

Federal funding for the Big Dig

1987 | Grade 4 · Explain with evidence

Words to know

plan — steps chosen to reach a goal

engineer — a person who designs and tests structures or systems

public — connected to people as a whole

Look closely



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

Read the story

Federal legislation helped fund Boston's Big Dig highway project. The plan would replace the elevated Central Artery with tunnels. Building it required many years of engineering work.

Planning came before the funding milestone; major construction began in 1991. Separate authorization, construction, opening, and final completion when following a large public project.

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: Aquinnah gains federal recognition

1987

The Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head, Aquinnah, gained federal recognition. Community members had worked for this outcome. Recognition changed the government relationship; it did not create the people or their history.

Aquinnah's tribal community existed long before 1987. Federal recognition is a legal and political status, not a test of whether Indigenous identity is real. Learn from the Tribe's account of its work.

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: Federal legislation helped fund Boston’s Big Dig highway project. The plan would replace the elevated Central Artery with tunnels. Building it required many years of engineering work. Planning came before the funding milestone; major construction began in 1991. Separate authorization, construction, opening, and final completion when following a large public project.

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.