

The Third Edition of MNHS' *Northern Lights* Minnesota Studies curriculum is currently in development, with a forthcoming launch date in the summer of 2026, in preparation for the 2026-27 school year. Given the changes to the Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards for Social Studies in 2021, MNHS is revising the Northern Lights curriculum to address all required benchmarks for history, civics, geography, economics, and ethnic studies. For more information on the details and timeline of this project, please visit [www3.mnhs.org/northern-lights-third-edition-updates](http://www3.mnhs.org/northern-lights-third-edition-updates).

This document provides a summary of the changes between the previous Revised Second Edition of the Northern Lights textbook (2013) and the upcoming Third Edition (2026). Each chapter features a small overview of the changes and a general percentage range that reflects the number of changes each section has undergone. The corresponding Investigation activities have also been included with their respective chapters.

UNIT 1	CHAPTER 1	
	<b>STUDYING MINNESOTA</b> - This chapter is slightly broader in comparison to the Revised Second Edition. It provides a more in-depth foundation on the historical inquiry process, including research and evidence. It familiarizes students with the five social studies disciplines as identified in the standards and their applications.	0-25%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 1: WHAT IS YOUR STORY?</b> - Students bring three primary sources that provide information about themselves and exchange them with a partner. The partner will practice analyzing them using the See-Think-Wonder strategy. Pairs will discuss whether their interpretations were accurate.	0-25%
	CHAPTER 2	
	<b>EVIDENCE FROM THE PAST</b> - This chapter includes various ancient Minnesota historical sites, rather than only the Jeffers Petroglyphs. Content from Northern Lights 2013 Edition's Chapter 2 investigation on archaeology has also been added to the main chapter content, strengthening the geographic scope and archeological coverage.	0-25%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 2: WAYS OF KNOWING THE PAST</b> - Students analyze the interactions between bison, Indigenous peoples, and the landscape pre-1100 CE by examining multiple kinds of evidence from the Itasca bison kill site.	76-100%
	CHAPTER 3	
	<b>DAKOTA PEOPLE IN MNI SOTA MAKOCE</b> - This chapter is revised in partnership with MNHS Native American Initiatives to convey content from a Dakota perspective. Changes include a new section on Dakota oral traditions.	0-25%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 3: KEEPING TIME</b> - Students practice strategies to revise historical interpretations when new evidence is introduced by analyzing winter counts, a pictorial record of time kept by the Dakota communities.	76-100%
	CHAPTER 4	
	<b>OJIBWE PEOPLE IN A NEW HOMELAND</b> - The Ojibwe migration and movement section is rewritten to include more specific geographic locations and details. This chapter has also been revised in partnership with MNHS Native American Initiatives to convey content from an Ojibwe perspective.	0-25%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 4: WHAT MY GRANDMOTHER TAUGHT ME</b> - Students use oral history excerpts from Ojibwe elder Maude Kegg to practice analyzing a source for perspective.	0-25%

UNIT 2	CHAPTER 5	
	<b>THE FUR TRADE</b> - This chapter includes more narratives from Ojibwe individuals to improve the balance of featured perspectives. It provides a more holistic overview of the Fur Trade, including several sections on the Fur Trade that were previously included in Chapter 6 of the 2013 edition.	51-75%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 5: ROLES OF THE FUR TRADE</b> - Students analyze primary and secondary sources together to explain the roles of the fur trade and the power each role had to influence the trade. They annotate a historical image to interpret the interactions of these different types of power.	76-100%
	CHAPTER 6	
	<b>CONTESTED VISIONS</b> - The section on Fort Snelling (previously titled "A Place to Gather") is revised to encapsulate the complicated history of slavery and assimilation at the Fort. Additionally, the focus on Ojibwe treaties for land is expanded.	26-50%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 6: IN THEIR OWN WORDS</b> - Students analyze primary source quotes from people involved in treaty-making and create blackout poetry to synthesize and interpret diverse and conflicting points of view about treaty-making, including the unequal power dynamics that shaped the treaty-making process.	0-25%
	CHAPTER 7	
	<b>ALWAYS A HOMELAND, NOW A STATE</b> - This chapter includes clearer coverage of statehood and the Minnesota state constitution, aligning with the new civics and history benchmarks. The content on Federalism and systems of government is revised for the same purpose. The narratives and perspectives explored in this chapter explore the concept of settler-colonialism.	26-50%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 7: WHO DECIDES?</b> - Students analyze population data from Minnesota's territory and statehood to determine who could vote, who could not, who decided, and whose perspectives were absent. Using this evidence, students analyze the degree to which the democratic principle of voting rights is protected today.	76-100%

**KEY:**

0-25%

26-50%

51-75%

76-100%

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Red indicates the most change, potentially 100% new content.

UNIT 3	CHAPTER 8	
	<b>THE CIVIL WAR</b> - This chapter is modified to include a broader approach to U.S. Civil War narratives. It includes more stories of Minnesota regiments, communities of color, and women to describe how Minnesotans participated in the institution of slavery, abolition, and the U.S. Civil War.	51-75%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 8: HISTORY AND MEMORY (PREVIOUSLY TITLED: "MISSIONARY RIDGE, "THE SOLDIER'S BATTLE")</b> - Students analyze the painting of Missionary Ridge in the context of memorialization and make an argument about whether the painting is a secondary source or a memorial. The primary sources examined in this Investigation are the same as the previous edition's investigation, but the approach to students' analysis of the painting is revised to encourage higher-level thinking.	26-50%
	CHAPTER 9	
	<b>THE U.S.-DAKOTA WAR</b> - This chapter has some minor changes to better focus students' attention on conflicting or absent perspectives in historical narratives. It includes content exploring the impact of the U.S.-Dakota War on Ojibwe people in addition to the Dakota people. The section on tensions with the Dakota people leading up to the war is revised with guidance from MNHS Native American Initiatives.	26-50%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 9: HUMANIZING A WAR (PREVIOUSLY TITLED: "UNTOLD STORIES OF THE U.S.-DAKOTA WAR")</b> - Students analyze the perspectives of settlers and Dakota people and identify those who are absent using a values framework to synthesize and interpret diverse and conflicting points of view about treaty-making, including the unequal power dynamics that shaped the treaty-making process.	26-50%

UNIT 4	CHAPTER 10	
	<b>A CHANGING LANDSCAPE</b> - This chapter previously focused on agriculture but is supplemented with information on the development of small towns and changes to the landscape. The coverage on allotment and reservations is expanded.	26-50%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 10: THE IMPACTS OF IMMIGRATION</b> - Students use primary sources to analyze the motivations of people immigrating to Minnesota, the opportunities and obstacles they faced, and the impact of settler-colonialism and immigration on Indigenous people.	76-100%
	CHAPTER 11	
	<b>IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN GROWING CITIES</b> - This chapter is a revised version of the 2013 Edition's Chapter 12, and it focuses more on people and communities. Additional narratives have been included to improve the diversity in perspectives.	26-50%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 11: WHAT WAS THE PIPESTONE INDIAN TRAINING SCHOOL?</b> - Students examine the perspectives of two boys enrolled at Pipestone Indian Training School, the obstacles and opportunities they faced, and the impacts of their experience. Students interpret the long-term costs of the boarding school system on people and communities.	76-100%
	CHAPTER 12	
	<b>FLOUR, LUMBER, AND IRON</b> - This chapter is a revised version of the 2013 Edition's Chapter 11. It includes narratives from both industrialists and workers, and the impact of machines and technology has been included for each industry.	0-25%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 12: MAKING ENDS MEET</b> - Students use primary sources to analyze the wants and needs of an immigrant family and design a budget to prioritize the interpreted needs and wants.	0-25%

**KEY:**

0-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
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UNIT 5	CHAPTER 13	
	<b>THE COMMON GOOD?</b> - This chapter combines the 2013 Edition's Ch. 13 and 14 and reflects the deprioritization of this time period in the state social studies standards. It focuses on "Progressive" initiatives and the impacts of war on Minnesotans. The boarding school content previously included is moved to the Chapter 11 Investigation.	51-75%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 13: PROTECTING JUSTICE</b> - Students investigate the failure of justice in the case of the Duluth lynchings, the role of racism, and how African Americans fought to defend their human rights. They reflect on ways human rights are protected in their communities and make a recommendation on how those rights could be better protected.	76-100%
	CHAPTER 14	
	<b>BOOM, BUST, AND WAR</b> - This chapter combines the 2013 Edition's Ch. 15 and 16 and reflects the combination of WWII and the Cold War into one benchmark in the state social studies standards. It provides multiple narratives from primary source quotes about how WWII and the Cold War impacted Minnesotans.	51-75%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 14: VIRGINIA MAE HOPE: WORLD WAR II PILOT</b> - Students investigate primary sources provided about Virginia May Hope and write an interpretation of the impact WWII had on her. Students practice researching another individual impacted by WWII in the MNHS oral history project, MN Greatest Generation.	0-25%
	CHAPTER 15	
	<b>SEEKING SECURITY AND COMFORT</b> - This chapter is based on the 2013 Edition's Ch. 17. New sections on racial covenants and the construction of Highway 94 are included as case studies for students to analyze how decisions are made on federal, state, and local levels, and how people affected by those decisions respond.	51-75%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 15: VOICES FROM THE VIETNAM WAR</b> - Students learn how multiple perspectives are crucial to understanding history. This investigation shows six stories, but they are only six of the millions of stories that might be told. Students are asked to think about whose stories are not represented and what other roles people played during the war.	0-25%

UNIT 6	CHAPTER 16	
	<b>TAKING A STAND</b> - This chapter expands on the content from the 2013 Edition's Ch. 18. The focus of this chapter has been expanded to include information on the Gay Liberation and Chicano Rights movements. The coverage of women's involvement in these movements has also increased.	51-75%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 16: SINGING OUT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE</b> - Students analyze song lyrics and art objects to interpret how the arts are used for social and political change.	26-50%
	CHAPTER 17	
	<b>COMING TO MINNESOTA (MINNESOTA IN THE MODERN WORLD)</b> - The 2013 Edition's Ch. 19 is reenvisioned to provide multiple narratives about why and how people have migrated to Minnesota as a result of warfare and/or genocide since 1960, using primary sources about immigrant experiences for students to construct a narrative.	76-100%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 17: DEBATING THE BWCA</b> - Students examine conflicting perspectives about the Wilderness Bill in the 1960s and 1970s, analyzing the policy issue and taking a position.	76-100%
	CHAPTER 18	
	<b>MINNESOTA PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES (WHO WE ARE TODAY)</b> - Elements from the 2013 Edition's Ch. 19 and 20 are reinterpreted in the context of globalization from 1990 to today. Themes surrounding ecology, agriculture, technological innovation, and social change are analyzed through stories of community building across Minnesota.	76-100%
	<b>INVESTIGATION 18: BUILDING YOUR COMMUNITY</b> - Students examine case studies of different community organizations and the people who added value to their communities. They use these case studies to determine what value they can add to their own community.	76-100%

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