

Boats in Our Harbor: teacher guide

Teacher guide. Keep separate from student materials.

Grade band	Pre-K
Subjects	History and Social Science, Mathematics, English Language Arts
Towns	Gloucester
Duration	One 25-minute circle time plus one 20-minute block center (45 minutes total) (sequence totals 45 minutes)
Prerequisites	Children have sat for a short read-aloud before.; Children know the circle, square and triangle by sight or are being introduced to them.
Essential question	What boats are in our harbor, and who works there?
Version	1.0, 2026-10-05
Review status	Draft: awaiting classroom teacher review
Lesson ID	CAC - LES - 001

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Children will be able to name at least one shape (circle, square, rectangle or triangle) they find in a boat, sail or flag.
- Children will be able to tell one thing a harbor helper (a fisherman, the harbormaster or the Coast Guard) does at work.
- Children will be able to build a boat or a harbor with blocks and tell an adult one thing about it.
- Children will be able to answer one question about a short informational passage read aloud.

Massachusetts curriculum frameworks

Code	Standard (verbatim) and source	How this lesson addresses it
PK.G.A.2	Identify various two-dimensional shapes using appropriate language. Mathematics Curriculum Framework (2017), Pre-K. Official framework , page PDF p. 27 (printed p. 24).	Children name the shapes they find in boat hulls, sails and flags during the shape hunt and while building.
PreK.T4, standard 1	With prompting and support, describe some things people do when they work inside and outside of the home, drawing on personal experience, literature, and informational texts. History and Social Science Curriculum Framework (2018), Pre-K. Official framework , page PDF p. 29.	Children describe jobs people do at the harbor: fishing, keeping the harbor safe and helping boats that need help.

Code	Standard (verbatim) and source	How this lesson addresses it
PreK.T2, standard 3	With guidance and support, use a combination of drawing, building with blocks or other materials, or dictating to construct maps and other representations of familiar places. History and Social Science Curriculum Framework (2018), Pre-K. Official framework , page PDF p. 28.	Children build a block harbor with boats, a dock and the open sea, a model of a familiar place.
RI.PK.1	With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about an informational text read aloud. English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum Framework (2017), Pre-K. Official framework , page PDF p. 29 (printed p. 26).	Children answer and ask questions about the teacher read-aloud on Gloucester Harbor.

Standards checked against the official Massachusetts DESE framework documents on Oct. 5, 2026.

Materials

- Paper shapes cut from card: large and small triangles, rectangles, squares and circles (at least one set per child)
- Unit blocks or other wooden blocks
- Blue fabric, a blue towel or a long piece of paper labeled OCEAN for the block center
- Small toy people or clothespin people (optional)
- Three simple hats or name cards for role play: FISHER, HARBORMASTER, COAST GUARD
- Chart paper and a marker
- Clipboard with the observation checklist

Setup

Before circle time, tape a large rectangle on the floor or on chart paper and label it BOAT. Hide paper shapes around the room (triangles for sails, rectangles and squares for hulls and cabins, circles for windows called portholes). Set up the block center with the blue cloth labeled OCEAN along one edge and a row of blocks as a dock. Put the three role cards in a basket. Have the observation checklist on a clipboard so you can mark it during the block center.

Teaching sequence

5 minutes Welcome: what floats in our harbor?

Teacher: Gather children in a circle. Say: "Gloucester is our city by the sea. It has a harbor. A harbor is a safe place by the land where boats can stop and rest. Put your hands together like a little boat. Let's make our boats rock on the water." Rock your hands and invite children to copy. Ask: "Who has seen a boat? What did it look like?"

Students: Rock their hand boats, then share one thing they remember about a boat they have seen.

8 minutes Read-aloud: Boats and Helpers in Gloucester Harbor

Teacher: Read passage R1 slowly. Stop at each star in the passage and ask the question printed there. After reading, ask: "What does a fisherman catch? Who helps boats stay safe in the harbor?" Accept pointing, gestures and single

words.

Students: Listen and answer the stop questions with words, pointing or acting it out. Ask their own questions.

7 minutes Shape hunt: build a boat on the floor

Teacher: Say: "Boats are made of shapes. Let's find shapes hidden in our room and build a boat together." Send children to find one shape each. As each child returns, ask: "What shape did you find? Where does it go on our boat?" Model the words: "A triangle can be a sail. A rectangle can be the bottom of the boat, called the hull. A circle can be a round window, called a porthole."

Students: Find a hidden shape, name it (or point to the matching shape on the chart) and add it to the class boat.

5 minutes Harbor helpers act it out

Teacher: Pull one role card from the basket and read it. Say for FISHER: "Pull up your net. Heavy! Lots of fish!" For HARBORMASTER: "Hold up your hand. Slow down, boats! Go this way!" For COAST GUARD: "Drive your fast boat. Who needs help? Here I come!" Have the whole class act out each helper. Then say: "In the block center you can build a harbor for these helpers."

Students: Act out each harbor helper with whole-body movements and say the helper's words.

20 minutes Block center: build our harbor

Teacher: Open the block center for small groups of three or four. Say: "Build a boat or a harbor. Put your boat on the ocean or at the dock." Move between groups and ask: "Tell me about your boat. What shapes did you use? Who works on your boat? Where will your boat go?" Mark the observation checklist as you listen. Write down one sentence each child dictates about the build and post it beside the build.

Students: Build a boat, a dock or a whole harbor with blocks and tell an adult about it, naming a shape or a helper.

Background for the teacher

This lesson introduces Gloucester Harbor as a familiar community place. The City of Gloucester has a Harbormaster office at 19 Harbor Loop. The city says the harbormaster promotes the responsible use of the city's waterways, and the listed duties include responding to distress calls, keeping navigation safe, maintaining waterways and managing city moorings. The U.S. Coast Guard History Program reports that Coast Guard Station Gloucester sits on the western side of Gloucester Harbor and was completed and put in operation in 1901. You do not need to share dates with Pre-K children. The focus is shapes, jobs and building. Points are set to 0 because this is an observation-based lesson; use the checklist for your records and family conferences.

Handling sensitive topics

This lesson is about boats, shapes and community helpers only. It does not mention accidents, storms or loss, and teachers should keep it that way for this age. If a child shares a worry about boats or the water, say: "There are many helpers who keep people safe at the harbor, like the harbormaster and the Coast Guard." Follow up privately with the child or family if needed.

Discussion prompts

- What did you see in our story that you have seen in real life?
- Why do boats need a harbor?
- Which harbor helper would you like to be? Why?
- What shapes are on your boat?

Formative checks

- During the shape hunt, can the child name the shape or point to the matching shape on the chart?
- During the read-aloud stops, does the child answer with a word, a gesture or by acting it out?
- During role play, does the child copy the helper's actions and words?

Assessment

Build a boat or a harbor with blocks and tell a grown-up one shape you used and one helper who works at the harbor.

Points: 0

Answer guidance

A1

- Triangles fit as sails or flags. Rectangles and squares fit as hulls or cabins. Circles fit as portholes.
- Accept any reasonable placement the child can explain, such as a square used as a sail.
- Look for the child naming the shape. Pointing to the matching shape on the chart counts as an emerging response.

A2

- Fisher: catches fish with nets, lines or traps and brings them to the harbor.
- Harbormaster: helps boats go the safe way, decides where boats tie up and helps people on the water.
- Coast Guard: helps boats and people who need help on the water.

A3

- Look for a structure the child calls a boat, dock or harbor, placed on or next to the ocean cloth.

- Listen for one named shape (triangle, square, rectangle or circle) and one named helper or job.
- Record the child's dictated sentence word for word.

Rubric

Criterion	4	3	2	1
Names shapes in boats	Names two or more shapes in a boat and tells where they go (for example, triangle sail).	Names one shape correctly without help.	Points to or matches a shape when the adult names it.	Does not yet name or match a shape; keep modeling shape words.
Describes a harbor job	Tells what two helpers do in their own words.	Tells what one helper does in their own words.	Acts out a helper's job or repeats the adult's words.	Watches role play but does not yet act or describe a job.
Builds a model of a familiar place	Builds a boat and harbor parts (dock, ocean) and explains how they fit together.	Builds a boat or a dock and tells one thing about it.	Builds with blocks and agrees when an adult describes it as a boat.	Explores blocks without a boat or harbor plan yet.
Answers questions about the read-aloud	Answers a stop question and asks a question of their own.	Answers a stop question with a word or phrase.	Answers with a gesture, sound or by pointing.	Listens but does not yet respond to questions.

Differentiation

Multilingual learners

- Teach four key words with gestures before the read-aloud: boat (hands together, rocking), fish (wiggle hand), help (hand raised), harbor (arms in a hug shape).
- Label the class boat parts with large printed words: SAIL, HULL, PORTHOLE. Point to each part as you say it.
- Invite children to say boat or fish in their home language and add the words to the chart.

Students with disabilities

- Use large, thick card shapes that are easy to grip; a child may point, eye-gaze or touch a choice board to name a shape.
- Offer large foam blocks or a tabletop building tray for children who build more easily sitting at a table.
- Let children who prefer less movement act out helpers with puppets or toy people instead of whole-body movement.
- Give a quiet spot and a two-step picture-free routine card read aloud: first build, then tell.

Advanced learners

- Ask the child to build two boats that are different and tell how they are different.
- Ask: How many triangles did you use? How many rectangles? Count them together.

- Invite the child to add a place for the harbormaster or the Coast Guard to the harbor build.

Print, low-bandwidth and extension options

Print: Print the read-aloud passage and the role cards. Cut shapes from any colored paper or cereal box card.

Low bandwidth: Everything in this lesson works with no screen. Read the passage aloud from the printed page.

Extensions:

- Keep the block harbor up for a week and add a new boat each day.
- Make a class book: each child dictates one page called My Boat.
- Invite a family member who works on boats or at the harbor to visit and talk about their work.
- Sing a boat song together, rocking hand boats to the beat.

Google Classroom: ready to paste

Assignment title: Boats in Our Harbor

Student instructions:

Grown-ups: please read this with your child. Look around your home with your child and find a triangle, a rectangle and a circle together, then talk about where each shape could go on a boat. Ask your child to tell you about a harbor helper: a fisherman, the harbormaster or the Coast Guard. If you have blocks, build a boat together.

Suggested points: 0

Attach:

- **student-handout.docx:** Make a copy for each student
- **slides.pptx:** Students can view file

Never attach the teacher guide to student work. See [how to use this lesson in Google Classroom](#).

Citations and rights

- City of Gloucester, Harbormaster. <https://gloucester-ma.gov/174/Harbormaster>. Facts only, in our words; City of Gloucester page, all rights reserved by the city
- U.S. Coast Guard History Program, Station Gloucester, Massachusetts. <https://www.history.uscg.mil/Browse-by-Topic/Assets/Land/All/Article/2650219/station-gloucester-massachusetts/>. Public domain (U.S. federal government work)

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