

Harvard College is founded

1636 | Grade 4 · Explain with evidence

Words to know

college — a school for study after high school

record — information kept so people can use it later

access — a way to reach, enter, or use something

Look closely



Modern topic illustration created for Massachusetts History Explorers. It is not a historical artifact.

Read the story

A college began in Cambridge in 1636. It later took the name Harvard. Early students were men. Many studied for religious work. Its history includes learning, exclusion, and people whose labor was exploited.

Harvard is the oldest college in the United States. The colonial legislature founded it. Its history includes ties to slavery, so a full account considers labor and funding alongside famous graduates.

Think, talk, and show evidence

1. State the main idea. Support it with two details from the reading.
2. Explain a change or challenge described in the text. Which words support your answer?
3. Use one vocabulary word in a new sentence about this event.
4. What can the image and caption help explain? What can they not tell you?

Follow-up reading: Anne Hutchinson challenges authority

1637–1638

Anne Hutchinson held meetings about religion. Leaders disagreed with her teachings. A court ordered her to leave Massachusetts Bay in 1637. She left in 1638. Her story raises questions about who could speak.

The civil trial and banishment order occurred in 1637; church proceedings followed in 1638. These were distinct events. Religious disagreement and expectations about women's roles shaped the conflict.

Compare the two readings. Explain one similarity or difference using a detail from each. Their order does not prove that one caused the other.

Teacher guide & source trail

Original classroom adaptation. Suggested reading levels are instructional choices, not standardized readability certifications. Use professional judgment and learner feedback.

ELA practice: RI.4.1: refer to details; RI.4.2: main idea and summary; RI.4.3: explain events; RI.4.7: interpret visual information; W.4.2 and SL.4.1: explain and discuss.

These tasks support selected skills in the [Massachusetts 2017 ELA framework](#); they do not establish mastery of an entire standard.

Answer guidance

Factual anchor: A college began in Cambridge in 1636. It later took the name Harvard. Early students were men. Many studied for religious work. Its history includes learning, exclusion, and people whose labor was exploited. Harvard is the oldest college in the United States. The colonial legislature founded it. Its history includes ties to slavery, so a full account considers labor and funding alongside famous graduates.

Accept accurate main ideas and explanations supported by the text. Vocabulary meanings are in the opening word bank. For picture questions, use the caption and credit below; distinguish what is visible from what is inferred. For comparison, accept a specific connection supported by both readings. Do not require personal accounts of trauma.

Continue the inquiry

[Research source for this event ↗](#)

[Research source for follow-up ↗](#)

[Event page, accessible HTML reading, and vocabulary game ↗](#)

Image: Original site illustration.

[Image source and rights record ↗](#)

The PDF contains selectable English text and embedded fonts. For adjustable text and browser reading tools, use the event's [HTML page](#). External sources may need adult guidance.