

Boston research helps fight polio

1949 | Grade 4 · Explain with evidence

Words to know

research — careful study to find out more

cooperate — work together

discover — find out something new to the person looking

Look closely



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

Read the story

Researchers John Enders, Thomas Weller, and Frederick Robbins grew poliovirus in laboratory tissue cultures. Their work in Boston helped later vaccine research. Scientific progress often depends on many teams.

The discovery was recognized with the 1954 Nobel Prize in medicine. It did not mean these researchers alone invented every polio vaccine. Distinguish a research method from later development and public use.

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: The Brink's robbery

1950

Robbers stole a large amount of money from Brink's in Boston. Investigators worked for years on the case. Newspapers gave it dramatic names. Studying a crime means checking evidence, not admiring the harm.

Different records answer different questions about a case. A headline attracts attention but may leave out uncertainty. Compare investigation records, court outcomes, and the effects on people involved.

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: Researchers John Enders, Thomas Weller, and Frederick Robbins grew poliovirus in laboratory tissue cultures. Their work in Boston helped later vaccine research. Scientific progress often depends on many teams. The discovery was recognized with the 1954 Nobel Prize in medicine. It did not mean these researchers alone invented every polio vaccine. Distinguish a research method from later development and public use.

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.