking Informed Action activities that push students to take tangible steps toward alleviating injustice (Crowley & King, 2018). Inquiries that explore an occupation in depth are better positioned to provide sufficient background information and encourage students to ask important questions about the treatment and rights of workers. For example, students might have opportunities to apply this lens when interviewees describe long hours and harsh working conditions.

## Conclusion

Young learners are capable of engaging in deep and thoughtful inquiry. The Library of Congress Occupational Folk Project offers a rich collection of sources that highlight the lived experiences of the people who do important work to keep society functioning. With appropriate scaffolding, students can access this lived experience through audio recordings, transcripts, and images, and ask their own authentic questions to drive further exploration. Students then have an opportunity to take action in their own communities, which necessarily include these essential workers.

# References

- BeACitizen.org. (n.d.). Be a citizen: Civic action project guide. <http://beacitizen.org/project-guide>
- Clark, K. F., & Graves, M. F. (2005). Scaffolding students' comprehension of text. *The Reading Teacher*, 58(6), 570–580. <https://doi.org/10.1598/rt.58.6.6>
- Crowley, R., & King, L. (2018). Making inquiry critical: Examining power and inequity in the classroom. *Social Education*, 82(1), 14–17.
- Meszaros, B. T., & Evans, S. (2010). It's never too early: Why economics education in the elementary classroom. *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, 22(3), 4–7.
- Muetterties, C., & Swan, K. (2019). Be the change: Guiding students to take informed action. *Social Education*, 83(4), 232–237.
- National Council for the Social Studies. (2010). *National curriculum standards for social studies: A framework for teaching, learning, and assessment*.
- Nickerson, V. (2019). Interview with David C. Orr. Library of Congress. [www.loc.gov/item/2020655489/](http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655489/)
- Porfeli, E. J., & Lee, B. (2012). Career development during childhood and adolescence. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 134, 11–23. <https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20011>
- Seefeldt, C., Castle, S., & Falconer, R. C. (2010). *Social studies for the preschool/primary child* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Swan, K., Grant, S. G., & Lee, J. (2019). *Blueprinting an inquiry-based curriculum: Planning with the Inquiry Design Model*. National Council for the Social Studies.
- Trash Talk: Workers in Vermont's Waste Management Industry. (2019). Library of Congress. [www.loc.gov/collections/occupational-folklife-project/articles-and-essays/workers-in-vermonts-waste-management-industry/](http://www.loc.gov/collections/occupational-folklife-project/articles-and-essays/workers-in-vermonts-waste-management-industry/)

# Appendix A

Primary Sources From the Library of Congress	
Source	Reference
Crystal Johnston interview	Nickerson, V. (2018). Interview with Crystal Johnston. Library of Congress. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655481/">www.loc.gov/item/2020655481/</a>
Marie Frey and Richard Hudak interview	Nickerson, V. (2019). Interview with Marie Frey and Richard Hudak. Library of Congress. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655487/">www.loc.gov/item/2020655487/</a>
Rhonda Mace interview	Nickerson, V. (2018). Interview with Rhonda Mace. Library of Congress. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655478/">www.loc.gov/item/2020655478/</a>
Jeff Miller interview	Nickerson, V. (2018). Interview with Jeff Miller. Library of Congress. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655477/">www.loc.gov/item/2020655477/</a>
David C. Orr interview	Nickerson, V. (2019). Interview with David C. Orr. Library of Congress. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655489/">www.loc.gov/item/2020655489/</a>
Patrick Palmer interview	Nickerson, V. (2018). Interview with Patrick Palmer. Library of Congress. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655474/">www.loc.gov/item/2020655474/</a>
Richard Smith interview	Nickerson, V. (2019). Interview with Richard Smith. Library of Congress. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655486/">www.loc.gov/item/2020655486/</a>
Paul Tomasi interview	Nickerson, V. (2018). Interview with Paul Tomasi. Library of Congress. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655472/">www.loc.gov/item/2020655472/</a>
Shirley Warden interview	Nickerson, V. (2019). Interview with Shirley Warden. Library of Congress. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2020655490/">www.loc.gov/item/2020655490/</a>

# Appendix B

Historic Image Set for Sanitation	
Source	Reference
<i>Open Trash Cans Along the Curb</i>	Parks, G. (1943). <i>New York, New York. Street scene showing open trash cans along the curb</i> [Photograph]. Library of Congress. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2017851527/">www.loc.gov/item/2017851527/</a>
<i>Emptying Garbage and Trash From Harlem Apartment Houses</i>	Parks, G. (1943). <i>New York, New York. Emptying garbage and trash from Harlem apartment houses</i> [Photograph]. Library of Congress. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2017851514/">www.loc.gov/item/2017851514/</a>
<i>People Unloading Trash to Sell to a Retail Junk Company</i>	Collins, M. (1942). <i>Washington, D.C. Scrap salvage campaign, Victory Program. People unloading trash to sell to a retail junk company</i> [Photograph]. Library of Congress. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/item/2017825378/">www.loc.gov/item/2017825378/</a>