

The Dirty History of Soap

The surprising story of how soap and hygiene have changed over time

About the Story

Lexile: 910L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to *Scope Online*.

Learning Objective:

to read two articles about the history of soap and hygiene and to draw key details from both to write a narrative

Key Skills: narrative writing, author's craft, key ideas, cause and effect, inference, drawing conclusions, synthesis

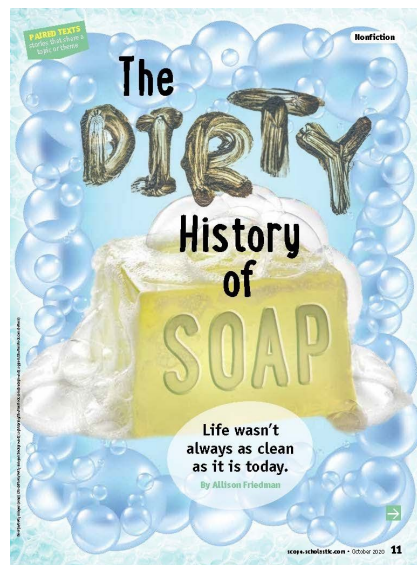
Essential Questions:

- How can scientific breakthroughs drive change?
- How has soap changed our lives?
- How does scientific understanding affect our lives?

Standards:

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.9, R.10, W.3, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to *Scope Online*.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at [scope.scholastic.com](https://www.scholastic.com).

Audio:

- Author read-aloud
- Vocabulary
- Text to speech

Recommended pairings from the *Scope* archives

Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Preparing to Write: Planning Your Story
- Vocabulary
- **Core Skills Workout:** Central Ideas and Details*
- Choice Board
- Quiz*
- Contest Entry Form

*Available on two levels



Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1. Preparing to Read

10 minutes

Do-Now: Respond to a Question (5 minutes)

- Post this question in your classroom or virtual hangout: *How would your life be different if soap didn't exist?*
- Give students a few minutes to answer. Then invite students to share and discuss their responses.

Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Share **Vocabulary: Words and Definitions** and review the words as a class. (Optionally, have students complete the **practice activity** for homework.) Highlighted words: *concoction, means, miniscule, myriad*

2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

“The Dirty History of Soap”

- Have a volunteer read the As You Read box on page 12 in the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.
- Read the story once through as a class. Optionally, have students listen to author Allison Friedman read the story while they follow along. (The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.)
- Divide students into groups to read the story again and respond to the following close-reading questions. *Tip: If you're remote, you can have each group respond in a shared Google Doc or discuss the questions in their own chat room.*

Close-Reading Questions

(10 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **Reread the first section of the article. How does the author draw the reader into the article?** (author's craft) *The author begins the article by vividly describing Abigail Foote stirring a gross concoction. The author describes the mixture as "stinky, bubbling brown goo" and explains that it is made up of globs of animal fat and ash. This description captures readers' interest and makes them want to keep reading to find out what Abigail is making. Then the author creates even more interest by revealing the shocking fact that the brown goo is soap.*
2. **Why did few people bathe in Abigail Foote's time?** (key ideas) *One reason that people did not bathe in Abigail Foote's time was because gentle, good-smelling soap was an expensive luxury that most people could not afford. Another reason people did not bathe often was because many believed that dirt on the skin protected them from disease.*
3. **What happened in the 1800s that helped to improve hygiene habits in America?** (key ideas, cause and effect) *Several things happened in the 1800s that helped improve hygiene habits in America. First, a French scientist figured out a way to produce good-smelling soap more easily, so bath soap became cheaper. Then, during the Civil War, more soldiers died of diseases than died in battle. The soldiers realized that washing themselves could help them stay healthy, and they brought this idea home with them. Around the same time, scientists discovered that tiny, invisible germs cause illness and that washing can get rid of germs and keep people healthy. Once people learned this, they began washing more.*
4. **How does what we know about soap and washing affect our lives today?** (inference, drawing conclusions) *Today we know that washing with soap is an important step in protecting ourselves from getting sick. Specifically, we know that washing our hands is key to helping slow the spread of Covid-19.*

"Lending a Clean Hand"

- Read the article as a class. Optionally, have students listen to author Allison Friedman read the article while they follow along. (The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.)
- Discuss the following close-reading and critical-thinking questions, some of which draw on both articles.

Close-Reading Question

(5 minutes)

The following question can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **Since soap was invented about 5,000 years ago, how has the way people keep clean changed? Use information from both articles in your answer.** (synthesis, key ideas) *Even though soap was invented about 5,000 years ago, people didn't often use it on their bodies because it was harsh and smelly. Instead, they cleaned themselves with things like rice water, crushed-up plants, or oil and sand. But many people in America didn't wash at all because they believed doing so was unhealthy. By the 1860s, people realized that washing with soap and water could carry away germs and keep them from getting sick. Today, we frequently wash with soap and water to stay clean and healthy or use hand sanitizer when soap and water aren't available.*

Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **In what ways, if any, do you think differently about soap after reading these articles?**
Answers will vary.
2. **How did Jayden Perez's donation of hand sanitizer support people in his community, aside from helping them sanitize their hands? What can we learn from his actions?** *Jayden showed people in his community that he cared about them. His act of kindness and generosity showed members of his community that they were not alone in facing Covid-19 and that they could get through it together. Jayden's actions also showed that sometimes it takes only one person and one act of kindness to make a big difference. In addition, Jayden set an example for his community of someone stepping up in a crisis to help others get through it.*

3. Skill Building and Writing

20 minutes

- Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Planning Your Story**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the writing prompt on page 15 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story article.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, which includes a range of ideas and difficulty levels.



Paired Texts, pages 11-15

Featured Skill: narrative writing

Recommended pairings from the *Scope* archives:

Paired Texts: "[The Great Stink](#)" (April 2020)

Paired Texts: "[The History of Teeth](#)" (October 2017)