



Pollyanna Racial Literacy Curriculum

PARENT/GUARDIAN COMPANION GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Why is it important to learn about and discuss race?

Educators, sociologists, and psychologists recommend that we address concepts of race and racism with our children as soon as possible. For example, in the landmark book, *The First R: How Children Learn Race and Racism*, sociologists Debra Van Ausdale and Joe Feagin assert that children as young as three years old, “take various bits of racial and ethnic information from the surrounding world and then experiment with and use that information in their everyday interactions with other children and with adults.” Unfortunately, much of this “experimentation,” is a mirroring of what children have absorbed from the adult social world, including the use of racial epithets and/or forms of social exclusion based on perceived differences, or race and ethnicity. Another study, conducted by psychologist Kang Lee finds that children may develop racial bias as young as six months old. While children may experience race in unique ways, it is clear that most, if not all, of our children are already operating in a racialized world before they even learn to read. Such studies support the importance of developing our children’s racial literacy skills and exposure to positive portrayals of a diverse range of people — across race, gender, socioeconomic status, etc. — as young as possible. As they enter school, more formal lessons about race are essential.

What is the Racial Literacy Curriculum?

Pollyanna’s Racial Literacy Curriculum for Grades K-8 is designed to help students gain crucial knowledge about race in the United States, and enhance students’ awareness of their own racial socialization and skills for engaging in productive conversations about race and racism. Unique in its multidisciplinary approach, the Racial Literacy Curriculum incorporates history, language arts, geography, science, and sociology to better understand the social construction of race and ethnicity in the United States. Utilizing a “both/and” framework, the Curriculum approaches race and racism with a nuanced view, such as how learning about and discussing race and racial identity can be both a challenging and empowering experience. We believe that racial literacy is an essential skill set to develop, and our free Curriculum serves as a vital toolkit for all students and educators — one that provides both “mirrors,” a way to see ourselves reflected in the classroom, and “windows,” the opportunity to better understand and connect with others.

“If the student is understood as occupying a dwelling of self, education needs to enable the student to look through window frames in order to see the realities of others and into mirrors in order to see her/his own reality reflected.”

– Emily Style

How is the Curriculum structured?


We have developed a spiral curriculum with grade-appropriate lessons. Guided by the idea that it is important to recognize similarities and celebrate differences, lessons created for the younger grades, such as Kindergarten through Grade 2, encourage students to build a positive sense of self as they increase their racial, cultural, and geographical awareness. By Grade 3, lessons begin to incorporate more historical information as students learn about forms of racial discrimination, such as segregation and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It should be noted that in order to paint a fuller picture of humanity, when the Curriculum introduces what many consider “hard history,” we intentionally and simultaneously introduce students to the individuals — both historical figures and everyday people — who resisted and are considered advocates of their respective era. To dispel myths of racial superiority, an entire unit recommended for Grades 4 and above explores the social, economic, and political advantage some ancient civilizations garnered through geography, which compounded over time and eventually led to global colonialism. These lessons guide students to powerful realizations, such as how some populations were able to globally enslave others not because of inherent superiority, but because of “geographic luck.”

To better understand the modern construction of race and the creation of racism, as well as the policies and laws that created and reinforced an unnatural racial hierarchy, the units suggested for Grade 5 and Grade 6 return to the history and current society of the United States. By Grade 7, students will critique the biological fallacy of race and pseudoscientific racism that plagued the United States in centuries past, and will analyze the importance of representation, or the ways race has manifested, and continues to manifest, in the media and how imagery can serve as a tool for empowerment. Finally, by Grade 8, lessons are designed to expose students to systemic manifestations of racism, such as housing discrimination and the prison industrial complex, with the goal of sharpening students’ overall knowledge and critical thinking skills. For a culminating activity, students will create an action plan centered on social and/or racial justice. In short, the more students learn about how race and racism were constructed the more they are equipped to deconstruct the problematic aspects of race to reconstruct it into something new.

More information about each unit is included in subsequent sections of this Companion Guide.

What is the Parent/Guardian Companion Guide?

This Parent/Guardian Companion Guide provides an in-depth overview of each unit featured in the Racial Literacy Curriculum, recommends questions and conversation suggestions for parents and guardians to facilitate dialogue at home that centers on race, culture, and identity, and suggests reading and viewing material to enhance racial literacy. Serving to bridge the classroom and home, this Companion Guide will encourage teachers, parents and guardians to work together to best support their children’s growth.



“It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.”

– Maya Angelou

How is the Companion Guide structured?

Because schools may not all teach specific topics at the same grade level, the following units are accompanied with a recommendation, not a requirement for the grade(s) that may be best served by the information. To best fit the already existing curriculum of your student's school, teachers and administrators may adapt Pollyanna's Racial Literacy Curriculum by teaching a unit in the recommended grade, or a grade close to it. For example, schools may begin teaching ancient civilizations at different times. While we recommend the unit "The Development of Civilization – How Geography Gave Some Populations a Head Start (Dispelling Myths of Racial Superiority)" starting in Grade 4, a school may find it serves their fifth, sixth, or even seventh grade students better. Those sorts of decisions may be directed by faculty and administrators, as they have a greater sense of the curricular needs and best interests of their students and the larger community. In short, while the units are presented in an intentional order, there is room for some fluctuation.

For each unit, a similar structure is presented and includes: 1) a summary of what's being taught, 2) an explanation of why the content is valuable for students to learn, and 3) suggestions for how to continue the conversation at home, which will include further suggestions for reading and/or viewing materials. In the upper grades, as the content becomes increasingly detailed and saturated in facts we provide more content, such as important facts or figures, to enhance parent and guardian understanding of a particular topic.

Finally, this Companion Guide was crafted with parents and guardians in mind. Some families may have more or less time and resources. Thus, we envision the Companion Guide as a place to come for resources and guidance, but it is not a mandatory prerequisite for your child. Provide support if and when you can. If you have the time and interest, this may serve as your Guide.

Before moving into the Curriculum, let's review important vocabulary, or the terminology used in the Curriculum and this Companion Guide.

Quick Notes About Terminology

Why Race?

For our Racial Literacy Curriculum, and for this Parent/Guardian Companion Guide, we are using the word "race" to encompass the concepts of both race and ethnicity. Race is a modern idea, a social construction created to reinforce an unnatural hierarchy based on perceived physical attributes, which has served and continues to serve as a primary foundation of U.S. society. There is no biological truth to race, but there is a social truth to it — one we must identify, analyze, and reconstruct in order to create a more egalitarian society with equitable access to opportunities.



"Race is not based on biology, but race is rather an idea we have ascribed to biology."

– Alan Goodman

Race is Not Biologically “Real”

Many people used to (and some still do) believe that race is rooted in biology, and that humans of different races could even be different species. While we have differences in physical appearances — such as skin color, hair texture, eye shape, etc. — most scholars and scientists today assert that these are simply superficial differences. We inherited such differences from our ancestors when they were more isolated from one another tens of thousands of years ago. Over time, some populations formed a distinct set of genetic mutations, some of which created a range of human skin color, hair texture, and other visible and non-visible differences. Even with this genetic variation, there is no “race” chromosome to point to in our DNA. Nor is there any consistent way to “measure” one’s race. As Alan Goodman, a professor of biological anthropology states, “Race is not based on biology, but race is rather an idea we have ascribed to biology.” In fact, science now shows us that genetically, we have more in common than we have different, because we share 99.9 percent of our DNA. For that marginal difference of

one-tenth of a percent, there is often more genetic variation within a “race” than there is across the “races.” For the past few centuries, members of U.S. society — including lawmakers and the masses — have taken these visible, superficial differences and have attached them to fluctuating racial categories. Even though race is a fluid sociological concept, the identity of one’s race can manifest in measurable economic and physiological outcomes that can impact one’s life, such as access to education and even life expectancy. On the other hand, recognizing and embracing concepts of race may also offer a (perhaps unintended) sense of community and identity. Thus, as opposed to employing a “color blind” philosophy, we advocate for a “color conscious” approach, one that recognizes the vast implication race has on our lives and in larger U.S. society. Given our increasingly multicultural and multiracial population, gaining knowledge about race, our racial socialization, and how to engage in conversations about race and racism are necessary social and life skills. We begin developing such racial literacy by recognizing our similarities and celebrating our differences.

Race vs Ethnicity

There are differences worth noting between the terms “race” and “ethnicity.” As defined by the American Sociological Association: “‘Race’ refers to physical differences that groups and cultures consider socially significant, while ‘ethnicity’ refers to shared culture, such as language, ancestry, practices, and beliefs.” Since it recognizes cultural practices, the term “ethnicity” may actually be a more “accurate” label to encompass and/or express aspects of one’s identity. However, much of U.S. society regularly employs the term “race,” and in order to create a point of access with the audience and to speak to social structures of inequality, power, and stratification, we are using the term “race.”

Words are Important

As we know, words are important. Throughout this Companion Guide, words have been chosen with great intention. For example, as you’ll note in upcoming unit descriptions, we have chosen to use the term “enslaved people” rather than “slave(s).” We use “enslaved people” in an effort to underscore and recognize the undeniable humanity and dignity of those who were forced to endure an unfair, racist institution. When adding the word “people,” we remind ourselves of the unnatural order some unfortunately declared was predetermined and/or acceptable. Upon first glance, the difference between terms like “enslaved people” and “slave(s)” may seem like a trivial distinction, but for our students, and for us, they may mean the difference between feeling shame or feeling pride. Feeling invisible or feeling seen. Terms like “enslaved people,” encourage us to see others, or ourselves, as inherently worthy. In short, these are not trivial decisions. Words matter.

More vocabulary is included in subsequent sections of this Companion Guide, presenting terminology in grade-appropriate order, or the order we expect students to learn new words.

The Physical World Around Us – A Celebration of Skin Colors

Recommendation: Grade Kindergarten

“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

– Nelson Mandela

What’s Being Taught

Younger students, especially kindergarteners, learn vocabulary to describe their physical world, such as colors and shapes. This unit includes grade-appropriate art, social studies, and science lessons to teach students how to categorize and compare colors. It gradually increases in complexity as students ultimately explore skin, such as the function of skin and why we have different skin colors. In the spirit of promoting inclusivity and fostering curiosity, students are encouraged to share questions and explore ideas through a range of activities, including read alouds, discussions, and art projects that teach students how to mix colors to create various skin colors, as well as to match and embrace their own skin tone.

Why It’s Valuable

The inaugural unit, lessons begin to teach students a key idea that is embedded throughout the entire Curriculum: the importance of both recognizing similarities and celebrating differences. With this “both/and” approach, students are encouraged to note that everyone counts, including themselves. They are encouraged to identify and develop their own sense of self while also learning to connect to others. By the end of the unit, students will develop connections between colors, skin, and identity to foster a greater sense of belonging.

How to Continue the Conversation at Home

To further promote conversations at home, consider reading, watching, or sharing the following activities with your child. Please note that while the following are suggestions and not requirements, one discussion has been marked as “The essential discussion.” If time and resources are limited, please consider prioritizing this particular suggestion.

Discuss and model routines for skincare with your child

- We spend a lot of time thinking and talking about skin, especially skin colors, but what is skin, and what function does it serve? The “job” of our skin is a featured lesson of the Curriculum, which includes the idea of taking care of our skin. Parents and guardians may want to model for their child how they take care of their own skin, such as routines that encourage cleanliness, moisturizing, protection from the elements, etc.
- Consider telling your child that our skin does an important job for us (i.e. it provides protection, helps regulate temperature, provides a sense of touch like hot and cold or rough and smooth). Because of this, it’s important that we do our job, which is to take care of our skin!

The essential discussion: Why do we have different skin colors?

- If all of our skin provides a similar function, why do we have different skin colors? It’s an important question to address. Here is one suggestion to guide this conversation: “What makes our skin different colors is a pigment called **melanin**. When people have more melanin, their skin is darker. When people have less melanin, their skin is lighter. Depending on where our ancestors came from, we may have more or less melanin. A long time ago, before we lived in permanent homes, skin with more melanin helped people live with a lot of sun. And skin with less melanin helped people live with less sun. Now, we live all over the world. So, no matter where we live, our skin can be different colors.”
- It may be helpful to follow this with a discussion of your own skin color, which is mentioned in the following section.

Converse and paint with your child

- Since the unit focuses on developing a positive sense of self and awareness of others, including a celebration of our skin colors, parents and guardians may want to speak with their child about their own sense of identity and their own skin color, and/or racial/ethnic identity. If your skin color is similar to your child’s own skin color or racial/ethnic identity, speak to that. If it is quite different, honor that as well. As no two skin colors are “exactly” the same, it may be helpful to underscore how our skin color, just like our personalities and dreams, are unique to each of us. The goal is to normalize such discussions so children have the opportunity to develop a fuller, more positive sense of self, and to learn to see their skin color as something that is remarkable and beautiful.
- If time and resources allow, consider creating colors at home to represent various skin colors, such as the skin colors of family members. To create skin colors, we suggest starting with orange paint. Add black, or a color close to black, to make orange a darker shade. Add white, or a color close to white, to make orange a lighter tint. To change the hue, consider adding yellow and/or red paint to the mix. This method illustrates that skin color is actually inherently similar in its “roots,” as the earliest humans of equatorial Africa — whom we all evolve from — were darkly pigmented. Over time, we have each transformed into someone unique. Some skin simply has either more or less melanin, or pigment. In this context, we are both similar and different.

Converse and look at art with your child

- If time and resources are available, consider visiting a museum or viewing artwork online. With your child, discuss the similarities and differences of the people featured in the artwork. How are they similar and different from your child? From you? How do differences add to a community?
- For a specific resource, we highly recommend referencing the photographic work of Angélica Dass. For her ongoing project, *Humanae*, she has photographed thousands of people. After photographing each person, Dass chooses a Pantone background based on a portion of their skin pigment (most people are not evenly one color). Through her work, we can visually see the beautiful range of colors we all come in. Her work is available here: <https://www.angelicadass.com/humanae-project>
- When speaking of the physical differences we can see, it may also be helpful to remind students that we have similarities as well. Additionally, sometimes our similarities and differences also include things we cannot see, as our “inside” self is worth celebrating just as much as our “outside” self. Our interests, personalities, and hobbies also add to who we are. As students reflect and begin to label aspects of their physical selves, such as speaking about skin colors and perhaps forming a sense of racial identity, it may be helpful to have students begin to identify other parts of themselves, such as words to describe their personalities and/or actions (i.e. kind, generous, outgoing, thoughtful, etc.) so they develop a more nuanced sense of self.

Read and watch with your child

As skin becomes a central area of focus in this unit, the recommended picture books and discussions of the Curriculum feature characters and figures that are human, as opposed to utilizing fictional texts with animals. The following includes some of these recommended materials for use in the Racial Literacy lessons, which parents and guardians may find useful:

- *Red is a Dragon: A Book of Colors*, a picture book by Roseanne Thong and Grace Lin.
- *Green is a Chile Pepper: A Book of Colors*, a picture book by Roseanne Thong and John Parra.
- *Round is a Mooncake: A Book of Shapes*, a picture book by Roseanne Thong and Grace Lin.
- *Round is a Tortilla: A Book of Shapes*, a picture book by Roseanne Thong and John Parra.
- *Same, Same But Different*, a picture book by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw.
- *Colors of Me*, a picture book by Brynne Barnes and Annika M. Nelson.
- *The Skin You Live In*, a picture book by Michael Tyler.
- “Sesame Street: Beautiful Skin Song,” a video created by Sesame Street. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oq9ydJK6Fn8>

For further reading and viewing materials for children even younger than Grade K, consider the following videos. Since they use puppets to drive the conversation, we recommend these resources for a Pre-K or younger audience:

- “Sesame Street: Colors of Me,” a video created by Sesame Street. Available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sqN2J9_axY&t=34s
- “Sesame Street: Lupita Nyong’o Loves Her Skin,” a video created by Sesame Street. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIC2hHECZ6Y>
- “Sesame Street: I Love My Hair,” a video created by Sesame Street. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=en-pFde5rgmw>
- “Sesame Street: I Love My Hair Song (Mando’s Spanish Version),” a video created by Sesame Street. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYMsijwAY0w>

For additional resources, consider the books curated and published by Lee & Low Books, the “largest multicultural children’s book publisher in the United States.”

- Lee & Low Books’ library is available here: <https://www.leeandlow.com>

Watch on your own

Finally, parents and guardians may want to watch TED Talks given by photographer Angélica Dass, describing *Humanae* — Dass’s artistic pursuit to “document humanity’s true colors.”

- In her first TED Talk, “The Beauty of Human Skin In Every Color,” Angélica Dass speaks to the nuance and beauty of skin color. Please note that is appropriate for adult viewers, not for young students. Available here: https://www.ted.com/talks/angelica_dass_the_beauty_of_human_skin_in_every_color
- In her second TED Talk, “What Kids Should Know About Race,” Angélica Dass shares her work and how it is inspiring “educators around the world to encourage inclusion and equality.” Available here: https://www.ted.com/talks/angelica_dass_what_kids_should_know_about_race

To learn more about why humans evolved to have different skin colors, the following TED-Ed and TED Talk videos may serve as informative resources for parents and guardians. We recommend these for parents and guardians only, as the content is advanced.

- “The Science of Skin Color,” a TED-Ed animation by Angela Koine Flynn. Available here: <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-science-of-skin-color-angela-koine-flynn>
- “Skin Color Is An Illusion,” a TED Talk by Nina Jablonski. Available here: https://www.ted.com/talks/nina_jablonski_breaks_the_illusion_of_skin_color?language=en

“Diversity is the most powerful resource of our species and it has to be celebrated.”

– Angélica Dass

We Are Part of a Larger Community – Encouraging Kindness, Social Awareness, and Empathy

Recommendation: Grade 1

“As you discover what strength you can draw from your community in this world from which it stands apart, look outward as well as inward. Build bridges instead of walls.”

– Sonia Sotomayor

What’s Being Taught

In this unit, lessons are designed to actively and positively build our students’ sense of self and expand their social awareness in an effort to create open-minded individuals and a more inclusive classroom community. To enhance communication and social skills, classroom discussions and activities aim to examine the roles we play in larger groups and the impact we can have on the well-being of our peers in the classroom, as well as the community beyond the school’s walls. Aspects of students’ identities will be explored, such as their names, neighborhoods, and cultures/ethnicities, with the goal of developing a sense of pride, or the positive awareness of oneself and others.

Why It’s Valuable

Fostering a sense of community is an integral element of school and the development of a young student’s racial literacy. Lessons centered on social awareness will encourage students to find ways to connect to others by recognizing similarities and celebrating the value their differences bring to the community. True learning can happen when students see themselves in others and learn to see their differences as strengths. Perhaps the ultimate goal is for young students to understand that the binding force of humanity is love — or our capacity for respect, kindness, acceptance, and empathy. It begins with believing in ourselves.

How to Continue the Conversation at Home

To further promote conversations at home, consider reading, watching, or sharing the following activities with your child. Please note that while the following are suggestions and not requirements, one discussion has been marked as “The essential discussion.” If time and resources are limited, please consider prioritizing this particular suggestion.

Go for a walk with your child

- If time, resources, and accessibility allow for it, consider going for a neighborhood walk with your child. When viewing and/or discussing the neighborhood, try to highlight things you enjoy about it. Consider the following questions to help prompt discussion: In our neighborhood, what are examples of beauty? What makes it special or different? How is it similar to other places? Do people help each other? If so, what kinds of things do they do for each other? How can we contribute to our community?

Use specific vocabulary with your child

- Consider discussing and defining the following term with your child, as it is incorporated in the Curriculum and will likely be used in the classroom:

Culture: “Culture is a pattern of behavior shared by a society, or group of people. Many different things make up a society’s culture. These things include food, language, clothing, tools, music, arts, customs, beliefs, and religion.”
(Source: *Britannica Kids*) With influence from other groups and people, aspects of a given culture can change over time. Sometimes we can represent or be influenced by a blend of cultures.

Discuss your identity, family, and values with your child

- The lessons in the unit are designed to help students recognize the importance of identity and culture — to think of their own identity, or sense of self, and to appreciate the similarities and differences of other people. To speak more about identity and culture at home, consider the following questions to help prompt discussion: What kinds of ideas make up our identity? (A good place to start may be with your child’s name. From there, they may then describe other aspects of themselves.) Why is it important to think about our identities? What is culture? Why is it important to learn about different cultures and cultural practices?
- The lessons in this unit are also crafted to encourage students to embrace the concept of family — to find value and pride in their family and to embrace the diversity of families. To speak more about the concept of family consider the following questions to help prompt discussion: What makes a family? Who is in our family? How is our family similar to and different from other families? How can we learn more about and embrace different types of families? When discussing, encourage your children to recognize various family structures, such as how some families may have two parents, one parent, same-sex parents, adoptive parent(s), or foster parent(s). Some families are multigenerational, multicultural, multiracial, etc. Some families may have specific religious beliefs and some may not. In short, a family can mean so many things: the size of our families can be different; where our families are from may be different; the colors and racial or ethnic makeup of our families may be different; the members of our families may be different. Yet, families can also feel similar to one another. What brings families together? Hopefully, it’s kindness, empathy, and love!
- An overarching objective of the lessons is to make individuals in the community feel visible and valued. A picture book referenced in the lessons, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids*, by Carol McCloud and David Messing, speaks to the idea of “filling one’s bucket,” or how the actions and words we use can impact someone else.

For example, when we use positive words and take positive actions, we “fill one’s bucket.” When we use negative words and take negative actions, we “dip from one’s bucket.” To continue the conversation at home, consider asking your child the following questions: What are actions we can take at home that make other people feel valued? What are actions or words you would like to receive so you can feel valued? What is empathy and why is it important? What does it mean to feel included? What does inclusive mean? What is an inclusive community? What does it mean to be kind and why is it important and/or beneficial? How does being kind impact our own self-worth and the well-being of others? How can we show appreciation for others in our community and beyond?

The essential discussion: How our differences can be strengths

- While it is important to recognize similarities, it is just as important to understand that our differences can serve as strengths. It may be a powerful experience for parents and guardians to speak with their child about their own differences and how they have served as sources of strength or opportunity. (If such “differences” present both challenges and opportunities, speak to that as well.) Additionally, parents and guardians may share ways they have found success in working together with different people, such as how they were introduced to new and interesting things when learning about different people and cultural practices in the workplace, at school, or other public spheres.
- To further engage your child, consider asking them to think of ways they may feel different. How may this difference be a strength? How are our family members similar? How have similarities helped us enjoy certain activities together? How are our family members different? How have our differences (and similarities) helped us relate to each other? How have our unique qualities helped to make our household and/or family strong? For ideas, consider thinking about how differences and a multitude of experiences and perspectives may lead to new activities, food or book suggestions, routines, etc. Consider expanding the discussion, such as transitioning from family to include the larger neighborhood or community, by asking: How can we as unique individuals add to different groups in our lives? For ideas, consider thinking about your child’s classroom, places they play or activities they are involved in, groups of friends, teams, etc.
- To spark more discussion, consider researching historical or contemporary figures who may share the same “differences” as your child. How did this identifying marker or experience (eventually) serve as a strength or opportunity for this person? After speaking about differences, consider including similarities as well. For example, how is your child similar to other people in society or figures of history? Conversations may be guided to include race, gender, or other social identities and eventually expand to “internal” or nonvisible ideas, such as personality traits, interests, etc. By including such content, we may apply the “both/and” approach, encouraging our students to embrace both similarities and differences, and to develop a sense of self that incorporates both their “external” and “internal” identifiers. Why may it be a good idea to celebrate both similarities and differences?
- If short on time, narrow the conversation down to two questions, which serve the ultimate goal of the Curriculum, which is to recognize ways we are similar and celebrate ways we are different: What is diversity, or difference, and why is it important? How can unique individuals build strong(er) communities?

Read with your child

As this unit aims to create a more inclusive classroom community, the recommended picture books represent an array of social emotional and cultural objectives, such as the importance of working as a team, helping others, identifying ourselves and our families, finding ways to connect with other people, and viewing our differences as strengths. The following includes some of the materials recommended for use in the Racial Literacy lessons, which parents and guardians may find useful:

- *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids*, a picture book by Carol McCloud and David Messing.
- *The Invisible Boy*, a picture book by Tracy Ludwig and Patrice Barton.
- *Last Stop on Market Street*, a picture book by Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson.
- *My Name is Yoon*, a picture book by Helen Recorvits and Gabi Swiatkowska.
- *One Family*, a picture book by George Shannon and Blanca Gomez.
- *Children Around the World*, a nonfiction picture book by Donata Montanari.

As mentioned in the previous unit, for additional resources, consider the books curated and published by Lee & Low Books, the “largest multicultural children’s book publisher in the United States.”

- Lee & Low Books’ library is available here: <https://www.leeandlow.com>

“Diversity is the magic. It is the first manifestation, the first beginning of the differentiation of a thing and of simple identity. The greater the diversity, the greater the perfection.”

– Thomas Berry

Diversity Around the World – How Our Geography and Our Daily Lives Connect Us

Recommendation: Grade 2

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”

– Audre Lorde

“In our work and in our living, we must recognize that difference is a reason for celebration and growth, rather than a reason for destruction.”

– Audre Lorde

What’s Being Taught

This unit utilizes nonfiction and fiction texts to explore the role and impact geography has on our lives, including the development of culture. Through this lens of geography, students will learn more about how people live around the world, as well as the experiences they themselves bring into the classroom. By investigating aspects of our daily lives and routines — housing, clothing, hobbies, traditions, family, food, etc. — students will understand the interconnectedness of humans and the environment, or how our physical and cultural space shapes us and vice versa. By highlighting people and cultures around the world, the proposed lessons combine to enhance our students’ cultural competence and global citizenship.

Why It’s Valuable

As students grow, their awareness should expand from the self to begin to include others, the community, and eventually extend to the larger world. In addition to enhancing geography skills, students will enhance their own cultural competence and racial literacy as lessons encourage students to employ various perspectives to understand that there is value and meaning to how others live. With a focus on celebrating differences and recognizing similarities, an ultimate goal is for students to apply a lens of inclusivity while expanding their sense of self and awareness of our larger world — which is a big, diverse place, filled with both unique beauty and commonality.

How to Continue the Conversation at Home

To further promote conversations at home, consider reading, watching, or sharing the following activities with your child. Please note that while the following are suggestions and not requirements, one discussion has been marked as “The essential discussion.” If time and resources are limited, please consider prioritizing this particular suggestion.

Use specific vocabulary with your child

- Consider discussing and defining the following terms with your child, as they are incorporated in the Curriculum and will likely be used in the classroom:

Culture: “Culture is a pattern of behavior shared by a society, or group of people. Many different things make up a society’s culture. These things include food, language, clothing, tools, music, arts, customs, beliefs, and religion.”

(Source: *Britannica Kids*) With influence from other groups and people, aspects of a given culture can change over time. Sometimes we can represent or be influenced by a blend of cultures.

Ethnicity: “The term ethnicity may be used to describe the cultural background of a person. An ethnic group is made up of people who share the same ethnicity.” (Source: *Britannica Kids*) While ethnicity is often used in reference to race, some usage of ethnicity is more connected to a societal group, often rooted in religious, cultural, and/or linguistic affiliation. Using the term ethnicity can often include nationality and culture, and sometimes race (though race is not a biological truth, it does have a social reality and/or cultural manifestation).

Learn about geography and other countries with your child

- To enhance cultural competency, racial literacy, and global awareness, it is important to consider and respect how other people in the world live, and how this is both similar and different to how we live.
- To support your child in learning more about the world, consider reviewing maps, atlases, or other informative resources with them. For an interactive activity, and if time and resources allow, consider using software — such as Google Earth — to get a better idea of how the continents and countries are connected, as well as the world’s varied terrains. For video exposure, consider viewing episodes or brief clips from BBC’s *Planet Earth* and/or *Planet Earth II*. Please keep in mind that some content may be considered violent to some audiences, such as hunting scenes. Common Sense Media rates the *Planet Earth* programming for ages 7 and up. We recommend pre-screening the material to assess if it is appropriate for your particular child. When choosing appropriate scenes and/or episodes, consider exposing your child to landforms they may not be familiar with, or landforms that are different from where you live. For more information about specific countries, consider visiting *Britannica Kids*, an age-appropriate resource to begin research. Available here: <https://kids.britannica.com/kids>
- Consider extending the conversation of geography to also include the environment. Discuss why it is important to take care of the environment. What happens when we destroy our natural resources, such as potable, or drinkable, water? What can we do to prevent more destruction? How can we better protect our environment? Why does this matter?

Read and cook with your child

- Because this unit encourages students to recognize similarities and celebrate differences with people around the world, consider reading the following picture books with your child, which have been suggested as extension activities in the lessons. Both books include recipes from the stories: *Mama Panya's Pancakes*, a picture book by Mary Chamberlin, Richard Chamberlin, and Julia Cairns; and *Salsa: Un Poema Para Cocinar/A Cooking Poem*, a picture book by Jorge Argueta and Duncan Tonatiuh. Also, consider researching new recipes together.
- To see how children eat around the world, and/or to inspire a conversation about health and nutrition, parents and guardians may want to view "What Kids Eat Around the World," photographs and text by Gregg Segal of *Time* magazine. Available here: <https://time.com/what-kids-eat-around-the-world-in-one-week/>

The essential discussion: How we view our "cultural" selves and others

- Having a conversation with your child about culture is a helpful way to share your particular values. What is culture? (For guidance, we have provided a definition in the Vocabulary section.) To begin the conversation, consider illustrating the culture of your own family. Consider the following questions to help prompt discussion: What are some of our core beliefs as a family? What are some of our important practices, routines and rituals? What are some of our pastimes and shared activities? How are they similar to those of other people we know? How are they different? Since the unit speaks to how geography shapes culture, consider talking with your child about your particular neighborhood. Consider the following questions to help prompt discussion: How has our town or neighborhood shaped our culture? What are some of the cultural practices in our town or neighborhood? For guidance, you may speak about what you wear, what you eat, language(s) spoken, holidays or customs shared, the media you consume, etc.
- Expand the conversation to include others outside of your family. When learning about new places, people, and cultures, engage your child with dialogue. Consider the following questions to help prompt discussion: How is this region of the world, or culture, both similar and different to where or how we live? How is their home, clothing, food, language(s), customs, beliefs, etc. both similar and different to us? Do you think we have values that are both similar and different? If you were from "here," or "this country or region," what is something you would be proud of? What may we learn from each other's cultures? Why is it important to learn about different cultures and cultural practices?
- Sometimes people "see" or "view" others through a lens of judgment. Consider speaking with your child about this, such as by asking: What is judgment? How does judging others cloud our ability to recognize connections? How might we stop ourselves when realizing that we are judging others? What questions could we come up with to help us explore our differences with other people and cultures so we don't judge them, but value them?

Read and watch with your child

The following includes some of the materials recommended for use in the Racial Literacy lessons, which parents and guardians may find useful to learn more about people — such as what they eat and wear — around the world:

- *National Geographic Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, an atlas by Elizabeth Carney.
- *If You Lived Here: Houses of the World*, a book by Giles Laroche.
- *What We Wear: Dressing Up Around the World*, a nonfiction book by Maya Ajmera.
- *This Is How We Do It: One Day In the Lives of Seven Kids From Around the World*, a nonfiction picture book by Matt Lamothe.
- *Children Just Like Me*, a nonfiction book by DK Penguin Random House.

- “Baked Bread: How Flour is Made,” a video created by the Eat Happy Project. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8vLjPctrCU>
- “Remarkable Rice: How Does Rice Grow,” a video created by the Eat Happy Project. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxAEiHCErSA>
- “Children Just Like Me,” a video created by DK Penguin Random House. Available here: <https://www.dkfindout.com/us/video/more-find-out/children-just-like-me-video/>
- “Children Just Like Me,” a video created by DK Penguin Random House. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4JEw3yfVGw>

For more resources about religious holidays and/or festivals, consider the following texts:

- *Holidays Around the World: Celebrate Hanukkah*, a nonfiction book by Deborah Heiligman.
- *Holidays Around the World: Celebrate Christmas*, a nonfiction book by Deborah Heiligman.
- *Holidays Around the World: Celebrate Kwanzaa*, a nonfiction book by Carolyn B. Otto.
- *Holidays Around the World: Celebrate Chinese New Year*, a nonfiction book by Carolyn B. Otto.
- *Celebrations Around the World: Adventures in Cultures Series*, a nonfiction book by Charles Murphy.
- *Holidays Around the World: Adventures in Cultures Series*, a nonfiction book by Jeff Sferazza.

“The peoples of the earth are one family.”

– Ruth Fulton Benedict

Stories of Activism – How One Voice Can Change a Community (and Bridge the World)

Recommendation: Grade 3

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

– Margaret Mead

What’s Being Taught

This unit features different stories from around the world, or voices of people who have felt different, “othered,” discriminated against, and/or persecuted and the various ways such people — both “everyday” heroes and famous figures — have responded to their situations. Inspired by such stories, students will unpack concepts of agency, individual and collective empowerment, as well as personally relevant and applicable ideas like fairness, courage, and friendship. Using a micro to macro progression, classroom dialogue will move into more sophisticated, mature topics such as discrimination — including racism and racial segregation — and a brief introduction to the institution of slavery. When learning about inequality, students will also explore the counter concept of cultivating acceptance and the importance of building/bridging diverse communities.

Why It’s Valuable

By the time students reach Third Grade, they are often presented with a more formal history curriculum and biographies of people who made positive change. By this age, students are beginning to better recognize and develop their own voice, such as what matters to them, what qualifies as fair. Ultimately, through an exploration of a multitude of voices, students will understand and analyze the power of an action and/or voice, both “big and small,” and how we can be agents of communal, social, political, and environmental change. By the end, students will comprehend the rippling effect of acts of kindness, and learn that when we work together, we are stronger.

How to Continue the Conversation at Home

To further promote conversations at home, consider reading, watching, or sharing the following activities with your child. Please note that while the following are suggestions and not requirements, one discussion has been marked as “The essential discussion.” If time and resources are limited, please consider prioritizing this particular suggestion.

A way to begin

One way to begin the conversation at home is to discuss the quote by Margaret Mead that opened this unit: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” What is the message? Who said it? Together, with your child, consider researching more about Margaret Mead. Who was she? What may have inspired her to share these words? Are they powerful, inspiring, etc.? Why do words matter?

Use specific vocabulary with your child

- Consider discussing and defining the following terms with your child, as they are incorporated in the Curriculum and will likely be used in the classroom:

Prejudice: “Unfriendly feelings directed against an individual, a group, or a race; or a dislike of [someone] without good reason.” (Source: *Britannica Kids*)

Stereotype: “An idea or image of what a particular kind of person is like, based on opinions or feelings, not necessarily on facts or experience.” (Source: Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror for Young People*)

Discrimination: “Unequal or unfair treatment of individuals or whole groups based on features such as race, gender, ethnic origin, or religion; treatment based on prejudice.” (Source: Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror for Young People*)

Ethnicity: “Quality of belonging to an ethnic group, a population that shares the same national, racial, cultural, or tribal background.” (Source: Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror for Young People*)

Segregation: “Separation; in American history, usually refers to the separation of races under law.” (Source: Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror for Young People*)

Integration: “Mixing together; in American history, usually refers to the end of laws that separated, or segregated, people by race; integration was brought about by the Civil Rights Movement and laws of the mid-twentieth century.” (Source: Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror for Young People*)

Racism: “The belief that racial differences make some people better or worse than others; also, treating people differently because of race.” (Source: Howard Zinn, *A Young People’s History of the United States*) In this unit, we begin to explore the role of social and legal “power,” and in the upper grades, we analyze more complex ideas, such as systemic racism.

Enslaved People: As mentioned earlier in “Quick Notes About Vocabulary,” this unit differentiates the terms “enslaved person” and “slave,” ultimately choosing to use the former. We use “enslaved people” in an effort to underscore and recognize the undeniable humanity and dignity of those who were forced to endure an unfair, racist institution. We should not forget that “slaves” were humans.

Learn more about U.S. slavery

In the Curriculum, and in this particular unit, we introduce students to the idea of slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Learning how we introduce students to this may be informative for parents and guardians, as it may assist in guiding discussions at home. The following is an explanation of our process:

- Before we introduce the Transatlantic Slave Trade, we introduce students to the story of Olaudah Equiano, a young boy — a prince in his kingdom of Benin — who was kidnapped and forcibly dragged into slavery. By reading the opening of his adapted autobiography, students will gain an understanding of Africa as a continent with rich culture. (Originally published in 1780, Olaudah’s autobiography was a bestseller in its time.) It is important for students, and adults, to recognize that enslaved people had dreams, emotions, abilities, and intelligence — we cannot forget that we are speaking of humans. Learning about a person who was enslaved, rather than first speaking about a nameless group of “slaves,” is one way to develop a paradigm centered in humanity.
- To introduce the concept of slavery, we remind students of the story they read in a previous lesson, *Each Kindness*, which centers on the idea that our actions have a rippling effect — sometimes positive, sometimes negative. We revisit the idea that when we treat others unfairly, it can have long-lasting effects. Sometimes individuals are unkind, and sometimes large groups of individuals are unkind. And these groups can become even larger groups, or “institutions.” Unfortunately, throughout the history of this country, there were large groups of people — people with legal and/or social power — that treated other people unfairly. Sometimes it was based on race or ethnicity, such as our skin color (as well as hair textures, facial features, etc.). Sometimes it was based on gender, or what language we spoke or didn’t speak. Mostly, it was based on physical identity, or things we often cannot control or change. One example of this was the Transatlantic Slave Trade.
- When we learn about Olaudah first, we have a human lens to then begin exploring the system of enslavement, an unfair system based on racial discrimination. Starting in the 1600s, some White Europeans, and eventually White Americans, forced enslaved people to do hard work for them in the colonies (and eventually states), such as growing tobacco, and other crops like cotton. At first, they relied on both (White) indentured servants from Europe and (Black) enslaved people from Africa. Eventually, to cement divisions in the working class, lawmakers and plantation owners created a racist system, over time, enslaving millions of Africans, or Black Americans with African ancestry. Sadly, this torture lasted for centuries. It influenced some people to have unnatural feelings of hatred toward other people, based on physical or racial differences. It happened, but it doesn’t mean it’s fair or okay. In Olaudah’s example, he came from a beautiful land, where he was a prince, the son of a chief. A life was there, ready for him in Benin. Even after Olaudah was enslaved, he continued to fight to make a life of his own.
- To better understand the life of other enslaved people, we then read the picture book *Freedom in Congo Square*. When reading the book, we have students pay attention to elements of humanity. Even though some people were enslaved, they were still people. They had desires and dreams. And some people were able to hold on to elements of culture, such as language and music. We consider the strength and courage it took for people of such circumstances — enduring a life of servitude, hard work, and even violence — to hold on to dreams, or fleeting moments of freedom.
- In short, we regularly remind ourselves of the “enslaved person’s” humanity, and we also recognize that slavery in the early colonies and eventually the United States was an unfair system, or institution, based on racial discrimination, which had an enduring impact on U.S. society. It’s important that students learn about slavery and racial discrimination so they understand why the Civil Rights Movement was needed. Without this knowledge, students may reify ideas about innate differences between racial groups. With this knowledge, they recognize that laws were unfair, discrimination was rampant, and that it took numerous movements to create more opportunities for some groups of people, such as Black Americans and other people of color (as well as women, those in the LGBTQ+ community, etc.). To create a true meritocracy, further action may be required of our children one day.

- When speaking with your child about slavery, ask them about Olaudah. Ask them about the land he came from and the culture he brought with him. Ask them to speak about the negative impact of racial discrimination. Ask them to consider those who were able to and fought for change. To segue the conversation to the Civil Rights era, additional questions may be helpful: What do the terms social, justice, and social justice mean? How have some of the historical figures of the Civil Rights era worked together to create a more just world? (More information about these historical figures follows.) To wrap up the conversation, consider reminding your child of the power of a voice, both spoken — and in Olaudah’s case — written.

Learn more about historical figures with your child

Since the unit focuses on historical and contemporary figures who advocated for others, parents and guardians may want to learn more about the prominent Civil Rights leaders that dedicated their life’s work to equality. For guidance, we’ve offered short descriptions for the seven figures highlighted in the lessons:

- Mahatma Gandhi – Gandhi’s lifework famously inspired people around the world, including the strategies of Bayard Rustin and Martin Luther King, Jr., and other activists in the Civil Rights era of the 1950s and 1960s. Born in India, Gandhi moved to South Africa, where he practiced law and faced racial discrimination (as South Africa had a system of apartheid, or legal racial segregation). Inspired to make change, Gandhi eventually moved back to India, where he led movements of civil disobedience based on nonviolent resistance, such as the Salt March of 1930, to protest unjust British laws in the era of colonialism, or the time of “British rule” in India. He practiced numerous nonviolent political tactics like boycotts, fasting, and protests, which often led to imprisonment. Gandhi’s efforts eventually helped gain India’s independence from the British empire in 1947. Unfortunately, Gandhi was assassinated within the next year. Why would someone kill him? Why were his views unpopular to some, yet popular to so many? What can we learn from his heroic efforts? Are there small acts we can take to generate change in our own lives, or in the lives of others?
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. – Dr. King is arguably the most famous figure to emerge from the Civil Rights Movement, which aimed to create a more equal living status for Black people (and largely people of color) in the United States. Inspired by the life and work of Gandhi, King’s philosophy centered on nonviolent, civil disobedience. A powerful orator, Dr. King had a way with words, such as the noteworthy “I Have a Dream Speech.” But Dr. King didn’t fight against racial discrimination on his own. Who were the other leaders that worked with Dr. King? Why may King have emerged as the visible leader? Discuss possible reasons.
- Bayard Rustin – Inspired by Gandhi’s message, Bayard Rustin introduced the philosophy of nonviolent, civil disobedience to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Even though he was instrumental in planning the famous March on Washington, Bayard Rustin rarely, if ever, receives credit for his numerous contributions to Civil Rights, which impacted the lives of people of color, the LGBTQ+ community, and beyond. As an outspoken, openly gay man, Rustin was not publicly embraced by the movement. However, could the movement have been as powerful without him? Why were his contributions hidden? Discuss possible reasons.
- Rosa Parks – The more popular version of Rosa Parks’ story centers on the idea of a feeble, older woman who went shopping and was too tired to give up her seat on the bus. In reality, Rosa Parks was an active, committed member of the Civil Rights Movement, who risked her safety and freedom when she intentionally did not vacate her seat on the bus in Alabama, which led to a mass boycott and a Supreme Court ruling that deemed bus segregation as unconstitutional. Parks’ acts illustrated to society and to the rest of the world how unjust, unfair, and prevalent systemic racism was in the U.S. Unfortunately, much of her intentional work and contributions to Civil Rights are overlooked. Why has the story of Rosa Parks as a victim, rather than a fighter, endured? Discuss possible reasons.

- Dolores Huerta – Beginning her career as an empathetic teacher, Dolores Huerta learned about the hardships of migrant farm workers, including their alarmingly low pay and unsafe working conditions. Deciding to take a stand, Dolores Huerta, alongside Cesar Chavez, helped organize a movement that fought for workers’ rights. As the only woman in her organization, Huerta had to learn to navigate many obstacles, while keeping her focus on improving the lives of her community. Why is Dolores Huerta a lesser known historical figure? Discuss possible reasons.
- Cesar Chavez – Cesar Chavez helped lead a 340-mile peaceful protest through California, to gain attention to the needs and struggle for basic rights of migrant farmworkers in central California. A shy boy, Chavez eventually learned the power of speaking up, and with the help of Dolores Huerta, organized a movement that caught the country’s attention. Why may Cesar Chavez have become the face of the movement and not others, especially Dolores Huerta? Discuss possible reasons.
- Larry Itliong – Before the actions taken by Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez, Filipino farmworkers were the first to strike, bringing public attention to the unsafe, unfair conditions of farmwork in the agricultural belt of California, though many historical accounts often erase their contributions. Led by the charismatic, seasoned labor leader, Larry Itliong, the Filipino workers went on strike, and with permission, the Mexican workers (led by Huerta and Chavez) eventually joined the struggle. Why may have the Filipino workers’ contributions’ been “forgotten” or overshadowed? Discuss possible reasons.
- To expand the representation of voices of those who advocated for change, consider learning more about leaders, such as Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Nelson Mandela, or contemporary environmentalists, like Greta Thunberg. How were/are they successful? Did they work with others? What kinds of words would you use to describe these figures? What may we learn from them?

Discuss current events and/or take action

- Since much of the content of these lessons is rooted in history, it may be helpful to have conversations with your child about more current events. Before doing so, consider your child’s maturity level, temperament, and interests. While exposing them to new ideas is important, try to ensure that news stories won’t create undue fear or distress. In short, it’s acceptable to attempt to curate which news resources enter your home. Consider pre-reading and/or pre-screening news stories you intend to share with your child. Encourage them to ask questions. Often, their questions can help guide the discussion and keep the dialogue in a sphere where they can more comfortably engage. Consider your own reactions to news stories as well. If “disturbing” news does enter your child’s sphere of consciousness, when and if appropriate, remind them that they are safe. If time and resources allow, consider thinking of ways to “take action” when news stories feel relevant and/or immediate. For example, with adult supervision, children may take the following actions: write letters or postcards to politicians or newspaper editors; volunteer for a cause they believe in; attend a community organizing event like a meeting, a parade, or another public display for change. If, for now, a child wants to simply be engaged with the world, we should find ways to encourage it.

The essential discussion: How our actions impact the larger community

- Much of this unit centers on the idea that our actions impact the larger community. Additionally, there is a ripple effect to our actions and words — meaning they can have an impact we may never quite see or fully realize. This applies to both negative and positive actions and words. An underlying goal of the Curriculum is for students to consider this impact, and to be an individual that fosters inclusivity rather than exclusivity. Two ideas may be helpful to discuss with your child: 1) how fear can lead to erroneous assumptions, and 2) thinking about actions we can take to foster kindness, empathy, and inclusivity. Both are described in the following paragraph.

- Sometimes when we don't know someone, we fear them. This fear may lead to holding onto ideas about others that aren't true, or reinforcing stereotypes. Speaking to our children about the negative impact of our fearful assumptions can be a productive exercise. To generate such a discussion, consider the following questions: Why might people create negative or judgmental ideas about others before learning about them? Why might someone fear who or what they don't know? What does the word "assume" mean? How may assumptions negatively impact individuals and communities? How might making assumptions be harmful for both the person making them and the person about whom those assumptions are made? How might assumptions play a part in the creation of stereotypes and the practices of prejudice and discrimination? What are some ways we can work to avoid making assumptions about other people? What are some alternatives to making assumptions? To further engage your child, consider speaking to them about a time when assumptions may have been made about you. What did it feel like? What emotions did you feel when realizing that you were not asked questions about who you are, your beliefs or your thoughts? What advice would you give that person, or even yourself, so that your interactions with others are more productive and heartwarming. In short, what kinds of questions can we ask to get to know each other better?
- To generate a discussion that highlights the importance of making and taking positive actions, consider the following: How are kindness, empathy, and inclusion related? What does it mean to be kind? What is empathy? What is inclusion? Do these ideas sound good to you? If so, what are some ways you might explore similarities and differences with those around you in a way that is kind and welcoming? How can you be inclusive, or invite others to join you, such as classmates or even siblings and teammates? Together, parents and guardians may generate questions they can ask, which enable both adults and children to make better connection with others. Perhaps it begins with inviting others to talk about themselves; to ask questions as opposed to making assumptions — to show that we are listening and that we care, as the actions we make are also often the actions we receive.

Read with your child

As this unit speaks to the rippling impact of our actions and the importance of creating inclusive spaces, such as the actions taken during the historic Civil Rights era, we've recommended books that feature historic figures as well as fictional characters who made a positive impact in the lives of others. Additionally, as the unit introduces the concept of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, two specific texts (referenced earlier) have been recommended as ways to begin the conversation of enslavement, as they underscore the humanity of enslaved people. Thus, the following includes some of the materials recommended for use in the Racial Literacy lessons, which parents and guardians may find useful:

- *Each Kindness*, a picture book by Jacqueline Woodson and E.B. Lewis.
- *The Other Side*, a picture book also by Jacqueline Woodson and E.B. Lewis.
- *The Kidnapped Prince: The Life of Olaudah Equiano* by Olaudah Equiano, a chapter book adapted by Ann Cameron. Due to content, we only recommend reading Chapter One, "My Home," with younger students.
- *Freedom in Congo Square*, a picture book by Carole Boston Weatherford and R. Gregory Christie.
- *Grandfather Gandhi*, a picture book by Arun Gandhi and Bethany Hegedus.
- *Be the Change: A Grandfather Gandhi Story*, a picture book by Arun Gandhi and Bethany Hegedus.
- *Child of the Civil Rights Movement*, a picture book by Paula Young Shelton and Raul Colon.
- *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, a picture book by Robert Coles and George Ford.
- *Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation*, a picture book by Duncan Tonatiuh.
- *Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up By Sitting Down*, a picture book by Andrea Davis Pinkney and Brian Pinkney.
- *I Have a Dream*, a picture book by Dr. Martin Luther King and Kadir Nelson.
- *Who Was Rosa Parks?*, a picture book by Yona Zeldis McDonough.
- *No Easy Answers: Bayard Rustin and the Civil Rights Movement*, a biography by Calvin Craig Miller.

- *Dolores Huerta: A Hero to Migrant Workers*, a picture book by Sarah Warren and Robert Casilla.
- *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez*, a picture book by Kathleen Krull and Yuyi Morales.
- *Journey for Justice: The Life of Larry Itliong*, a picture book by Dawn Mabalon and Gayle Romasanta.
- *Malala Yousafzai: Warrior with Words*, a picture book by Karen Leggett Abouraya.
- *Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah*, a picture book by Laurie Ann Thompson and Sean Qualls.
- *Mama Miti: Wangari Maathai and the Trees of Kenya*, a picture book by Donna Jo Napoli and Kadir Nelson.

Watch and discuss with your child

To support your child in learning more about figures of the Civil Rights era, consider watching and discussing the following videos:

- "Brother Outsider: Presidential Medal of Freedom Ceremony," a one-minute video featuring the speech President Barack Obama gave as Bayard Rustin was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Available here: <https://www.pbs.org/pov/brotheroutsider/video-brotheroutsider-classroom-clip-presidential-medal-of-freedom-ceremony>
- "'I Have a Dream' Speech," a video produced by History.com, which illustrates how the famous moment of Dr. King's speech was inspired by Mahalia Jackson, when she urged King to "tell them about the dream." Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB0i6bJlJw>

Watch and listen on your own

- Parents and guardians may find the work of Henry Louis Gates informative and engaging. To learn more about the Civil Rights era, consider watching Gates' television series produced by PBS, "Black America Since MLK: And Still I Rise," Episode 1: "Out of the Shadows." More information is available here: <http://www.pbs.org/weta/black-america-since-mlk-and-still-i-rise/watch-videos/>
- To learn more about the lifework of Bayard Rustin, parents and guardians may consider watching *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin*, a feature-length documentary "focusing on Rustin's activism for peace, racial equality, economic justice, and human rights." More information is available here: <http://rustin.org>
- To learn more about King's inspiration for his famous speech, consider viewing "How Martin Luther King Went Off Script in 'I Have a Dream'," a video produced by The Wall Street Journal. In this video, King's adviser and speechwriter Clarence B. Jones discusses the moment Mahalia Jackson inspired King to speak from the heart. This resource may also be suitable for children. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxIOlynG6FY>
- To learn more about the work of Larry Itliong, consider listening to the 5-minute audio report by NPR, "Grapes of Wrath: The Forgotten Filipinos Who Led a Farmworker Revolution." This resource may also be suitable for children. Available here: <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/09/16/440861458/grapes-of-wrath-the-forgotten-filipinos-who-led-a-farm-worker-revolution>
- Finally, for more information about the United Farm Workers and the life's work of Dolores Huerta, parents and guardians may consider the PBS documentary *Dolores* informative and engaging. More information is available here: <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/dolores-huerta/>

| "Let us be enraged by injustice,
| but let us not be destroyed by it."

– Bayard Rustin

The Development of Civilization – How Geography

Gave Some Populations a Head Start (Dispelling Myths of Racial Superiority)

Recommendation: Grade 4 and above

“All human societies contain inventive people. It’s just that some environments provide more starting materials, and more favorable conditions for utilizing inventions, than do other environments.”

– Jared Diamond

What’s Being Taught

As students enter upper elementary school, social studies curriculum often features a study of ancient civilizations. This unit is designed to help students understand how geography influenced the emergence of civilization. Humans are the only animals to build vast civilizations, and geography provided or denied the resources that allowed some groups of former hunter-gatherers to become farmers and herders and eventually develop what is often considered some of the world’s first civilizations. Students will explore the various engineering, technological, scientific, and mathematical innovations of such civilizations, tracing cross-cultural patterns in order to develop a more informed and eclectic worldview — enhancing their own cultural competency. A goal is for students to realize that humans of a given time and place created similar structures and/or inherited ideas to establish a common pattern that was dictated by geography.

Why It’s Valuable

With such a lens, students will be able to analyze history and other social assertions that fabricate myths of racial superiority, including the ability to critique and dispel Eurocentric perspectives that favor a myopic view of race. When we don’t incorporate an analysis of geography, historians and larger society — including our own students and children — may begin to invent ideas and/or believe that a particular “race” of humans “conquered” other racial groups out of innate superiority and/or inferiority. By tracing the story of geography, we unearth the origins of what many historians refer to as ancient “civilizations” and a root cause of eventual global domination, or how geography either denied or granted some populations a head start. Gaining such essential knowledge begins to unravel and dispel powerful myths of racial superiority — a vital lesson in one’s racial literacy development.

How to Continue the Conversation at Home

To further promote conversations at home, consider reading, watching, or sharing the following activities with your child. Please note that while the following are suggestions and not requirements, one discussion has been marked as “The essential discussion.” If time and resources are limited, please consider prioritizing this particular suggestion.

A way to begin

As suggested in previous units, one way to continue the conversation at home is to discuss the quote by Jared Diamond that opened this unit. “All human societies contain inventive people. It’s just that some environments provide more starting materials, and more favorable conditions for utilizing inventions, than do other environments.” What is his message? Together, with your child, consider researching more about Jared Diamond. Did you learn about him in school, or read his work? Who is he? Do you think his work is groundbreaking and/or anti-racist? If so, how? (More information about his ideas is included in the following sections.)

Use specific vocabulary with your child

- Consider discussing and defining the following term with your child, as it is incorporated in the Curriculum and will likely be used in the classroom:

Civilization: “A group of people that share common languages, some form of writing, advanced technology and science, and systems of government and religion.” (Source: *Life In Ancient Mesopotamia* by Shilpa Mehta-Jones) Please note that while other societies and cultures developed for tens of thousands of years across the world, a group of people or society is often considered a civilization when they develop complex and organized systems — a central government, job specialization, mathematics, laws, etc. With this definition in mind, the following are often considered to be some of the world’s first civilizations, along with their approximate periods of “power” and influence: Ancient Mesopotamia, 3500 to 2000 BCE; Ancient Egypt, 3100 BCE to 30 BCE; Indus Valley Civilization, 2600 to 1800 BCE; Ancient China, 2000 BCE to 220 CE; and in the Americas, some include the Olmec Civilization, 1200 BCE to 400 BCE. (Please note that this list may not represent all ancient societies. Additionally, time periods are estimates from suggested texts; other texts may cite somewhat different dates.)

Learn more about “early humans” with your child

- If time and interest allow, consider learning more about human evolution. Perhaps the most salient information to garner from evolution and how it relates to racial literacy is the evidence-based idea that modern humans evolved in Africa, meaning all humans today can trace their ancestry — either immediate or distant — to Africa.
- For parents and guardians interested in learning more, consider the following information to help guide discussions about evolution and our interconnectedness: Before the evolution of modern humans, there is evidence that various species of archaic humans existed, debunking the idea that modern humans evolved in one clean “line” of evolution. Somehow modern humans became the dominant species, and the only surviving humans on the planet. It may be noted that while many modern humans are believed to carry miniscule levels of DNA from archaic humans, or the “close cousins of modern humans,” such as the Neanderthals and the Denisovans, all human beings living today are the same species of *Homo sapiens*, and are believed to have emerged from an original group of *Homo sapiens* somewhere in Africa. In fact, all living humans today can trace their ancestry, using mitochondrial information, to a single woman living in Africa about 150,000 years ago, whom scientists named “Mitochondrial Eve.” Thus, Africa is the cradle of modern humans.

How the story of geography can dispel myths of racial superiority

Much of this unit is centered on the work of physiologist, ecologist, geographer, biologist, and historian Jared Diamond. The general idea of Diamond's work centers on the story of geography, or how continental differences in geography either denied or granted some populations a head start in regard to the development of "civilizations." To learn more about this theory, consider reading the following descriptions, which support the Curriculum and may enhance discussions with your child.

- **How Civilizations Emerged** – When humans live as hunter-gatherers, foraging for food and hunting animals are primary concerns (please note that some pockets of humanity still live a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, and that for most of modern human existence, we lived in this manner). As hunter-gatherers, humans are dependent on seasons — often traveling to follow the natural rhythms of plant cycles, animals' migration patterns, etc. In short, such people are nomadic. Tens of thousands of years ago, at various points in time, humans — who emerged in Africa — began to migrate around the world. Eventually, some of these groups of humans began to settle, or live a more sedentary lifestyle, once they realized seeds planted in the earth turned into grains. (Some historians and academics assert that the development of agriculture was an accidental discovery.) Eventually, whether accidental or not, farming allowed some of these societies to build villages, and cities, and sometimes city-states and empires. Why did this happen in some parts of the world and not others? Many theories have been suggested, but historians generally agree that civilization begins when there is a source of water, typically rivers, and an abundant food source, creating surplus, or extra food. With water and extra food, more time can be devoted to developing specialties, and if natural resources allow, some of these large populations may begin building more permanent structures for various purposes like temples and tombs, making pottery and textiles, manipulating metal to make tools and weapons, creating systems of writing and counting, forming governing bodies, etc. But how did this chain of events begin? Why did some groups of people develop civilizations and others did not? Geographical advantage was key!
- **Jared Diamond's Argument** – According to Jared Diamond, "Geography and biogeography, which is the pattern of species and ecosystems as they are distributed across various regions, have been molding human lives for thousands of years." His argument asserts that the key to the development of civilization is continental differences in geography and biogeography (or the native plants and animals of a particular region). With well-documented research, Diamond argues: "Europeans did not conquer the Americas and Australia because they had better genes. They conquered because they had worse germs (especially smallpox), more advanced technology (including weapons and ships), information storage through writing, and political organization. All these things stemmed from continental differences in geography." The story begins with plants and animals. For parents and guardians who'd like to learn more about this, consider reading the following explanations.
- **The Influence of Domesticated Animals** – Animals need specific characteristics in order to be domesticated, such as being social, or living in packs or herds; the ability to "stand their ground," or not be vulnerable to a "flight" instinct; and the ability to reproduce in captivity. Some parts of the world had access to such animals, other areas only had animals that at best could be "tamed," but were incapable of being domesticated. In the case of North America, for instance, bison could not be domesticated. In Africa, large game like rhinoceros could not be domesticated. At times, elephants could be temporarily tamed, but were not capable of long term domestication. Yet, in the Middle East — and, because of its close proximity and similar climate zones, regions to the east and west of the Middle East, such as parts of Europe and Asia — there were plenty of animals that could be domesticated. Out of the 14 large animals that have been successfully domesticated, 13 are indigenous to the Middle East and/or Eurasia: goats, sheep, pigs, cows, horses, donkeys, Bactrian camels, Arabian camels, water buffalo, reindeer, yaks, mithans, and Bali cattle. Why does this matter? In addition to providing food and clothing, the domestication of these animals brought draft power, or the ability to farm on a scale much larger than human hands alone are capable of producing. This provides an agricultural advantage that expands to economic and political power, which compounds over time.

- The Revolutionary Horse – Horses have “high military value,” and “revolutionized” warfare more than any other animal. With inventions like saddles, stirrups, and chariots, some societies went on to develop a strong cavalry. Such cavalries could become assets, which helped some societies conquer others, as was the case with the Mongols and eventually other European nations. Thus, whoever had access to the horse — a powerful animal capable of domestication — was at a military advantage and could more easily conquer other people. This is perhaps best illustrated with the example of how Spanish colonists conquered empires in the Americas. According to Diamond: “A few dozen horses helped the Spanish conquistadors Cortés and Pizarro, each leading only a few hundred Spanish fighters, overthrow the two most populated and advanced American states: the Aztec Empire in Mexico and the Inca Empire in South America.” With little to no animals suitable for domestication (besides llamas), the people indigenous to the Americas could not respond with equal military strength.
- The Surprise Weapon of Disease – Beyond the horse, the greatest military advantage was the “secret weapon” of disease. According to Diamond: “The major killers of humanity throughout our recent history — smallpox, flu, tuberculosis, malaria, plague, measles, and cholera — are all infectious diseases that arose from diseases of animals. Until World War II more victims of war died of microbes than of gunshot or sword wounds. All those military histories glorifying Alexander the Great and Napoleon ignore the ego-deflating truth: the winners of past wars were not necessarily those armies with the best generals and weapons, but those bearing the worst germs with which to smite their enemies.” When societies domesticate animals, they inherit disease. Throughout the history of European colonization, especially in the Americas, such disease “accidentally” emerged as a source of untouchable, insurmountable power.
- Plant Power – The ability to feed a large population is an essential component for a civilization to emerge. As with animals, some plants are easier to domesticate than others. Some of these include self-pollinators like wheat. As Diamond states: “Plant foods played a vital role in the rise of civilizations. In fact, most of the calories consumed by the human race still come from plants — specifically, from cereals, which are grasses with edible starchy seeds, such as barley kernels or wheat grains. But as with animals, only a tiny fraction of all wild plant species has proved suitable for domestication.” Instead of wheat, some regions did have other grains, like corn. However, corn — or the ancestor of corn, teosinte — was not produced on a similar scale. Compared to the easy harvesting qualities of wheat, which could be collected quickly with a slice of a sickle, corn was a less promising food plant. Its seeds had to be carefully planted one at a time — while wheat seeds were “tossed” — and the few kernels available on the ancient ear of corn had to be scraped or bitten off. In short, it took thousands of years of human intervention for corn to become the more desirable, recognizable crop we think of today. Regions that had wheat, on the other hand, were in a more advantageous position for wide-scale farming, and could better support population growth and the development of specialized jobs, including feeding a military.
- The Shape of Continents – One of the final geographical factors that allowed some societies to transform into civilizations was their location on the globe, such as where they existed along lines of latitude, and the form of continents, such as the availability of coastline and the literal “shape” of continental land. Since the Middle East hosted the most abundant crops and animals that were capable of being domesticated, people in and/or near this region were at an advantage in regard to creating a civilization. According to Diamond: “The mainly north-south axis, or central line, of the New World made it hard for food plants to spread over large areas. The mainly east-west axis of the Old World made it easy.” (Please note that in this Curriculum we use the names of continents and regions, instead of terms like “New World” and “Old World.”) Why was the “east-west” axis “easier” for plants (and animals) to spread across? Along similar lines of latitude, regions have similar climates. If a plant or animal moves within a similar climate zone, it has a better chance of successfully transplanting. When looking at map of Eurasia, it’s easy to note that Europe and Asia fall on an “east-west” axis. This suggests that they can more easily share plants and animals. When looking at North and South America, the “height,” or vertical span, of these continents illustrates how disparate their climate zones can be as they spread to such high degrees north and south. This “tall” continent shape makes it more difficult to successfully share plants and animals up and down the land mass, as the top of North America and the bottom of South America are separated by “thousands

of miles of tropics.” In short, the shape and location of continents was another factor that either provided or denied the resources for ancient civilizations to emerge and expand.

The essential discussion: Dispelling the myth of racial superiority

- The Curriculum includes Diamond’s work as it provides an anti-racist argument to describe how geographic luck led to the emergence of civilization. Societies that first emerged as “civilizations” — and populations with similar climates and in close proximity to these civilizations — inherited the military technology needed to “conquer” others, and such advantage compounded over time, perhaps best evidenced with the era of European colonization. Yet, some historical texts often portray the story of European colonization as a simple tale of adventurous voyagers, while other texts may reduce this era of history as a story of ability, as victor vs victim, or an example of corruption and morality, as good vs evil. When we recognize the role of geography, we begin to view history with a more analytical lens, not ridden in motives and opinions, but rooted in fact. With this knowledge, rather than utilizing and reinforcing a reductive approach, we can develop a more productive and sound lens to view both history and current society. Thus, parents and guardians may want to discuss with their child the role geography had in the development of civilizations and how such advantages compounded over time. Additionally, consider the work of Jared Diamond, who presented the argument that geography was key to the emergence of civilization and eventual global domination. Can his work be considered anti-racist. If so, how?
- Finally, it may be helpful for parents and guardians to consider how the idea of racial superiority is a myth to promote power over others. Why would some historical perspectives paint Europeans (and other White Americans) as innate victors and people of color as victims? (Or, on the other hand, reduce and conflate Europeans as simply a vindictive, monolithic group?) What is to be “gained” with this false or limited perspective? Instead, how can we approach history with more nuance? What is the importance of facts? Beyond the typical lists of ancient civilizations, what other examples of culture emerged? Why may other societies be overlooked in historical texts? In short, knowing the truth about historical advantages can help us combat ideas rooted in false notions of racial superiority and inferiority, so we move closer to a more inclusive society that values empathy and truthfulness. Our story begins with geography. The reconstruction of history begins with facts.

Read with your child

The following includes some of the materials recommended for use in the Racial Literacy lessons, which parents and guardians may find useful:

- *Early Humans*, an informative text by DK Eyewitness Books.
- *Ancient Civilizations*, an informative text by DK Eyewitness Books.
- *The Third Chimpanzee for Young People: On the Evolution and Future of the Human Animal (For Young People Series)* by Jared Diamond adapted by Rebecca Steffoff. The following chapters are highly recommended: Chapter Two, “The Great Leap Forward,” Chapter 8, “Agriculture, For Better And Worse,” and Chapter 12, “Accidental Conquerors.”

Read and watch on your own

- Parents and guardians may find the work of Jared Diamond informative and engaging. Consider reading Diamond’s detailed book *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fate of Human Societies*. The ideas and theories of Diamond have also been featured in a three-part PBS television series, also titled *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. Depending on the age and maturity level of your child, this may or may not be a resource you can view with your child; please pre-screen the episodes to assess. More information about *Guns, Germs, and Steel* is available here: <https://www.pbs.org/gunsgermssteel/show/index.html>

How “Immigration” Shaped the Racial and Cultural Landscape of the United States — The Persecution, Resistance, and Contributions of Immigrants and Enslaved People

Recommendation: Grade 5 and above

“Every aspect of the American economy has profited from the contributions of immigrants.”

– John F. Kennedy

What’s Being Taught

Throughout this unit, students will trace the history of immigration to the United States, a country “made by” and “made of” immigrants. Essential questions will guide their learning: How did immigration policy impact the conceptualization of race and the overall racial and ethnic landscape of the United States? Why do Eurocentric perspectives dominate the historical narrative of immigration? How did demographics in the U.S. change over time? And what were the forms of resistance and various contributions made by those who lived in the U.S.?

An essential idea is for students to recognize that not all “immigrants” came to the U.S. by choice, as many were captured and forced to endure a life of enslavement. In an effort to explore general patterns of immigration and the forced movement of people, some lessons will follow a general structure — including a review of the cultural contributions, persecution, and resistance of such populations — but obviously cannot represent all groups of people and all stories. This unit may serve as an essential introduction.

“Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the fabric of American life”

– John F. Kennedy

Why It’s Valuable

For students who live in the United States, it’s imperative that they understand how migration and immigration have historically shaped (and continue to shape) the formation of U.S. society. Unfortunately, a dominant narrative for immigration often presents the false image of a melting pot, without analyzing the structures of power that dictated either the exclusion or inclusion of various groups of people, and how such treatment simultaneously impacted the idea of what an “American” — or more accurately, a resident or citizen of the U.S. — should “look like” and be. Through unpacking and analyzing institutional forms of racism, such as immigration policy, students will gain a more informed, nuanced view of U.S. history and current U.S. society. With such knowledge, our youth may begin to envision and reconstruct a society that is more egalitarian, and perhaps one day, more representative of the meritocracy the United States government and larger society proclaims.

How to Continue the Conversation at Home

A way to begin

As suggested in previous units, one way to continue the conversation at home is to discuss one of the quotes by John F. Kennedy that opened this unit: “Every aspect of the American economy has profited from the contributions of immigrants,” and “Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the fabric of American life.” What is the message? Who said it? Together, with your child, consider researching more about President John F. Kennedy. Who was he? What may have inspired him to share these words? What type of legislation was passed around the time of his presidency? May his words and work be considered powerful, inspiring, etc.? Why do words matter?

Use specific vocabulary with your child

- Consider discussing and defining the following terms with your child, as they are incorporated in the Curriculum and will likely be used in the classroom:

Ethnicity: “The term ethnicity may be used to describe the cultural background of a person. An ethnic group is made up of people who share the same ethnicity.” (Source: *Britannica Kids*) While ethnicity is often used in reference to race, some applications of the term ethnicity are more connected to a societal group, often rooted in religious, cultural, and/or linguistic affiliation. Using the term ethnicity can often include nationality and culture, and sometimes envelop the social idea of race.

Race: “A category of humankind that shares certain distinctive physical traits.” (Source: *Merriam-Webster*) Remind children that the concept of race is not biologically true, but there is a social reality to race, especially in the United States.

Eurocentric: “Reflecting a tendency to interpret the world in terms of European or Anglo-American values and experiences.” (Source: *Merriam-Webster*)

Racism: “The belief that racial differences make some people better or worse than others; also, treating people differently because of race.” (Source: Howard Zinn, *A Young People’s History of the United States*) At this point, we begin to analyze more complex ideas, including institutional levels of racism, such as laws that codified racial discrimination.

“Immigrant(s):” It’s important to note that not all “immigrants” came to the U.S. by choice, as enslaved people were forcibly brought to early colonies and states. Additionally, Native Americans were indigenous to the U.S., and because of that, some may or may not apply the term “immigrant” to encompass Indigenous people. Thus, when appropriate, the term “immigrant” (and “immigration”) may appear throughout this Companion guide with quotation marks. Parents and guardians may want to define the term with their child. What is an immigrant? (We ourselves may be immigrants, or we may know immigrants.) How do immigrants contribute to society? Much of the Curriculum is centered on these core questions.

Learn more about the diversity of Native American cultures and civilizations before European colonization

- Before lessons center on the persecution of particular racial or ethnic groups, we spend time recognizing the cultures and contributions of these groups before European colonization and/or enslavement. We do this to counteract a reductive lens, to recognize the agency of individuals and communities, who existed for thousands and thousands of years before the Transatlantic Slave trade and settler colonization. When speaking of Native Americans, please keep in mind that, like any ethnic or racial group, it is not a monolithic identity. There is great diversity among Native American nations, in regard to language, food, belief systems, etc. When using the term Native Americans, we are referring to the first peoples to populate the Americas, as well as their descendants, which represents great diversity.
- For parents and guardians who would like to learn more about Native Americans before colonization, consider reading *An Indigenous People’s History of the United States for Young People*, a historical text by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, adapted by Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese. This book may be appropriate to read with children. Also, consider watching *Native America*, a four-episode television series created by PBS. As usual, we recommend pre-screening the material to assess if it is appropriate for your particular child. More information about *Native America* is available here: <https://www.pbs.org/native-america/home/>
- For a quick overview, consider the following: “Native American Cultures,” an article and video on *History.com*. Available here: <https://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/native-american-cultures>

Learn more about the diversity of African cultures and civilizations before the Transatlantic Slave Trade

- As mentioned previously, before lessons center on the persecution of particular racial or ethnic groups, we spend time recognizing the cultures and contributions of these groups before European colonization and/or enslavement. We do this to counteract a reductive lens, to recognize the agency of individuals and communities, who existed for thousands and thousands of years before the Transatlantic Slave Trade and settler colonization. When speaking of Black Americans and/or African Americans, please keep in mind that, like any ethnic or racial group, it is not a monolithic identity. There is great diversity among Black Americans, or those who identify as having African ancestry, as well as those who live or come from the continent of Africa.
- For parents and guardians who would like to learn more about African civilizations before the Transatlantic Slave Trade, consider watching *Africa’s Great Civilizations*, a six-episode television series created by Henry Louis Gates for PBS. As usual, we recommend pre-screening the material to assess if it is appropriate for your particular child. More information about *Africa’s Great Civilizations* is available here: <http://www.pbs.org/weta/africas-great-civilizations/home/>

- For a quick overview, consider reading the following: “7 Influential African Empires,” an article on *History.com*. Available here: <https://www.history.com/news/7-influential-african-empires>

Learn more about historical figures and/or communities that resisted

- After the Curriculum introduces students to the diversity of Native American and African cultures and civilizations before European colonization and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, students learn about historical figures who utilized their sense of agency to resist centuries of persecution. Parents and guardians may want to learn more about the featured leaders of U.S. history who risked their lives through various methods, such as waging campaigns of war, heading rescue missions, writing autobiographies, speaking to multiracial audiences, forming alliances, etc. In these lessons, we highlight the contributions of the following Native American and Black American leaders: Osceola, Tecumseh, Cochise, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Frederick Douglass. Reading material is suggested in the “Read with your child” section.

Learn more about Ellis Island vs Angel Island:

- Not all immigrants were/are treated the same. Throughout American history, some immigrant groups were “preferred” over others, the favored group being northern and western Europeans. During the 1800s and 1900s, most immigrants came from Europe, and many were processed at Ellis Island. But, there was also a processing center on the West Coast, in the bay of San Francisco, called Angel Island, which processed mostly Chinese immigrants. Due to racist ideologies and laws based on racial and ethnic exclusion (i.e. the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882), immigrants who were “processed” at Angel Island had a vastly different experience than those who came through Ellis Island. At Angel Island, mostly Asian (especially Chinese) immigrants were processed and had to prove they were related to someone already living in the United States. Why did the majority of Chinese immigrants have to endure this? Responding to escalating anti-Chinese sentiment, which rippled across some nativist groups of White Americans, the U.S. government had passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which banned all immigration of Chinese laborers (just after many Chinese immigrants, along with Irish immigrants, endured brutal labor requirements to build the transcontinental railroad). This was the first law to ban a group of immigrants based on nationality or race. As a result, they were detained on Angel Island anywhere from days, to weeks, to months and even years. In short, the different treatment of immigrants who arrived at Angel Island compared to Ellis Island was mostly based on racial discrimination.
- If parents and guardians are interested in historical fiction texts set in this time and place consider two historical fiction novels: *The Dragon’s Child: A Story of Angel Island* by Laurence Yep and *Letters from Rifka* by Karen Hesse. Reading both may provide a noteworthy text-to-text comparison. These books may be read with your children.

Learn about the history of “immigration” and migration in the U.S.

To better understand the history of “immigration” and migration to the United States, consider reviewing the following brief historical overview. Please keep in mind that while it does not represent all events, the selection is useful to better understand the laws and actions the U.S. government took that discriminated against various groups of people, especially people of color. If reading this list with your child, you may remind them that they are not responsible for what happened in the past, but they are responsible for knowing the information, which may impact the way we move forward. This list is also featured in the lessons of this unit, so children may already be familiar with it.

A Brief Overview of U.S. “Immigration” and/or Migration:

- Native Americans populated the Americas. Estimates range, but most historians agree that this happened more than 15,000 years ago.
- One of the first “successful” European colonies was Jamestown, founded in 1607, followed by Plymouth, which included a group of 102 “Saints and Strangers” who arrived in 1620. From 1630-1640, about 20,000 more colonists immigrated to Plymouth. As the numbers of European settlers increased, so did the campaigns of violence committed against local Native American communities, in efforts to obtain land and resources.
- In 1619, 20 Africans were forced into enslavement in Jamestown, Virginia, marking the beginning of “forced immigration” and the enslavement of Africans in what would become the United States. (African enslavement happened much earlier in other parts of the Americas and the Caribbean. By 1680, there were an estimated 7,000 enslaved Africans in the American colonies; and by 1790, there were an estimated 700,000 enslaved people. Though some historians consider this to be a conservative estimate.)
- The 1790 Naturalization Acts state that a foreign-born person can be a U.S. citizen only if “free and white.” The act actually uses the term “white.”
- In 1830, President Andrew Jackson signs the “Indian Removal Act.” Over the course of the next few years, tens of thousands of Native Americans are forcibly removed from their lands, and “relocated” to “federal territory” west of the Mississippi River. Many Native American lives are lost in the process of relocation, at the hands of the U.S. government.
- In 1848, the United States — through a violent campaign of military force — annexed nearly half of northern Mexico, moving the U.S. border further south. As a result, people who were of Mexican citizenship in this land area were technically living in the U.S. at that point. Many lost rights to and ownership of their homeland.
- Until the 1800s, U.S. immigration policy was mostly handled by the states. The 1882 Immigration Act made immigration a federal issue. In the same year, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, which banned all immigration of Chinese laborers. This was the first law to ban a group of immigrants based on nationality or race.
- “Waves” of additional European immigrants arrived in the U.S. in the 1800s and 1900s. A “first wave” was around 1815 to 1865 of mostly northern and western Europeans, such as people from Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, etc. About one-third came from Ireland, due to the Irish Potato Blight. From 1820 to 1930, about 4.5 million Irish immigrants arrived. Throughout the 19th century, about 5 million German immigrants arrived. The second “wave” of European immigrants took place around 1880 to 1920, with 20 million immigrants arriving, mostly from central, eastern, and southern Europe, such as Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Russia, Italy, Spain, and Turkey. With the Chinese Exclusion Act in place, most immigrants of this era were European, and although faced with various forms of discrimination upon arrival, eventually were able to blend into a homogenous idea of “whiteness.”
- The 1907 Gentlemen’s Agreement regulated the numbers of Japanese immigrants to the U.S., generally allowing for only skilled “businessmen.”
- Also in 1907, Congress passed the Expatriation Act, which stripped U.S. women of their citizenship status if they married any “foreigners,” such as Chinese men.
- The year 1916 marked the beginning of “The Great Migration,” or the mass migration of about six million Black Americans, who — over the course of decades — relocated to escape racial violence and an absence of economic opportunity in the rural south to urban centers in the north, midwest, and west. Forms of racial discrimination continued in these urban centers, such as the race riots of Chicago in 1919.

- After WWI, a “reactionary nativism” swept across some White communities in the U.S., resulting in the 1917 Immigration Act, the first significant legislation to restrict immigrants (even from parts of Europe) by requiring literacy tests and enforcing other parameters, such as the “Asiatic Barred Zone,” which blocked south and southeast Asians from entering the U.S. An anti-communist ideology also flourished at this time, resulting in limited immigration from Russia, and the deportation of around 5,000 Russians from the U.S.
- In 1917, the U.S. granted “citizenship” rights to people of Puerto Rico — which became a U.S. territory in 1898 — but barred them from voting in presidential elections.
- The Emergency Immigration Act of 1921 kept newly arrived immigrants at three percent of existing foreign-born numbers based on the 1890 Census, which favored European immigrants over other ethnic or racial groups.
- The Immigration Act of 1924 set quotas on the number of immigrants from specific countries and/or regions, in order to decrease the immigration of specific groups of people, such as southern Europeans and eastern Europeans, “Arabs,” as well as people with religious differences from the dominant norm of the U.S., such as those from Roman Catholic-majority countries and Jewish people.
- In the 1940s, the U.S. government sent 120,000 Japanese Americans to internment camps. Two-thirds of them were citizens of the U.S.
- In 1943, Congress repealed many of the laws that banned immigration from Asia, but quotas were set extremely low (specifically 105 immigrants were allowed from China, 100 immigrants from the Philippines, and only 100 immigrants allowed from India).
- The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 abolished the previous quota system based on national origin, establishing a new immigration policy based on family reunification and skilled laborers. This marked an “unintended,” radical transition of the racial/ethnic landscape, allowing those from other countries (outside of Europe) to immigrate into the U.S. This act changed the demographics of the country and the general cultural fabric.

The essential discussion: How has “immigration” impacted the United States?

- The foundation of this unit is immigration. But what exactly is immigration? It may be recent, or deep in our lineage, yet on some level, all of us are connected to immigration stories. The United States is a country “made by” and “made of” immigrants. Beginning with Native Americans, people from all over the world have arrived on the shores of what eventually became the U.S. Yet, a particular story dominates the concept of immigration. According to historian Ronald Takaki, this exclusionary tale is the “epic story of great migrations... [of] those who came to the United States from Europe.” To prompt discussions about immigration, consider the following questions: Why do European, or Eurocentric, perspectives dominate the historical narrative? Why did Europeans initially outnumber other racial, ethnic, geographical, and/or national groups who emigrated in the colonial era and beyond? What sort of immigration policies were passed? How did some groups of immigrants benefit from denying other groups resources or opportunities? What were some ways in which immigrant groups advocated for their rights as new members of the United States? How did demographics change over time? Why has immigration been vital to the development of the United States? How have various groups of immigrants (positively) impacted the United States? If parents and guardians feel they need more information to have this discussion, consider reading (if you haven’t already) the “A Brief Overview of U.S. ‘Immigration’ and/or Migration.” Also, consider the following resource: “The Racist History of U.S. Immigration Policy,” a three-minute video by Vox, which connects immigration policy to the formation of racial identity, racism, and structural inequalities in the U.S. Available here: <https://www.vox.com/2016/1/15/10775602/immigration-map-data-racism>

- If possible and applicable, consider speaking about your own experiences with immigration. Do immigration stories exist in your family? If so, how has your family history been shaped by immigration? If it has not, perhaps parents and guardians can speak to larger social circles and/or current events that are related to immigration. Given the trajectory of history, this may likely include negative stories (and hopefully positive stories as well). To encourage productive conversation, consider revisiting the historical timeline. It's clear that many immigration laws codified racial discrimination. However, the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 ushered in an era of great change and demographics dramatically shifted. What other steps could the U.S. government take to ensure immigration laws are more just and fair? What steps can citizens take? Even if parents and guardians do not have "all the answers," normalizing the topic of immigration and encouraging your child to contemplate these ideas are essential conversations and steps to take to support our children's racial literacy, cultural competency and general sense of "citizenship," especially if they are to grow up in the United States — a country "made by" and "made of" immigrants.

Read and watch with your child

The following includes some of the materials recommended for use in the Racial Literacy lessons, which parents and guardians may find useful:

- *A Different Mirror For Young People: A History of Multicultural America (For Young People Series)*, a history book by Ronald Takaki adapted by Rebecca Stefoff.
- *Native American Heroes: Osceola, Tecumseh, and Cochise*, a historical text by Ann McGovern.
- *Who Was Harriet Tubman?*, an illustrated biography by Yona Zeldis McDonough.
- *Who Was Sojourner Truth?*, an illustrated biography by Yona Zeldis McDonough.
- *Who was Frederick Douglass?*, an illustrated biography by April Jones Prince.
- "U.S. Immigration Before 1965," an article on *History.com*. Available here: <https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/u-s-immigration-before-1965>
- "U.S. Immigration Since 1965," an article and three-minute video on *History.com*. Available here: <https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/us-immigration-since-1965>

Read on your own

- To learn more about U.S. history, especially about the generalized experiences of people of color, parents and guardians may find the work of historian Ronald Takaki informative and engaging. In the lessons, we have recommended the adapted version of his book for a younger audience. If parents and guardians are interested in reading more, consider Ronald Takaki's original text: *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*.

"I believe our sorrow can make us a better country. I believe our righteous anger can be transformed into more justice and more peace."

– Barack Obama

The Historical Construction of Race and Current Racial Identities Throughout U.S. Society – The Danger of a Single Story

Recommendation: Grade 6 and above

“Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity.”

–Chimamanda Adichie

What’s Being Taught

After students have a firm grasp of United States history, they can better explore current society, especially the construction and social reality of race and ethnicity in the U.S. In this unit, lessons aim to create a more nuanced, eclectic conceptualization of race. Inspired by Chimamanda Adichie’s idea of the “Danger of a Single Story,” which highlights the importance of considering multiple perspectives when categorizing people, suggested activities will create a historical timeline — mapping the social construction of “race” by providing a brief

overview of the treatment and conceptualization of various racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. In an effort to provide a humanistic lens, such lessons also include current and literary voices of people who identify as a particular racial group: Native American, Black American, White American, Latinx American, Asian American, and Multiracial American voices. After watching mini-documentaries, reading poetry, and having class discussions, students explore their own sense of identity.

Why It's Valuable

The unit aims for a balanced “both/and” approach — one that faces both the unpleasant social and historical truths and acknowledges the humanity of individuals and groups of people, such as those who dared to love and embrace their cultures and identities while living in a society that’s plagued with violence and efforts of dehumanization. As an interviewee in one of the lessons states, “Existence is resistance.” In this unit, students explore essential ideas, such as how marginalized voices have survived and dared to thrive. While various perspectives are considered, the curriculum cannot represent all groups of people and all stories. The Curriculum, however, does provide an array of voices, so students realize that no group is monolithic, nor is any group inferior or superior. For a final lesson, students will construct a personal sense of identity and begin to tell their own stories.

“Show a people as one thing, only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.”

– Chimamanda Adichie

How to Continue the Conversation at Home

To further promote conversations at home, consider reading, watching, or sharing the following activities with your child. Please note that while the following are suggestions and not requirements, one discussion has been marked as “The essential discussion.” If time and resources are limited, please consider prioritizing this particular suggestion.

A way to begin

As suggested in previous units, one way to continue the conversation at home is to discuss the quotes by Chimamanda Adichie that opened this unit: “Show a people as one thing, only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become,” and “Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity.” Who is Chimamanda Adichie? How may she identify? Together, with your child, consider reading about Adichie to learn more about her life and writing. What is her message in this quote? How does her quote relate to stereotypes? What kind of actions do you think Adichie is encouraging us to take in our lives? To expand the conversation, consider reading the following section, which describes Adichie’s idea of the “danger of a single story,” or the “danger” of applying a myopic lens or worldview when engaging with and envisioning the lives of others.

Talk about the “Danger of a Single Story”

- To provide students with what Emily Styles coined as “windows and mirrors” — or opportunities for students to understand and envision other viewpoints in classroom curriculum, the “windows,” and to see themselves reflected in the same classroom, the “mirrors” — we recommend an exploration of Chimamanda Adichie’s idea of “the danger of a single story.” In her remarkable TED Talk “The Danger of a Single Story,” Chimamanda Adichie speaks to both the danger of having a limited story of a particular individual and/or racial/ethnic group, and the importance of providing multiple perspectives so that we don’t have myopic or limited views of others, and ourselves. A native of Nigeria, Chimamanda Adichie — who grew up to become a novelist — speaks about the lack of representation of the literature she had access to, as she shares, “Because all I had read were books in which characters were foreign, I had become convinced that books by their very nature had to have foreigners in them and had to be about things with which I could not personally identify. Now, things changed when I discovered African books.” This lesson, and subsequent lessons, will

encourage our students to consider the power of representation, and the long-lasting impact a multitude of “windows and mirrors” may have on our lives, both in and beyond the classroom. To support your child’s growth, in this regard, consider watching and discussing, “The Danger of a Single Story.” Available here: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

- After viewing, consider having a conversation. Parents and guardians may share their own unique reaction to Adichie’s words. If more guidance is desired, consider sharing your response to the following quotes from Adichie’s TED Talk, which are also referenced in the lesson: 1) “Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story.” 2) “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.” 3) “The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.” 4) “When we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise.”

“History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.”

– Maya Angelou

Learn more about the historical construction of race in the U.S.

According to Howard Zinn, “In the history of the world, there is no other country where racism has been more important than in the United States.” For students, as well as parents and guardians, who are actively developing their racial literacy, understanding the historical construction of race and racism in the U.S. is essential. It is through an investigation of this history, we begin to understand the systemic forces of racism and other forms of discrimination that have created unequal opportunity for

groups of people, especially for various groups of people of color. Without this knowledge of history, we are at a loss to explain current social ills, such as the imbalance of wealth, education, imprisoned populations, and even measurable aspects of health that persist today. When we overlook history, we are more likely to rely on and reify stereotypes. When history is omitted, we reinvigorate the danger of a single story. To counteract this, the following is a collection of summaries of historical events that impacted various groups of people of color. Please note that these summaries cannot reflect every event or person, but they may provide an opportunity to increase understanding. Please view them as a start, not an end, to one’s racial literacy development.

- **Native Americans**

The first peoples who populated the Americas were rich with cultural diversity. They were farmers, hunters, and art makers. Made up of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of nations, tribes, and communities, Native Americans were not a monolithic group. In fact, the term Native American represents diverse groups of people, whose main commonality is that they are considered to be Indigenous, or Native, to the land of the Americas. The arrival of foreign, White settlers marked the beginning of a tumultuous history for the majority of Native Americans, including those living in what would eventually become the United States. At the time of colonization, various Europeans — such as Columbus and his army of sailors, and English colonists, like those of Jamestown and Plymouth — engaged in violent campaigns of war, enslavement, and other forms of persecution and inhumane efforts to gain land and personal wealth.

When early Jamestown settlers struggled with starvation and even cannibalism, some of the English settlers pressured and attacked Native Americans for provisions, some burning down Native American villages, and others poisoning Native populations. According to historian Ronald Takaki, by 1629, the goal of the English in Virginia was to “root out [Native Americans] from being any longer a people.” The European colonists of Plymouth eventually followed a similar plan of action. As their settlement grew, so did their desire for land. To justify their imperialistic efforts, some European colonists painted an image of Native Americans as demonic and subhuman. As Takaki argues, “Religious leaders led the way in

justifying violence against the Native Americans...as a battle between God and the Devil.” Because Native Americans lacked the same geographical advantages of Europeans — such as having horses and pre-exposure to disease — they faced insurmountable obstacles, with unequal military strength. The vast majority of the estimated 75 to 100 million Indigenous people of the Americas died with the arrival of Europeans. While not all Europeans at the time were responsible for these events, their arrival in the Americas marks the beginning of the efforts of White settlers, and eventually the U.S. government, to eradicate Native Americans, or what many refer to as genocide. It’s also important to note that not all European Americans or White settlers agreed that Native Americans were subhuman and/or deserved persecution. Yet, it did not stop what Takaki refers to as the Europeans’ “relentless conquest of the North American continent.”

As the United States became an official country, the thirst for acquiring more land continued. According to Takaki, Thomas Jefferson supported removing, even destroying Native Americans, as Jefferson wrote, “We would never cease pursuing them with war while one remained on the face of the earth.” This idea of “exterminating” Native Americans in order to seize their land dictated the behavior of many political leaders. For example, in 1830, after Native American nations legally advocated for ownership of their land at the Supreme Court level, Andrew Jackson ignored the Courts’ decision, forcibly removing and/or causing the death of an estimated 70,000 Native Americans during his presidency. Through campaigns of violence and discriminatory legislation, the U.S. government continued to forcibly remove Indigenous people from their land, expanding the country for White Americans. This systematic effort included, but was not limited to, the creation of the “Indian Reservation System,” the Battle of Little Bighorn, the Massacre at Wounded Knee, the creation of boarding schools to “assimilate” Native American children, and the Dawes Act, which divided reservations into smaller lots of land. Eventually, in 1891, the U.S. Census Bureau announced that “Americans had settled the entire continent, and that the frontier had come to an end.” Yet, this definition of “Americans” was limited to White Americans. Despite unfathomable obstacles and targeted violence, Native Americans, even if fewer in number, resisted, persisted and continue to live, embracing their cultural heritage and membership to various communities. Currently, over 500 tribes are federally recognized by the U.S. government. Their story is worth recognizing, as their cultures go on.

- **Black Americans**

1619 marks the arrival of 20 enslaved Africans to Jamestown, Virginia, who were forced to work newly developed tobacco fields. While there weren’t formal laws on the books identifying slavery as an official institution, many historians mark this as the beginning of enforced African labor in the colony. African enslaved people initially made up a small percentage of the population. In 1675, there were about sixteen hundred people of African descent, approximately five percent of the Virginia population. At first, as historian Ronald Takaki suggests, in an effort to create a White society similar to English society, early colonists — who lived full time in the colonies and intended to live there for a lifetime — relied on the labor of mostly White indentured servants and smaller numbers of Black enslaved people. At times, these groups of servants and enslaved people worked side by side and even “joined forces.” As Takaki states, “Servants of both races deserted their masters together so often that the Virginia legislature complained about the problem of ‘English servants running away with Negroes.’” As a solution, the ruling class made efforts to divide these groups and weaken their ability to mobilize against the elite, by offering rewards of land and money only to White indentured servants when their terms of servitude ended. White plantation owners and political leaders in early Virginia society also began to single out Black enslaved people, often giving them more cruel punishments and longer terms of servitude than White indentured servants. In 1661, Virginia legislature codified the racial caste system, as they “passed a law that allowed lifetime servitude, or slavery, for Blacks,” fortifying a hierarchy based on racial inequality — equating Black enslaved people as lifelong “property” in the eyes of society and the law. However, rebellion transpired, and in 1676, an organized militia of thousands of White and Black people killed Native Americans, whom they believed were unfairly attacking them, and then turned their weapons on the White, ruling elite. This event, known as Bacon’s Rebellion, marked a turning point in Virginia and for American history. As Takaki argues, “After Bacon’s Rebellion, large landowners realized that the social order would always be in

danger as long as they relied on White labor.” After Bacon’s Rebellion, to appease discontent among the White working class, rather than giving “landless freemen” the right to vote, the ruling class instead turned to African slavery as their main source of labor. Over time, as Takaki notes, “From 5 percent of Virginia’s population in 1675, Blacks increased to 25 percent by 1715, and to more than 40 percent by 1750.” As the number of Black enslaved people increased, so did racist sentiment. Stricter laws were passed, stripping Black people of basic human rights, and to further weaken racial unity, laws also banned interracial marriage. Throughout the colonies, the White ruling class’ dependency on enslaved African and Black labor escalated.

Even though the northern colonies and states lacked large-scale plantations, life was also not “easy” for Black people in northern society. According to Takaki, “Everywhere Blacks experienced discrimination and segregation.” Even in 1860, Black people experienced an unequal status in the North: “They were barred from most hotels and restaurants. In theaters and churches they had to sit in separate sections, always in the back. Black children usually attended separate, inferior schools. Told that their presence in White neighborhoods would lower property values, Blacks found themselves trapped in crowded, dirty slums. They were excluded from good jobs — in the 1850s nearly 90 percent of working Blacks in New York had menial jobs.” For Black Americans, the power of the vote was elusive, interracial marriage was largely banned, and White mob violence persisted. As Takaki states, “All in all, for Blacks the North was not the Promised Land. They were not slaves, but they were hardly free.” In order to “defend themselves against those who called slavery [and racial inequality] immoral,” many White slave owners and White media sources perpetuated false images and ideas of Black people as “childlike,” or “irresponsible,” among other negative traits. After the Civil War, racial persecution persisted. The Thirteenth Amendment simply rebranded the institution of slavery, as it still allowed for the enslavement of imprisoned populations. With the dawn of Reconstruction, many Black Americans were promised land; this was a short-lived dream, however, as Andrew Johnson, the man who became president after Lincoln’s assassination, quickly pardoned White Southern planters and restored their land to them. According to Takaki, “this ended the possibility of real freedom” for Black Americans, as many had no choice but to participate in a sharecropper system. Black Americans continued to lose “freedoms” as racial discrimination soared and “Jim Crow” laws were passed, which continued to divide society — cementing a lower social standing for Black Americans and a higher social standing for White Americans.

By the early 1900s, southern Black Americans were moving out of the South by the tens of thousands, and as World War I “cut off the flow of European immigrants” to the U.S., Black Americans helped to fill labor shortage in factories, mills, and workshops that had once denied Black workers jobs. Not only did the population begin to shift, a new “generation” was born, as many of these young Black Americans demanded higher wages and began to proudly claim and assert their identity and humanity. The jump in numbers and outward sense of pride, however, “sparked an explosion of White resistance,” perhaps most evidenced with the intentional creation of racially segregated, unequal neighborhoods, a practice known as redlining. As Takaki writes, “White citizens formed organizations to pressure real estate agents [and White property owners] not to sell [or rent] houses to Blacks.” Racial tensions also swept across the workplace, and riots broke out across major cities, like Chicago. For those who lived in Black communities like Harlem, many Black Americans “felt a surge of power and a sense of pride.” Unfortunately, events like the Great Depression would continue to create obstacles for many Black Americans. An ongoing fight for equal rights continued, as seen with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s to the more recent movements of today, such as Black Lives Matter. For Black Americans, and other groups of color, racial inequalities still exist, and it’s important we understand how discrimination and resistance transpired across centuries to perpetuate injustice, so we can reconstruct a more just society.

- **Asian Americans**

Tens of thousands of years ago, during an ice age, it is commonly believed that people from the Asian continent crossed the Bering Strait, becoming the first humans to occupy the landmass of the Americas. As ocean levels rose, the land bridge was no longer available, erasing the footpath for Asian migrants. For thousands of years, these populations lived in the Americas, and are considered to be the Indigenous, or Native, population of the Americas. It is commonly believed

that no further groups from Asia migrated, until a small group of Filipinos, referred to as the “Luzonians,” arrived on the coast of California in 1587. Nearly two hundred years later, in 1763, another group of Filipino sailors arrived, establishing a settlement near New Orleans, Louisiana. Additionally, mostly for “trade” purposes, in the late 1700s and early 1800s, a small population of South Asian (Indian) and East Asian (Chinese) immigrants resided in the United States.

It wasn’t until the 1850s that a larger “wave” of Asian immigrants arrived in the U.S. Most of the early immigrants were Chinese men, as states like California led “recruitment” efforts to hire workers for taxing and dangerous work, such as constructing The First Transcontinental Railroad and toiling the agricultural fields. Other Chinese people, mostly men, immigrated to join the gold miners, while others emigrated – or left their home country – to escape war and famine. Even though Chinese immigrants comprised a small margin of the population, in the mid to late-1800s, anti-Chinese sentiment brewed among the White working class. Laws were passed to favor and give advantage to White miners panning for gold, which included having additional taxes placed on “foreigners,” and basing different wages for workers on ethnic or racial identity. Supervisors often pitted such groups against each other to keep wages as low as possible. As Chinese immigrants increasingly became targets of racial hatred and violence, many left the factories and fields to start their own businesses, such as restaurants and laundry services. Over time, White support for the exclusion of Chinese Americans grew, and in 1882, the U.S. government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first act which prevented immigration and naturalization on the basis of race, or country of origin. The act was renewed in 1892, and again in 1902, when it was extended “indefinitely into the future.” The legal exclusion of Chinese immigrants lasted for sixty years.

With the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act, groups of workers arrived from other countries in Asia, such as Japan, Korea, and India. Following the pattern of racial discrimination toward the Chinese, these groups also faced discrimination and even violence. Perhaps most notable was the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, of whom two-thirds were U.S. citizens. Throughout the early and mid-1900s, the numbers of Asian immigrants remained relatively low. The passing of The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, however, allowed for more immigration from Asia. In the following decade, more immigrants arrived from Southeast Asia, including refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Currently, alongside “multiracial” people, Asian Americans are considered to be the fastest growing racial/ethnic group in the U.S. Despite efforts to suppress the numbers of Asian immigrants, their contributions to the U.S. — from cultural practices to the construction of essential infrastructure — are profound and should be recognized.

- **Latinx Americans**

Hungry for land, White settlers and government forces of the United States continued expanding further westward in the 1800s. As they did, they came across Native Americans and land “occupied and owned” by Mexico. At this time, some White Americans echoed the slogan of “Manifest Destiny,” or the belief that occupying land, all the way to the Pacific — even through violence — was their inherent right. For example, even though Texas was officially part of Mexico, many White American settlers began squatting there in the 1820s. According to historian Ronald Takaki, “Many [of these White settler] slaveholders came from the South in search of new lands on which to grow cotton.” One of these “American colonizers,” Stephen Austin, urged the White settlers in Texas to “Americanize” the territory, arguing that they were “civilized,” while Mexicans were of an inferior “mongrel Spanish-Indian and Negro race.” Soon after, White settlers in Texas formed an armed uprising, in a fort called the Alamo. The Mexican army responded, and many White settlers were killed in battle. With the rallying cry of “Remember the Alamo!” White Americans counterattacked, eventually claiming victory and declaring Texas an independent country, naming it the Lone Star Republic. Despite some public opposition, thousands of Americans volunteered to fight the expanding war for Mexican land. The U.S. ultimately claimed California through violent battles. Finally, in 1848, marking the end of war, the U.S. and Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Takaki describes the decline of the Mexican territory and the growth of the U.S. empire: “The treaty gave the United States a vast new territory: New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, parts of Colorado and Utah, and California, its prime target. Together with Texas, these territories had made up more than half of Mexico.” An exchange of fifteen million dollars allowed the U.S. government to promote the idea that the nation’s new territories were “bought,” not seized through violence or by force.

The U.S. national border was then drastically moved and tens of thousands of Mexicans suddenly found themselves living inside of the U.S. Those who stayed were promised the same rights granted to American citizens. However, the Mexicans then living in the U.S. lacked political power, including the right to vote. Quickly, the White American population outnumbered the Mexican population in the southwest, seizing about four-fifths of the land that had belonged to Mexicans. Most Mexicans of this region went from being landholders to becoming laborers, working in ranching and agricultural sectors, as well as the railroad industry. According to Takaki, “Whatever kind of work they did, Mexican laborers found themselves in a system in which job rank was tied to race.” In 1903, Mexican workers fought back and went on strike. Alongside Japanese workers, Mexicans demanded better wages and eight-hour workdays. They formed a union called the Japanese Mexican Labor Association, which held meetings in Japanese and Spanish. Yet, this union was not recognized by the American Federation of Labor, which was not willing to grant membership to Japanese or Chinese members. Nevertheless, strikes continued. Through efforts to overcome obstacles, a strong new Mexican identity was formed in the U.S. Takaki describes the Mexican American identity as a “proud attachment to the culture south of the border as well as a fierce determination to claim their rights and dignity north of the border.”

After seizing land that once belonged to Mexico, the U.S. government continued its imperialistic efforts. In 1898, after a war with Spain, the U.S. acquired the “territory” of Puerto Rico, along with other territories, such as nations in the Pacific. In 1917, Puerto Ricans were granted partial U.S. citizenship, but did not have the same rights as U.S. citizens, such as the ability to vote in presidential elections. Throughout the Depression era of the 1930s, in response to racist sentiment that specific racial and ethnic groups were “taking jobs,” the U.S. government forcibly deported between 300,000 to 500,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans to Mexico. Some of those deported were actual U.S. citizens. When labor was needed, however, the Latinx community was increasingly embraced. For example, in the following decade, with the arrival of WWII, Latinos enlisted in the U.S. Army, becoming the largest “ethnic group,” or population of “color,” who served in the war. Additionally, in 1951, the U.S. passed the “Bracero Program,” which brought an average of 350,000 Mexican workers per year to the U.S. The program would end, however, in the next decade. In 1954, the U.S. government launched “Operation Wetback,” an initiative that allowed the government to “locate and deport” undocumented Mexican workers. As a result, from 1954 to 1958, nearly 4 million people of Mexican descent were deported. Four years later, the tide switched again as the presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy formed “Viva Kennedy” clubs and a civil rights agenda, partially to “carry the Latino vote.” Later that year, fleeing Fidel Castro’s rule, 200,000 Cubans arrived in Florida. When Lyndon B. Johnson became president, after the assassination of JFK, he appointed more Mexican Americans to government positions. Finally, in 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of “race, color, religion, sex or national origin.” As the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum, farm workers in California also began to strike. Iconic leaders emerged, such as Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez. In the following decades, as immigration from other Central American and South American countries increased, the Latinx population continued to diversify. Unfortunately, many still face similar forms of prejudice and discrimination, which plagued the last 200 years of Latinx American history. The fight for equality persists.

- **White Americans**

The experience of White people in the early colonial era was not monolithic. While the ruling class was comprised of mostly White males, a large majority of the colonial population of the 1600s was comprised of White indentured servants. As historian Ronald Takaki writes, “Three-quarters of the people who came to the Virginia colony before 1700 were indentured servants. Most of them were White. They came from England, Ireland, and Germany, from the poor classes and from society’s outcasts: convicts, the homeless and jobless, people who could not pay their debts.” Takaki also describes the experience of many White indentured servants, noting, “Some servants had to wear iron collars. All had to show passes whenever they left the master’s property. They were beaten and sometimes tortured, and many lived in miserable conditions with poor food.” Even if they came for different reasons — as some were kidnapped and some came voluntarily — many White indentured servants of the 1600s worked alongside enslaved Black people. These groups at

times “joined forces.” To divide the working class, the ruling elite began offering rewards of land and money only to White indentured servants when their terms of servitude ended. Additionally, they gave Black enslaved people more cruel forms of punishment, and eventually made their status of “slave” lifelong. Such actions of the White ruling elite solidified a racial caste system in the United States by creating an unequal enslaved status for Black Americans, and social privileges to lower income White Americans.

Beyond the measurable social advantage White Americans received since the colonial era, in regard to the legal system and other social sectors like education and housing, another consistent feature of “Whiteness” is its sense of fluidity, or rather, how the White identity and sense of “community” has shifted. According to historian Nell Irvin Painter, “Constructions of Whiteness have changed over time, shifting to accommodate the demands of social change.” Though the term “White” was used in early colonial and U.S. society for centuries, such as appearing as a racial category on the first U.S. Census, in 1790, the idea of Whiteness varied, including the notion that more than one White race existed. Painter asserts, “Before the mid-19th century, the existence of more than one White race was commonly accepted, in popular culture and scholarship.” For example, an early concept of Whiteness divided the White race into two categories: “Saxons” and “Celts.” The word “race” was used to describe these groups of people with different origins. The people of the “Saxon race” — or those from northern Europe, with ancestral ties to Great Britain and Germany — were considered to be “intelligent, energetic, sober, Protestant and beautiful.” Meanwhile, the “Celts” — or those with Irish, Scottish, or Welsh ancestry — were considered to be “stupid, impulsive, drunken, Catholic, and ugly.” Such stereotypes persisted until new groups of European immigrants arrived, which would complicate, or shift, this binary again. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, as large groups, or a “wave,” of low-income immigrants entered the U.S. from other parts of Europe, new racial classifications emerged, such as the “Northern Italian” race, the “Southern Italian” race, and the “Eastern European Hebrew” race. Through pseudoscientific assessments, including the measurements of people’s cranial features and “intelligence” tests, these groups were erroneously deemed inferior, as the Celts had been.

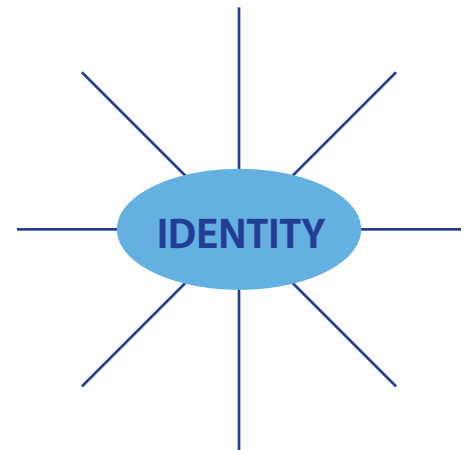
Forms of ethnic discrimination for European Americans, however, did not last for centuries, as the social construction of “White” continued to transform throughout the 20th century. For instance, with the rise of Nazi Germany, the preferred term of “Saxon” waned, in favor of Nordic. According to Painter, by the 1940s, anthropologists presented yet another form of racial classification, declaring the “only real races were “one Negroid race, one Mongoloid race, [and] one Caucasoid race.” This classification conflated previous delineations of White races, further solidifying a homogenized, or integrated view of Whiteness. Additionally, the rampant discrimination asserted against some European Americans, such as Irish Americans, gradually decreased as select populations were able to rise to a higher socioeconomic status. Over time, more and more European Americans – and other ethnic groups, including those from select regions of the Middle East and North Africa – were homogenized into a group of “Whiteness,” solidifying a racial hierarchy that subjugated people of color to a disadvantaged status, and associated Whiteness with unearned privileges, or as Peggy McIntosh describes, as “exemption from [racial] discrimination.” In the 1970s, perhaps inspired by the “Black is Beautiful” movement, some groups of people with ancestry from Europe — such as Italians, Irish, Greeks, and Jews — enthusiastically used terms like “ethnic” to describe themselves. Yet, the racial binary of Whiteness and Blackness persisted, as Painter states, “But this ethnic self-discovery did not alter the fact that Whiteness continued to be defined, as before, primarily by what it isn’t: Blackness.” Without Blackness, there is no Whiteness. In other words, without ideas like “Whiteness” and “Blackness,” there is no superior or inferior racial category, or advantaged or disadvantaged social status, to embody. This binary, hierarchical view of race, as “White” and “non-White” (or White vs people of color) continues to dominate the current social construction of race and ethnicity in the U.S.

Recognize Multiracial Americans

Multiracial Americans, in addition to Asian Americans, are considered the fastest growing racial group in the United States. As Pew Research Center states, “More than 40 years ago, only one of every 100 babies younger than one year old and living with two parents was multiracial. By 2013, it was one in ten.” To learn more about and from Multiracial Americans, consider visiting, “Multiracial in America: Black. White. Asian. American Indian. Pacific Islander,” a report and series of videos created by Pew Research Center. Available here: <https://www.pewresearch.org/multiracial-voices/>

The essential discussion: Discussing the impact of identity

- Since the unit speaks to the historical construction of race and the social implications of race, parents and guardians may want to discuss the impact of identity. Before doing this, parents and guardians may want to explore aspects of their own identity. Consider thinking about your own race or ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, able-bodiedness, religion, nationality, socioeconomic status, etc. How has your perceived identity, or identities, impacted your own life? How may your identity impact your child’s life? How does your child identify and how may that impact their sense of belonging and/or access to opportunity? If there are perceived advantages associated with aspects of our identities, what kind of responsibilities may we have? If there are perceived disadvantages or obstacles associated with aspects of our identities, how can we navigate our lives to maximize and/or create more opportunities? The following is an identity chart referenced in the lessons, which students use to begin conceptualizing their identities. Parents and guardians may find it useful, at least to encourage dialogue. Perhaps parents and guardians may consider reviewing ideas their child came up with, as well as completing an identity chart of their own.
- For some people, “Who Am I?” may be a challenging question to think about. To unpack this, perhaps first consider a more “surface” version of who you are, or the ideas they think others may have of you upon first glance, which may often include race and ethnicity. Then consider parts of your identity others can’t perceive immediately by looking at you. In short, we may think about our physical and social identities, as well as our personality and inner world. At once, our conversations may aim to dismiss stereotypes and embrace nuance.



Watch and discuss engaging 5-minute videos with your child

The New York Times created a series of videos that feature “conversations about race.” The collection of “Op-Docs,” or mini-opinion documentaries, is particularly noteworthy and may serve as an engaging resource to spark inspiration and conversation. We highly recommend viewing and discussing them with your child; please note that the videos are also suggested for use in a Grade 6 or above classroom.

- “A Conversation with Native Americans on Race,” video and brief article by Michèle Stephenson and Brian Young for *The New York Times*. Available here: <https://nyti.ms/2uZeW53>

After viewing, to help guide a discussion, consider the following questions which are referenced in the lesson: What is the significance of land, geographic location or geography for some of the interviewees? Some interviewees speak

about blood quantum and having to prove their “nativeness” in this film. What does this mean? How might this blood quantum demand affect someone as a member of the only racial/ethnic group who has to provide this “proof”? How is this

different from the popular practice of getting results from services like 23andMe? One interviewee states, “decolonization is like grieving.” What do you think she means? What are your thoughts on the statement made by an interviewee, “My existence is resistance”? What do you think she means?

- “A Conversation About Growing Up Black,” video and brief article by Joe Brewster and Perri Petlz for *The New York Times*. Available here: <https://nyti.ms/1ES30m8>

After viewing, to help guide a discussion, consider the following questions which are referenced in the lesson: One interviewee states, “The way people perceive you is not up to you.” Given that this is a film about Black men and boys speaking about their experiences and struggles growing up, what is the significance of this statement? How have some of the boys and/or men adapted their behavior? How may this be seen as an unfair burden? How do those dealing with such burdens hope to maintain their sense of self? As a viewer, what sort of feelings does this bring up for you?

- “A Conversation with Black Women on Race,” video and brief article by Joe Brewster and Michèle Stephenson for *The New York Times*. Available here: <https://nyti.ms/1HD3im3>

After viewing, to help guide a discussion, consider the following questions which are referenced in the lesson: What were some of the ways in which some of the Black women in the film were affected by the assumptions and actions of others? Think about the statement that was shared about a father shading in characters in various storybooks for his daughter before she read them. What is the significance of this action? How might this action have changed the little girl’s experience? Some of the interviewees mentioned their experiences with others’ perceptions of their appearance, such as whether or not their hairstyles were “professional.” How were assumptions about appearance made? What are better ways to approach differences?

- “A Conversation with White People on Race,” video and brief article by Blair Foster and Michèle Stephenson for *The New York Times*. Available here: <https://nyti.ms/1GYQCII>

After viewing, to help guide a discussion, consider the following questions which are referenced in the lesson: One interviewee speaks about “a system of advantages based on race.” What do you think she means by this? What advantages do you think she is referring to? An interviewee brings up the idea of “colorblindness” as something that White people might think of more than others. What does this idea of “colorblindness” mean? How might this idea affect people of color? How does this idea affect White people? For those people who are hesitant to speak about race, what strategies could they use to engage more with the topic?

- “A Conversation with Latinos on Race,” video and brief article by Joe Brewster, Blair Foster, and Michèle Stephenson for *The New York Times*. Available here: <https://nyti.ms/215J9sp>

After viewing, to help guide a discussion, consider the following questions which are referenced in the lesson: Some interviewees spoke about struggling to find a racial identity. Which categories did they seem to feel they must choose from? Why might they feel this way? Can people belong to more than one identity group? What might the interviewee who said, “Ni de aquí, ni de allá,” or “I’m from neither here nor there,” have been referring to? What sorts of cultural identifiers (i.e. language, clothing, etc.) did some of the interviewees feel they had to “give up”? How might this affect

them? What is colorism? How did it impact some of the interviewees' life experiences? The final interviewee said, "You're the best person to be a connector of both, because in you is everything." What might she have been saying with this statement?

- "A Conversation with Asian-Americans on Race," video and brief article by Geeta Gandbhir and Michèle Stephenson for *The New York Times*. Available here: <https://nyti.ms/1RZ41m7>

After viewing, to help guide a discussion, consider the following questions which are referenced in the lesson: What is the "model minority myth"? How might this myth perpetuate stereotypes, discrimination, and racism? What is colorism? How might this idea affect people's beliefs about themselves and others? Think about the last interviewee to speak in the film. What is the significance of her statement: "When the tide rises, all boats rise"? What might she have meant with this statement? What are some of the thoughts and emotions you are experiencing as you think about this idea?

For this video series, *The New York Times* did not include multiracial voices, but if parents and guardians are interested in hearing from multiracial perspectives, consider watching "Multiracial American Voices," a video series created by Pew Research Center. Available here: <https://www.pewresearch.org/multiracial-voices/>

Read poems with your child

The following includes some of the materials recommended for use in the Racial Literacy lessons, which parents and guardians may find useful. Poems are included as a way to add more nuance and perspective to our discussions and conceptualizations of race and identity. Consider visiting the following, which are links to the Poetry Foundation's online collection of poems. As usual, please pre-read and pre-select any poems used, as not all may be suitable for a sixth grade audience.

- "Native American Poetry and Culture," online poetry collection. Available here: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/144560/native-american-poetry-and-culture>
- "Poetry and the Civil Rights Movement," online poetry collection. Available here: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/146367/poetry-and-the-civil-rights-movement>
- "Celebrating Black History Month.," online poetry collection. Available here: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/101640/celebrating-Black-history-month>
- "U.S. Latinx Voices in Poetry," online poetry collection. Available here: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/144542/us-latinx-voices-in-poetry>
- "Asian American Voices in Poetry," online poetry collection. Available here: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/101589/asian-american-voices-in-poetry>
- "Poems of Muslim Faith and Islamic Culture," online poetry collection. Available here: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/144559/poems-of-muslim-faith-and-islamic-culture>

"Poetry is a political act because it involves telling the truth."

– June Jordan

Read on your own

- To learn more about U.S. history, especially about and from the generalized experiences of people of color, parents and guardians may find the work of historian Ronald Takaki informative and engaging. In the lessons, we have recommended the adapted version of his book for a younger audience. If parents and guardians are interested in reading more, consider Ronald Takaki's original text: *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*.
- Also, consider the work of historian Howard Zinn, who was an advocate for writing history from "underrepresented" perspectives. In the Curriculum, we have recommended the adapted version of his book for a younger audience. If parents and guardians are interested in reading more, consider Howard Zinn's original text: *A People's History of the United States*.

What is Race? – How Science, Society, and the Media (Mis)represent Race

Recommendation: Grade 7 and above

“Colour is not a human or a personal reality; it is a political reality.”

– James Baldwin

What’s Being Taught

Many of us use the term race, but what does race really mean? This unit explores how race has been fabricated and “defined” by science and pseudoscientific efforts, and unpacks the (mis)representations of various racial communities in the United States over time. Students will examine the relationship between historical events, pseudoscientific ideologies, and current perspectives. Lessons will also distinguish the sociological reality of race from its biological fallacy, dispelling myths of “biodeterminism,” or the racist ideology promoted in the era of pseudoscientific racism, which ascribed traits like intelligence to race, and unfortunately continue to percolate within current U.S.

society. Students will also learn about implicit bias, and how it shapes the way we view and treat ourselves and others. A media analysis follows, which will enable students to explore the ways racist imagery dominated U.S. television and film, review current statistics to gain knowledge about underrepresented groups in today’s media, and learn more about the power positive representation has on both individuals and the larger society. A final lesson will present the history of the U.S. Census, so students can better understand the shifting nature of racial categorization and recognize the societal importance and implications of “counting” race.

Why It's Valuable

Understanding that race is a social construct is an essential stage in one's racial literacy development. As most upper grade students begin to learn about biology, they should be more prepared to critique the biological fallacy of race, or as Alan Goodman, a professor of biological anthropology states, they should be able to comprehend that "race is not based on biology, but race is rather an idea we have ascribed to biology." To understand how race is embedded in and impacts our society, students will explore the construction

of race as a result of pseudoscientific ventures and the media, and the impact of such negative (and eventually positive) representations of race. In short, this unit challenges historical and modern conceptualizations of race and ethnicity, so students may deconstruct the more troubling, erroneous aspects and applications of race, to reconstruct it into something new — as they grow into adulthood, helping to shape our increasingly multicultural, multiracial future.

How to Continue the Conversation at Home

To further promote conversations at home, consider reading, watching, or sharing the following activities with your child. Please note that while the following are suggestions and not requirements, one discussion has been marked as "The essential discussion." If time and resources are limited, please consider prioritizing this particular suggestion.

A way to begin

As suggested in previous units, one way to continue the conversation at home is to discuss the quote by James Baldwin that opened this unit. "Colour is not a human or a personal reality; it is a political reality." Who was James Baldwin? What did he likely intend with this message? How is race, or "color," a political reality?

Use specific vocabulary with your child

- Consider discussing and defining the following terms with your child, as they are incorporated in the Curriculum and will likely be used in the classroom:

Race: "Race, the idea that the human species is divided into distinct groups on the basis of inherited physical and behavioral differences. Genetic studies in the late 20th century refuted the existence of biogenetically distinct races, and scholars now argue that 'races' are cultural interventions reflecting specific attitudes and beliefs that were imposed on different populations in the wake of Western European conquests beginning in the 15th century." (Source: *Encyclopedia Britannica*)

Implicit Bias: "An unconsciously triggered belief in the inferiority of, or negative attitude toward, a group(s)." (Source: Sociologists Matthew Clair and Jeffrey S. Denis) Also consider: "Thought processes that happen without you even knowing it; little mental shortcuts that hold judgments you might not agree with, sometimes those shortcuts are based on race." (Source: "Implicit Bias," PBS video series)

The essential discussion: What is race?

To develop our racial literacy skills, we must talk about race. Therefore, for parents and guardians who would like to support the racial literacy development of their child — and/or their own growth — it is important to talk to your child about race. A goal of such discussions should include nurturing a more nuanced view of what "race" really means and encapsulates. Consider the following questions for such a discussion: What does race mean to you? How has race impacted society, your own life, the life of your child, etc.? In short, deeply reflect on what you want to know about race and what you want your child to know.

For guidance, the following is a list created to accompany the PBS documentary, *Race, The Power of An Illusion*.

Below includes “Ten Things Everyone Should Know About Race”:

- Race is a modern idea.
- Race has no genetic basis.
- Human subspecies don’t exist.
- Skin color really is only skin deep.
- Most variation is within, not between, “races.”
- Slavery predates race.
- Race and freedom evolved together.
- Race justified social inequalities as natural.
- Race isn’t biological, but racism is still real.
- Color Blindness will not end racism.

After reading the list, discuss ideas that resonate with you the most. Do you agree and/or disagree with the tenets? Why is it important to consider these ideas when discussing race? Why should we develop our racial literacy skills? For more guidance, consider reading the following sections, as relevant information is included and can help support further racial literacy growth.

Learn more about the biological fallacy of race and what those “DNA kits” are measuring

- As mentioned earlier in this guide, many people used to (and some still do) believe that race is rooted in biology, and that humans of different races could even be different species. While we have differences in physical appearances — such as skin color, hair texture, eye shape, etc. — most scholars and scientists today assert that these are simply superficial differences. The field of genomics now demonstrates that genetically we have more in common than we have in differences, as we share 99.9 percent of our DNA. For that marginal difference of one-tenth of a percent, there is often more genetic variation within a “race” than there is across the “races.” In short, there is no consistent way to “measure” one’s race. As Alan Goodman, a professor of biological anthropology states, “Race is not based on biology, but race is rather an idea we have ascribed to biology.”
- Once this idea is embraced, some may still wonder: If race isn’t biologically “real,” what are those DNA “ancestry” kits measuring? To better understand this, we can take a closer look at our DNA. Tens of thousands of years ago, when our human ancestors were more isolated from one another, some populations formed a distinct set of genetic mutations, some of which created a range of physical differences — as seen in our height, skin color, hair texture, etc. — and other non-visible variations. These marginal differences in our DNA are referred to as the single-nucleotide polymorphisms, or SNPs. These SNPs represent the one-tenth of a percent of genetic difference of our DNA. DNA tests are comparing some of these SNPs, or patterns of these SNPs, to make guesses about where our ancestors may have come from, or where some of our “relatives” may live, by comparing these SNPs to a large database and the pool of people who took the same test and self-reported their assumed “ancestry”. SNPs, however, are not always unique to one particular region of the world. Therefore, the reported origin of our ancestors reflects an estimated guess. In short, these tests cannot define our “race.” There is simply no “race” chromosome and no consistent method to scientifically “measure” the social construct of race.
- If parents and guardians would like to learn more about this, consider watching, “What DNA Ancestry Tests Can — And Can’t — Tell You,” a video by Danush Parvaneh for Vox. Available here: <https://www.vox.com/videos/2019/4/16/18410869/dna-genetic-ancestry-tests>

Learn more about implicit bias

- Recently popularized in the media, “implicit bias” has more or less entered the mainstream. But what is it? As defined by Keith Payne, Laura Niemi, and John M. Doris for *Scientific American*, implicit bias is the “tendency for stereotype-confirming thoughts to pass spontaneously through our minds.” Even though the term of implicit bias is not interchangeable with explicit or structural racism, it is important to address this idea, as implicit forms of bias — even if “unknown” — still have an impact on our lives, as they regularly manifest into acts that often provide either social advantages or social disadvantages to others. In the Curriculum, students are encouraged to unpack the concept of implicit bias, how it may impact our lives, and to think about ways to combat implicit bias. While we may not be able to fully rid ourselves of implicit bias in totality, becoming aware of it is a key first step.
- If parents and guardians are interested in learning more about implicit bias, consider the module series created by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. Available here: <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/implicit-bias-training/>
- If parents and guardians are interested in “working through” their own biases by first “recognizing” what kind of implicit biases they may have, consider taking one of the Implicit Association Tests developed by Project Implicit. Project Implicit, a non-profit organization founded by researchers in universities, created a series of “tests” (the Implicit Association Test, or the IAT, often associated with Harvard) to measure implicit bias, or implicit stereotype. Rather than using the exact term “implicit bias,” Project Implicit uses the terms implicit stereotype (and explicit stereotype). Please note that while this is often considered the most reputable test to “measure” implicit biases, results may vary and should be viewed with some discretion or nuance. A link to the “Project Implicit Test,” starting with the disclaimer page, is available here: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

Learn more about pseudoscientific racism and how it was deconstructed

Damaging ideas about particular “racial” groups were promoted throughout U.S. history. In this unit, we focus on the emergence of pseudoscientific racist practices of U.S. “scientists” in the 1800s, and highlight an overlooked, essential figure of history — Dr. William Montague Cobb — who dedicated his career in science to repeal the erroneous idea that people of particular “races” either inherited superior or inferior traits as a result of biological differences between the “races.” The following may serve as helpful summaries for parents and guardians who are interested in learning more.

- **The Proliferation of Pseudoscientific Racism** – In the 19th century, ideas justified and promoted by pseudoscientific racism entered a mainstream “norm,” especially across White American communities, of both the educated and working classes. Pseudoscientists of this era — both White Americans and White Europeans — used different techniques, such as “craniology” to “prove” that some “races” had larger brains or different skull shapes, and that intelligence and other traits could be determined by someone’s “race,” evidenced in the shape of bones. Samuel Morton, often considered to be a “father of scientific racism,” was one of these prominent physicians in the early 1800s. Using scavenged skulls, Morton declared that skull capacity (the size of a skull’s brain region) correlated with intellectual capacity. He collected skulls to “prove” this idea. First pouring pepper seeds, and then lead shot, to measure the volume of the braincase. This practice was referred to as “craniometry.” Through his work with skulls, Morton — inspired by German anatomist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach — asserted that humans were divided into five “races”: Caucasians (White Europeans, mostly Anglo Saxons and Germans), whom he considered most intelligent; followed by Mongolians; Native Americans; Malays (or Southeast Asians); and Ethiopians, or “Negros.” Depending on the source, Morton placed either Native Americans or “Negros” at the bottom of this fictional racial hierarchy of intelligence. Perhaps the most damaging product of Morton’s work was his famous book *Crania America*, which swept across social circles in the U.S. and even reached a mass audience in Europe. Featuring rendered illustrations of skulls to suggest differences of “race” and intelligence, this book cemented erroneous ideas of inherent racial difference, solidifying beliefs of racial inferiority and superiority. As a line of text in the book states,

“the structure of the [Native American] mind appears to be different from that of the white man.” The work of Morton and his peers fed into racist-inspired ideas that people of different races may actually be different species, an idea called polygeny. The negative impact of this false idea endures, as evidenced in more contemporary racist rhetoric. At the time of his death, in 1851, Morton amassed somewhere between 800-1200 skulls (estimates range). Taken as “scientific proof,” Morton’s ideas propagated racist ideology in incalculable ways, much of which we are still coping with and fighting against today. For more information about the proliferation of Morton’s racist ideologies, consider the following, “Skulls in Print: Scientific Racism in the Transatlantic World,” a video and article by James Poskett of the University of Cambridge. Available here: <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/skulls-in-print-scientific-racism-in-the-transatlantic-world>

- **The Dismantling of Pseudoscientific Racism** – Many scientists, historians, and sociologists had to contribute a career’s worth of work to disprove the racist ideology fortified by pseudoscientific practices. One of the unsung heroes of this movement was Dr. William Montague Cobb, the first Black American to earn a PhD in anthropology. Dr. Cobb, professor emeritus of anatomy at Howard University, was, at various points in his life, the president of the NAACP, an author, a historian, and even a musician. With over 1,000 papers, and 40 years of teaching at Howard University — where he trained over 6,000 physicians and was the first to earn the rank of distinguished professor — Dr. Cobb devoted his life’s work to studying the human body in an effort to debunk and dismantle “biodeterminism,” or the idea that different “races” had different, distinct “bodies,” and that some were naturally inferior and/or superior to others. To better understand Dr. Cobb’s purpose, consider an excerpt of a letter Dr. Cobb sent to the dean of Howard’s School of Medicine: “It is my belief that physical anthropology can make a significant contribution to our national welfare if it would by giving the people, by modern propaganda methods, the scientific facts we have about race. In this way, a great blow could be struck at the dominant group’s entrenched belief in its racial superiority...I do not believe that we can look to others to do this job for us. Nearly every distinguished living American anthropologist, and I know them all now, has private reservations about the intellectual possibilities of the Negro. We cannot expect them to be willing to go very far.” In his work, rather than indicating inferiority, Dr. Cobb asserts that in light of social and economic barriers associated with slavery and racial discrimination, the intellectual achievements of African Americans are extraordinary. In addition to documenting the toll that racism was exacting on Black Americans, he also discussed the costs to larger society. Finally, perhaps Cobb’s greatest achievement was dispelling the idea that race was rooted in biology. This was perhaps best argued in one of Dr. Cobb’s defining papers, “Race and Runners,” which, according to anthropologist Rachel J. Watkins, “still stands as a poignant counter argument to biodeterministic explanations of athletic abilities.” Written in response to the furor over Jesse Owens’ performance at the 1936 Olympic Games and the false idea that Black bodies were “naturally” given athletic advantage (and intellectual disadvantage), Dr. Cobb presented data from skeletal collections indicating little or no difference between the length of calf muscles, legs, feet, and heels of Black and White athletes. Dr. Cobb also used data from his personal examinations of Owens’ body, which he compared to White athletes’ anatomy. According to Dr. Cobb, Owens’ anatomy exhibited what could be considered both “Caucasoid” and “Negroid” characteristics, indicating a discordance of “pure race” traits. Dr. Cobb argued that Jesse Owens didn’t dominate the sport because he was Black, but because he trained harder. In short, Dr. Cobb’s work began to dismantle the idea that race was rooted in biology. His anti-racist contributions to the fields of science and larger society are immeasurable. For more information about the proliferation of Morton’s racist ideologies, consider the following, “Knowledge from the Margins: W. Montague Cobb’s Pioneering Research in Biocultural Anthropology,” essay by Rachel J. Watkins for *American Anthropologist*. Available here: [https://www.newpaltz.edu/media/anthropology-/Watkins%20\(2007\).pdf](https://www.newpaltz.edu/media/anthropology-/Watkins%20(2007).pdf)

Learn more about media and the power of representation

Visual imagery can have an enduring impact on society and our psyche. Throughout the history of the U.S., negative imagery of people of color dominated many media sources, strengthening racial stereotypes and racist sentiment across some communities. Positive imagery can also be powerful. In fact, for many people, simply seeing versions of themselves, of people “who look like” them, can have an enduring impact. In the Curriculum, we explore the “power” of both negative and positive imagery. The following may serve as helpful summaries for parents and guardians who are interested in learning more.

- **Negative Portrayals of Race in the Media** – In the Curriculum, students will unpack the history of racist images and stereotypes presented in popular forms of “entertainment” in the United States. They begin by reviewing the era of minstrel shows — a theatrical form of “entertainment” that portrayed and perpetuated incredibly negative, false portrayals of Black Americans — which regrettably became the most popular form of entertainment in the 1800s. Students then move to a review of Hollywood, or the film industry, and how it continued racist practices, such as the ongoing use of “blackface” and “yellowface” imagery, which featured false portrayals of Asians and Asian Americans. A goal for studying the media will be to learn more about how imagery and storytelling was used to perpetuate harmful, incorrect ideas about racial or ethnic groups, and how these ideas provided a more privileged experience for some and a more disadvantaged experience for others. By understanding this form of systemic racism, students can hopefully deconstruct the media, and begin to reconstruct it into something new. To learn more about both “blackface” and “yellowface” entertainment, consider the following resources. (Please be advised that the materials suggested may be visually triggering and unpleasant. They have been suggested, however, in order to unpack the history of racist, misrepresentations of people in the media.)

“Blackface: A Cultural History of a Racist Artform,” a news segment by *CBS Sunday Morning*. Available here: <https://www.cbsnews.com/video/blackface-a-cultural-history-of-a-racist-art-form/>

“How the History of Blackface is Rooted in Racism,” an article by Alexis Clark for *History.com*. Available here: <https://www.history.com/news/blackface-history-racism-origins>

“Casting White People in Asian Roles Goes Back Centuries,” an article by Thad Morgan for *History.com*. Please be advised a racial epithet is used in the article. Available here: <https://www.history.com/news/yellowface-whitewashing-in-film-america>

- **Positive Portrayals of Race in the Media and the Power of “Visual” Representation** – After learning about the racist imagery of the past, students will review a study to better understand the media’s underrepresentation of certain groups, such as people of color, women, and those who identify as LGBTQ+. For example, in the “Top 100 films” in the U.S., only three movies featured “female actors” that were non-white, and only 29 percent featured actors of color. To understand why representation matters, students will also “hear” voices that speak to the importance of seeing oneself reflected in media sources, and the long-lasting, positive impact it can have on one’s life. To learn more about the power of representation, consider the following resources.

“Inequality in 900 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT, and Disability from 2007-2016,” a report produced by the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. Available here: https://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/Dr_Stacy_L_Smith-Inequality_in_900_Popular_Films.pdf

“Yalitza Aparicio en La Portada de Vogue México,” a video by *Vogue México*. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmEhcDZqrUo>

“On Their Shoulders’: Juju Chang Talks Pursuing the American Dream and Why Representation Matters,” a video by Juju Chang for *Good Morning America*. Available here: <https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/culture/story/shoulders-ju-ju-chang-talks-pursuing-american-dream-representation-62488547>

Learn more about how “race counts” in the U.S. Census

- A final lesson features the U.S. Census, focusing on how definitions of race have shifted over time. The following may serve as helpful summaries for parents and guardians who are interested in learning more.
- The U.S. Census began in 1790. Every ten years it “counts” the U.S. population, and includes questions about race/ethnicity. For many decades, the U.S. Census only measured two racial categories: White and Black. Throughout the centuries, racial categories were limited and fleeting. For the first time, in 2000, the Census provided a space for multiple races to be checked. In regard to the concept of “race,” The U.S. Census Bureau states: “The racial categories included in the census questionnaire generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country and not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically.”
- To better understand the history of racial categories on the U.S. Census, consider viewing, “What Census Calls Us: A Historical Timeline,” an interactive timeline of the U.S. Census. Available here: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/interactives/multiracial-timeline/>
- To have a discussion about the U.S. Census, parents and guardians may consider the following questions: Why does the United States conduct a census? Since 1790, how has the U.S. Census categorized race and ethnicity, and how have such categories changed over time? Is it inclusive and/or (in)accurate? Is it important to measure race/ethnicity on the U.S. Census? Why or why not? What are the advantages and/or disadvantages? Should we continue to use the current racial and ethnic categories described in the 2010 version of the U.S. Census? Why or why not? If not, what should we use in its place?

Read and watch with your child

- Many of the resources already mentioned may be shared with your child. As usual, please pre-screen materials to ensure they are appropriate. For another engaging activity to share with your child, if resources and time allow, consider watching an episode of *Chef’s Table* on *Netflix*. Episode 1 and Episode 3 of Volume 6 feature two women of color — Chef Mashama Bailey and Chef Asma Khan — who share inspiring stories of overcoming obstacles. Both are noteworthy examples of the power of representation, and how these particular women developed confidence as they fought to pursue their dreams.

Racism as a Primary “Institution” of the U.S. – How We May Combat Systemic Inequality

Recommendation: Grade 8

“Race is the child of racism, not the father.”

– Ta-Nehisi Coates

What’s Being Taught

The lessons in this unit explore race and racism in the United States, and the importance of developing anti-racist frameworks. Students will understand both historical and current forms of racism, unpack sophisticated ideas like white privilege and white supremacy, and analyze the various manifestations of separate and unequal institutions and structures that generate and reify racial discrimination in the U.S., such as housing, education, and mass incarceration. When learning about racism, lessons will encourage students to think about their own agency and responsibilities. By the end of the unit, students will set commitments for rectifying current social ills, such as learning and planning how to carry out anti-racist activism and/or social advocacy in their communities and/or how to improve their everyday lives.

Why It’s Valuable

Race is a powerful social construct that serves to support racism, especially in the United States. As students reach upper middle school, they should be more prepared to understand how race operates in U.S. society, such as grasping individual and systemic levels of racism. By developing a deeper understanding of racism as a primary “institution” in the United States, students will better comprehend the political, cultural, and economic spheres that often deny or grant a series of advantages to select groups and individuals, which compound over time. Not only is this unit designed to help teach students how racism functions and persists, it also incorporates lessons which encourage students to take action — to create a skill set that helps them deconstruct inequality so they may reconstruct a more egalitarian society that allows all of us the opportunity to thrive.

How to Continue the Conversation at Home

To further promote conversations at home, consider reading, watching, or sharing the following activities with your child. Please note that while the following are suggestions and not requirements, one discussion has been marked as “The essential discussion.” If time and resources are limited, please consider prioritizing this particular suggestion.

A way to begin

As suggested in previous units, one way to continue the conversation at home is to discuss the quote by Ta-Nehisi Coates that opened this unit. “Race is the child of racism, not the father.” What might Coates be trying to explain with this quote? How could racism precede race? Why may society develop notions of race to perpetuate racism? Do you agree or disagree with his statement? Why or why not?

Use specific vocabulary with your child

- Consider discussing and defining the following terms with your child, as they are incorporated in the Curriculum and will likely be used in the classroom:

Prejudice: “Is a matter of feeling; it’s a hostile or dismissive attitude, a feeling toward people we find different from ourselves in some way, and some way that we take as significant.” (Source: Historian, George Fredrickson) Also consider: “Prejudgment about another person based on the social groups to which that person belongs; thoughts and feelings, including stereotypes, attitudes, and generalizations that are based on little or no experience and then are projected onto everyone from that group; all humans have prejudice.” (Source: Sociologist, Robin DiAngelo)

Discrimination: “Action based on prejudice; these actions include ignoring, exclusion, threats, ridicule, slander, and violence; [it also includes] subtle, even harder to detect [actions].” (Source: Sociologist, Robin DiAngelo)

Racism: “Whole set of beliefs about that which justifies [prejudice] feelings and tries to make the case for differences that we find are innate, permanent, and are the basis for action; the basis for discrimination, or even for an institution that will be based on these differences; a kind of inequality or hierarchy based on these ideas.” (Source: Historian, George Fredrickson) Also consider: “Occurs when a racial group’s prejudice is backed by legal authority and institutional control; this authority and control transforms individual prejudices into a far-reaching system that no longer depends on the good intentions of individual actors; it becomes the default of the society and is reproduced automatically; racism is a system.” (Source: Sociologist, Robin DiAngelo) Please note, for this unit, we explore the different “levels” or “forms” of racism, such as individual levels and systemic levels. Individual levels of racism include internalized and interpersonal forms of racism. Systemic levels of racism include institutional and structural forms of racism. The following section explains this concept in greater detail.

White privilege: “A sociological concept referring to advantages that are taken for granted by whites and that cannot be similarly enjoyed by people of color in the same context (government, community, workplace, schools, etc.)” (Source: Sociologist, Robin DiAngelo)

White supremacy: “A descriptive and useful term to capture the all-encompassing centrality and assumed superiority of people defined and perceived as white and the practices based on this assumption; in this context does not refer to individual white people and their individual intentions or actions but to an overarching political, economic, and social system of domination.” (Source: Sociologist, Robin DiAngelo)

Understand the different “levels” or forms of racism

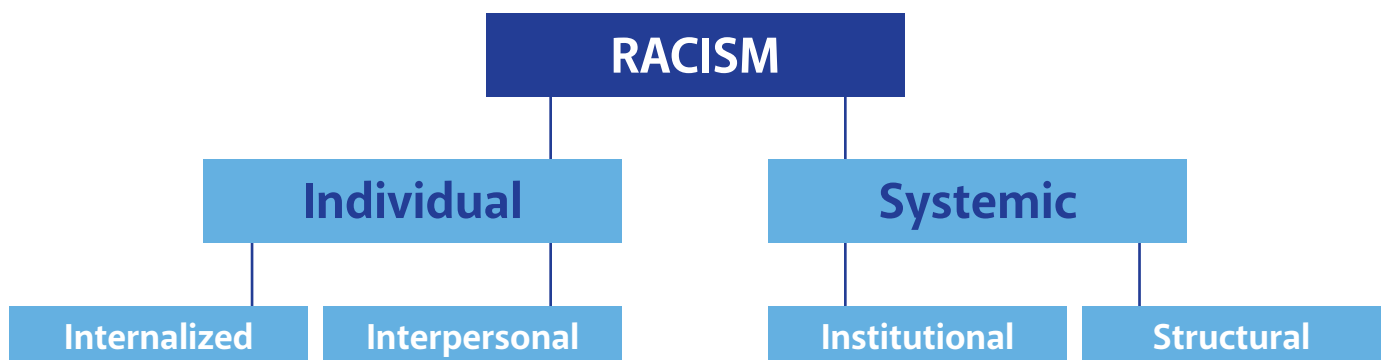
As the underlying goal of this unit is to review race as a primary “institution” of the United States, an introductory lesson will unpack the various forms of racism. While the scholarship of racism is wide, we’ve chosen a particular view that asserts racism can happen on either an “individual” or “systemic” level. Examples of individual racism include internalized racism and interpersonal racism. Examples of systemic racism include institutional and structural racism. The following includes definitions of the various “levels” of racism, suggested by Race Forward: The Center for Racial Justice Innovation.

Individual Levels of Racism:

- Internalized racism: “Prejudice, bias, and blind spots you might have within yourself as an individual.”
- Interpersonal racism: “What happens when we act out that internalized racism on each other.”

Systemic Levels of Racism:

- Institutional racism: “Racist policies and discriminatory practices in schools, work places, and government agencies that routinely produce unjust outcomes for people of color.”
- Structural racism: “Unjust racist patterns and practices that play out across the institutions that make up our society.”



While there is “overlap” between these categories, noting differences can be helpful. Perhaps one of the greatest reasons to delineate between “individual” and “systemic” forms of racism is to widen the scope of how we discuss racism. According to a study conducted by Race Forward: The Center for Racial Justice Innovation, the media tends to focus mostly on “individual” levels of racism, leaving many to deduce that “racism” is a problem of individual prejudice, and not a systemic issue that requires civic engagement and the deconstruction and reconstruction of new “institutional” patterns in the U.S., such as adjusting the loan lending practices of banks to passing more equal legislation. Thus, our Curriculum utilizes the different “levels” of racism as a pliable “guide” or concept, instead of firm, unyielding boxes.

Unpack “white privilege,” such as the social and economic advantages provided to some White Americans

The creation of race was an intentional effort by the ruling White elite, from the colonial era through the formation of the U.S. government. Sociologist Robin DiAngelo describes the evolution of race and the “White” identity: “Race is an evolving social idea that was created to legitimize racial inequality and protect white advantage. The term ‘white’ first appeared in colonial law in the late 1600s. By 1790, people were asked to claim their race on the census, and by 1825, the perceived degrees of blood determined who would be classified as [Native American]. From the late 1800s through the early twentieth century, as waves of immigrants entered the United States, the concept of a white race was solidified.” Race, and the concept of “white privilege,” are powerful social constructs. In the United States, the social invention of race has systematically denied and/or granted privileges and advantages to different racial groups. To better understand the impact to these “privileges,” we can underscore the institutional advantages given to some White Americans throughout the history of the U.S. Such privileges offered vast social and economic advantages and opportunities that compounded over time. For guidance we’ve included the following summary, based on the events listed in “A Long History of Racial Preferences: For Whites,” an article written by Larry Adelman.

Socioeconomic Advantages Given to Some White Americans:

- In the colonial era, the legal institution of slavery replaced White indentured servitude with enslaved African labor. This cemented an unnatural hierarchy of race in the United States.
- The 1790 Naturalization Act permitted only “free white persons to become naturalized citizens.” For the next 175 years, immigrant restrictions “further limited opportunities for non-white groups, which remained until 1965.”
- The U.S. government passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830 to “make [more] room for white settlers.” As a result, tens of thousands of Native Americans were forcibly removed from their land, many died from disease and government-sponsored violence.
- The U.S. government passed the 1862 Homestead Act, “giving away millions of acres — for free — of what had been Indian Territory west of the Mississippi,” to White Americans to resettle (this was 10 percent of the total land area of the U.S.).
- After the Civil War, the South never “followed through” on the federal government’s plan to give each freed enslaved person “40 acres and a mule” as a form of reparation. Instead, “government officials paid up to \$300 per [enslaved person] upon emancipation — not to the [enslaved person], but to local slaveholders as compensation for loss of property.” Economists have estimated that for the White Americans who profited from 200 years of unpaid enslaved labor, they made at least \$1 trillion — wealth that was passed to subsequent generations and compounded over time.
- The Jim Crow laws of the 1800s and 1900s “reserved the best jobs, neighborhoods, schools and hospitals for white people.” They were not overturned in many states until the 1960s, and forms of racial segregation persist today.
- The landmark Social Security Act of 1935 “provided a safety net for millions of workers, guaranteeing them an income after retirement.” Unfortunately, “the act specifically excluded two occupations: agricultural workers and domestic servants, who were predominantly African American, Mexican, and Asian.”
- The Wagner Act of 1935, like Social Security, gave new rights to many White Americans by “granting unions the power of collective bargaining, it helped millions of white workers gain entry into the middle class over the next 30 years.” Unfortunately, “the Wagner Act permitted unions to exclude non-whites and deny them access to better paid jobs and union protections and benefits such as health care, job security, and pensions.” As a result, many of these unions remained nearly all-White, “well into the 1970s.”

- The Federal Housing Administration’s New Deal program “helped generate much of the wealth that so many white families enjoy today” by making it possible for “millions of average White Americans” to own a home, but denied this benefit to people of color. As Adelman states: “The government set up a national neighborhood appraisal system, explicitly tying mortgage eligibility to race. Integrated communities were deemed a financial risk and made ineligible for home loans, a policy known today as ‘redlining.’ Between 1934 and 1962, the federal government backed \$120 billion of home loans. More than 98 percent went to [White Americans]. Of the 350,000 new homes built with federal support in northern California between 1946 and 1960, fewer than 100 went to African Americans.”
- The redlining efforts created racially segregated neighborhoods, and additional infrastructure reinforced either greater advantage or disadvantage for racial groups. As Adelman states: “These government programs made possible the new segregated White suburbs that sprang up around the country after World War II. Government subsidies for municipal services helped develop and enhance these suburbs further, in turn fueling commercial investments. Freeways tied the new suburbs to central business districts, but they often cut through and destroyed the vitality of non-white neighborhoods in the central city.” Racial segregation and discriminatory practices are still rampant.
- Because of generations of preferential treatment, “a typical white family [in the year 2003] had on average eight times the assets, or net worth, of a typical African American family.”
- Finally, it is important to note that economic advantage is passed down through the generations. For example, as Adelman states: “In 1865, just after Emancipation, it is not surprising that African Americans owned only 0.5 percent of the total worth of the United States. But by 1990, a full 135 years after the abolition of slavery, Black Americans still possessed only a meager 1 percent of national wealth.” Due to decades and centuries of socioeconomic advantages, current calculations estimate that the median White household’s wealth — which is defined by their savings, assets, minus their debts — is \$171,000. The median Black household’s wealth is \$17,600.

For parents and guardians who would like to learn more about the social and economic ramifications of providing advantages to some racial groups and not others, consider watching the PBS documentary, *Race, The Power of An Illusion* and/or “The Racial Wealth Gap,” Episode One of the *Netflix* show *Explained*. Also consider, “What Discrimination Looks Like in America,” a video by *NowThis World*. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwjKuitlu8>

Unpack “white supremacy,” a manifestation of systemic racism

- As early as the colonial era, a form of white supremacy has existed in U.S. society. As Kat Chow writes for NPR, “As long as the United States has existed, there’s been some version of white supremacy. But over the centuries, the way white supremacy manifests has changed with the times. This includes multiple iterations of the infamous Ku Klux Klan.” Many historians and sociologists note that social gains for people of color usually contribute to a rise of white supremacy. According to sociologist Kathleen Blee: “The Klan first surfaced in large numbers in the 1860s in the aftermath of the Civil War, then again in the 1920s, and yet again during the Civil Rights era.”
- To learn more about “white supremacy,” consider reading: “What the Ebbs and Flows of the KKK Can Tell Us About White Supremacy,” article by Kat Chow for NPR. Available here: <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2018/12/08/671999530/what-the-ebbs-and-flows-of-the-kkk-can-tell-us-about-white-supremacy-today>
- For another resource about the emergence of “white supremacy,” consider listening to: “Henry Louis Gates Jr. Points to Reconstruction As the Genesis of White Supremacy,” article for NPR. Available here: <https://www.npr.org/2019/04/03/709094399/henry-louis-gates-jr-points-to-reconstruction-as-the-genesis-of-white-supremacy>

Learn more about how racism permeates U.S. society

The United States is a country founded on racist ideology. From the colonial era onward, an array of privileges have been granted to some White Americans at the expense of some people of color. With the creation of racist ideology in the colonial era, the perpetuation of inhumane systems of labor like the enslavement of African and Black Americans, the forced relocation of Indigenous people, and the creation of a legal status of “White,” the United States codified a social, legal, political, and economic structure based on an unnatural racial hierarchy. Over time, these “racial preferences” for some White Americans compounded, creating large gaps in wealth and other forms of social and political privilege. The following provides more information about racism and how it impacts us on various levels, including our neighborhoods, our schools, our bodies, and even our homes.

- **How Racism Impacts Our Neighborhoods**

Unfair housing practices have had a huge impact on the exaggeration of unequal access to wealth across race. Due to various efforts of systemic racism — such as “redlining,” or the disproportionate lending practices of banks along lines of race and socioeconomic status — neighborhoods and access to home ownership in the U.S. are incredibly segregated and unequal. Because most U.S. residents and citizens gain their wealth through homeownership, efforts of housing discrimination have further compounded the racial wealth gap. According to sociologist, Dalton Conley, “Where one’s family lives in America is not just a matter of taste and preference. You have the issue of housing and wealth. The majority of Americans hold most of their wealth in home equity. That’s how they can finance the education of their offspring [or] save up for retirement.” While segregation based on race is centuries old, more modern efforts, such as programs developed by the New Deal’s Federal Housing Administration, helped exacerbate racial and economic inequality. For example, The Federal Housing Administration’s New Deal program “helped generate much of the wealth that so many white families enjoy today” by making it possible for “millions of average white Americans” to own a home, but denied this benefit to people of color. For more information, consider reading the section, “Socioeconomic Advantages Given to Some White Americans.”

To learn more about racial segregation, consider viewing, “Why Are Cities Still So Segregated?” a video by journalist Gene Demby for *Let’s Talk*, NPR. Please note that because of language, the first fifteen seconds of this video is not suitable for most children. The rest of the six-minute video is powerfully informative. Available here: <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2018/04/11/601494521/video-housing-segregation-in-everything>

- **How Racism Impacts Our Schools**

In 1954, with *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ruled that segregated public schools were unconstitutional. Yet, in the subsequent decades, funding for schools has been grossly unequal, as they are generally funded by local and state resources, mostly derived from property taxes. Because of a long history of social and economic advantages given to some White Americans, especially housing, there are more resources given to local schools in higher-income White neighborhoods, than there are given to lower-income neighborhoods. Beyond unequal levels of funding, school punishments vary along lines of race. For example, there are higher rates of suspensions for students of color — especially Black students — when compared to White students. In short, individual and systemic forms of racism also play out in the U.S. education system, which unfortunately reinforces a “school to prison pipeline.”

To learn more about the unequal treatment of students in the U.S. based on race, consider viewing, “American Kids and the School-To-Prison Pipeline,” a video by AJ+. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04pcSyzwoTg>

Additionally, consider viewing, “The School-to-Prison Pipeline, Explained,” a video by Vox. Please note that this video features images of “School Resource Officers” assaulting children and may not be suitable for all audiences. Available here: <https://www.vox.com/identities/2016/1/11/10749266/school-to-prison-pipeline-video>

- **How Racism Impacts (and “Feeds”) U.S. Prisons**

Mass incarceration has reached unprecedented levels in the United States. Individual and systemic forms of racism are central to this rise. To better understand this, reviewing statistics may be helpful. For example, according to sociologist Bruce Western, the rate of incarceration is now five times higher than it was around 1940; per 100,000 residents of the U.S., 698 are incarcerated. This is overwhelmingly larger than other countries, as the country with the second highest rate has only 148. Based on data from 2010, per each sample of 100,000 people in the U.S., 380 were incarcerated and White, 966 were incarcerated and Latino, and 2,207 were incarcerated and Black. A Black man born after 1970 who dropped out of high school has a near seventy percent chance of serving time in state or federal prison in their lifetime. 1.2 million Black children have a parent that is incarcerated, which is about one in nine Black children. According to Bryan Stevenson, founder and Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative, “Mass incarceration has been largely fueled by misguided drug policy and excessive sentencing... Private prison builders and prison service companies have spent millions of dollars to persuade state and local governments to create new crimes, impose harsher sentences, and keep more people locked up so that they can earn more profits. Private profit has corrupted incentives to improve public safety, reduce the costs of mass incarceration, and most significantly, promote rehabilitation of the incarcerated. State governments have been forced to shift funds from public services, education, health, and welfare to pay for incarceration, and they now face unprecedented economic crises as a result. The privatization of prison health care, prison commerce, and a range of services has made mass incarceration a money-making windfall for a few and a costly nightmare for the rest of us.” In this context, mass incarceration is imprisoning individuals and social groups.

To learn more about the prison industrial complex and its impact on communities of color and low-income people, as well as alternative ideas to reduce incarceration rates, consider viewing, “Mass Incarceration, Visualized,” an animated interview with sociologist Bruce Western for *The Atlantic*. Available here: <https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/404890/prison-inherited-trait/>

- **How Racism Impacts Our “Blood”**

Race is a social construction, and categories of race have fluctuated over time. How the colonial era and the U.S. government defined certain races and/or ethnicities was a reflection of “need” and greed. For example, when it came to “Blackness,” for much of U.S. history, all one needed to be defined as “Black,” was “one drop of blood” that was sub-Saharan African, meaning a person with any measurable amount of “Black” ancestry — be it one-half, one-fourth, one-eighth, one-sixteenth, or smaller — was socially, and even legally, considered “Black.” This was known as the “one-drop” rule, more specifically, the one-drop rule of hypodescent, which assigned the “subordinate” racial identity to such “mixed-race” people. Its effect was to reinforce and uphold a Black/White hierarchy that relegated Black Americans (and eventually other people of color) in a subjugated position, compared to White Americans, though it may also have unintended positive consequences, such as the formation and mobilization of a Black American community. Blood quantum, another form of “racial measurement” applied only to Native Americans, in some ways, contrasts the one-drop rule. Blood quantum requires a minimum quantity of Native ancestry to gain tribal rights and membership. It was originally initiated by U.S. government officials to thin tribal membership, especially when considering that generations of Native people have had “multiracial” children. Some see it as a positive way to maintain culture, while other tribes choose to open their memberships with other rules for eligibility.

- **How Racism Impacts Our Family and Home**

In many states, legislation was passed — even in the twentieth century — to curtail interracial marriage and/or “racial mixing.” For example, the state of Virginia passed the Racial Integrity Act of 1924, which aimed to categorize all people as either “White” or “Negro” (Black), with the ultimate goal of ending “amalgamation,” or the “mixing” of different racial groups. This wasn’t the first law of its kind, however, as the history of banning interracial marriage is centuries old, with the first law being passed by the state of Virginia in 1691, closely followed by Maryland in 1692. In fact, by 1913, 30 out of

48 states outlawed interracial marriage. A famous Supreme Court case, *Loving v. Virginia*, finally struck down state laws that banned interracial marriage.

To learn more about this case, consider reading and viewing, “*Loving v. Virginia*,” an article and video on History.com. Available here: <https://www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement/loving-v-virginia>

To hear voices of couples who are in interracial marriages, consider watching, “*Loving in America*,” a video produced by Vice News. Available here: https://news.vice.com/en_us/article/bjdanm/interracial-couples-50-years-after-loving-v-virginia

To hear voices of children who were born into interracial marriages, consider watching, “*The Loving Generation*,” a four-part video series produced by Topic. Available here: <https://www.topic.com/the-loving-generation>

As usual, for parents and guardians who may consider sharing these resources with their child, please pre-screen all materials, as they may not be suitable for all audiences.

“The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to speak openly and candidly on the subject of race, and to apply the Constitution with eyes open to the unfortunate effects of centuries of racial discrimination.”

–Sonia Sotomayor

The essential discussion: What is racism? How does it impact both individuals and the larger U.S. society?

- As Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum describes, racism is like “smog in our air.” Immersed in a society permeated with stereotypes and discriminatory actions and legislation, all of us are impacted by racism. According to Dr. Tatum, “We don’t breathe it because we like it. We don’t breathe it because we think it’s good for us. We breathe it because it’s the only air that’s available.” Therefore, to counteract the ills of racism, we must first learn how it operates so we form a more critical lens and reject misinformation. Thus, to support their child’s racial literacy development, parents and guardians may discuss how racism impacts both individuals and groups. Why and how was racism engineered? How does it impact our lives? Why is it important that we learn about racism, especially systemic forms of racism? For more information about the formation and reinforcement of racism, consider the wealth of information presented in this unit. After discussing “problems,” also consider discussing ways to combat or solve these problems. A final assignment in the Curriculum encourages our students to create action plans to further social and/or racial justice. Consider asking your child about his or her action plans. What change did they envision to make happen? Why did they want to see this happen? In short, discuss what matters to you and ideas, mindframes, and actions that matter to your child.
- While it is important to underscore how racism was and continues to be a primary “institution” of the United States, it is also important to recognize our own agency. In an interview on *PBS NewsHour*, author and historian David Treuer said, “I’m not interested in the tragic narrative, I’m not interested in the story of hope, I’m interested in the story of complexity

and depth.” When speaking about the ills of racism and other forms of discrimination, parents and guardians may want to include a conversation that applies a lens of “complexity and depth,” or to simultaneously underscore the importance of recognizing our own agency. To facilitate such a dialogue, we may highlight key ideas in Treuer’s essay, “2020 Vision.” In the essay, he writes: “I cannot shake the belief that the ways in which we tell the story of our reality shapes that reality: the manner of telling makes the world. And I worry that if we tell the story of the past as a tragedy we consign ourselves to a tragic future. If we insist on raging against our dependency on the United States and modernity itself, we miss something vital: as much as our past was shaped by the whims and violence of an evolving America, America, in turn, has been shaped by us.” Consider asking your child to think of a “story” of racism that they have learned about, experienced, and/or discussed recently. How can they reframe this story so it underscores the influence or agency of someone who is considered by larger society to be “marginalized”? Why is it important to recognize our agency? How can such a perspective help us not just survive, but also thrive?

- To better understand Treuer’s ideas, consider viewing “Author David Treuer On Rewriting the Native American Narrative,” an interview on *PBS NewsHour*. Available here: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/author-david-treuer-on-rewriting-the-native-american-narrative>
- Also consider, “2020 Vision,” an essay by David Treuer for *Harper’s Magazine*, adapted from his book *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee*. Available here: <https://harpers.org/archive/2019/01/the-heartbeat-of-wounded-knee-david-treuer-ojibwe/>

Read and watch on your own

- Parents and guardians may find the work of Bryan Stevenson informative and engaging. Consider reading Stevenson’s book, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. To better understand the creation and reinforcement of systemic racism, parents and guardians may also be interested in reading *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing*, an informative nonfiction book by Joe Feagin.
- Additionally, parents and guardians may be interested in viewing, *I am Not Your Negro*, a documentary by Raoul Peck that “examines Baldwin’s life, Black representation, and the Civil Rights Movement both historically and now.” And, as previously referenced, “The Racial Wealth Gap,” Episode One of the *Netflix* show *Explained*, may serve as a noteworthy resource.

While it seems as if there are numerous resources to read or view, simply speaking with our children may serve as an essential first step.



ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ ΝΙΑΡΧΟΣ
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POLLYANNA
Every Voice Matters.