

Race and Ethnic Studies: Power and Perspective

Coursebook



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Introduction

What is the history of race and ethnicity in the United States? How did race and ethnicity become key social categories in society? The field of critical race and ethnic studies (CRES) explores how race and racism are foundational to the formation of the United States and spread their influence beyond borders.

Traditional ethnic studies look at individual identity and culture while critical race and ethnic studies moves beyond that to consider inequality, power, and social change. CRES emphasizes the connections among forms of social differentiation, including race, ethnicity, class, gender, ability, and sexuality, and examines how these forms of differentiation provide advantages for some groups and disadvantages for others.

In this single-semester course, you will explore these issues by reading and viewing books, articles, films, videos, interviews, and lectures from a variety of perspectives. You'll examine how the topics impact your own experiences and feelings by keeping a journal throughout the course. Journal prompts will be provided with each lesson to help guide your reflections. For your major course project, you will write a children's book about an issue related to critical race and ethnic studies. You will be developing this project in lessons 12–17.

A note about terminology and capitalization: In this coursebook, you will see the terms *Black* and *Indigenous* capitalized. This notes the recognition of an ethnic identity and shared culture. The term *white* is not normally used as a cultural or ethnic identifier but rather a color, so it remains lowercase.

Course Materials

The following materials are used in this course:

A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America by Ronald Takaki

A Different Mirror for Young People: A History of Multicultural America by Ronald Takaki

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros

Blank journal

The two different versions of *A Different Mirror* will be useful as you dive into the complex material of this course. You are welcome to use one or the other, or both versions. You will find instructions in the lessons.

In addition, you are required to choose two children's books to read. See lesson 13 for more details. You will also need paper and basic art supplies: crayons, colored pencils, or markers.

In lesson 3, you are required to watch *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (California Newsreel 2003), a three-part series on the history of race and its contemporary implications. This is available at vimeo.com/ondemand/race. A one-week rental costs \$4.99.

Links to lesson resources are included throughout the course and can also be found at oakmeadow.com/curriculum-links. Bookmarking this page will make it easy to access the information sources in each lesson.

What to Expect in This Course

This single-semester course is divided into 18 lessons. Each lesson is designed to take about one week to complete, working approximately one hour per day or five hours per week. Lessons may include the following sections:

An **Assignment Checklist** is found at the beginning of each lesson so you can see all your assignments at a glance and check off assignments as you complete each one.

The **Learning Objectives** outline the main goals of the lesson and give you an idea of what to expect.

The **Lesson Introduction** provides context and important background information about the lesson topic.

Key Terms are included to help you identify and understand essential words and concepts.

The **Reading and Viewing** section provides the research sources you will use to learn about the lesson topics.

The **Think About It** section provides ways to reflect deeply about relevant issues. You are encouraged to discuss your ideas with others to help further your understanding of the lesson topics. You do not need to write anything down for these prompts.

Assignments are designed to help you examine key concepts and apply your knowledge.

Activities provide additional ways to explore and apply what you've learned.

The **Course Project** section, found in lessons 12–17, will guide you in the creation of your major course project, a children's book related to race and ethnic studies.

An **Around the World** section highlights global issues and actions related to race and ethnic studies.

Further Study activities and resources relate to the topics you are studying. You can choose any that interest you (all are optional).

The **Share Your Work** section provides reminders and information for students who are submitting their work to a teacher.

When you begin each lesson, scan the entire lesson first. Take a quick look at the number of assignments and amount of reading and viewing. Having a sense of the whole lesson before you begin will help you manage your time effectively.

This course is designed for independent learning, so hopefully you will find it easy to navigate. However, it is assumed you will have an adult supervising your work and providing support and feedback. If you have a question about your work, please ask for help!

Academic Expectations

You are expected to perform your work with integrity and diligence. You are expected to submit work that is your own and accurately cite sources when using the words or ideas of someone else.

The appendix contains important information about academic expectations, original work guidelines, citing sources, and more. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the resources in the appendix. Successful completion of this course depends on incorporating these guidelines into your work throughout the year.

A Note About the Workload

Students vary greatly in terms of reading speed, reading comprehension, and writing ability. Some may find the reading in this course takes longer than expected; others may find the writing assignments take a great deal of time. In general, you can expect to spend about five hours on each lesson. If you need more time to complete the work, you might modify some lessons to focus on fewer assignments, or you might arrange with your teacher to complete some assignments orally instead of in written form. Modifications like these can allow you to produce work that is of a higher quality. Each lesson in this course can be customized to suit your needs.

Keep an eye on the workload as you progress through the course, and make adjustments so you have time for meaningful learning experiences rather than rushing to try to get everything done. Please consult with your teacher when making adjustments to the workload.

Lesson

1

What Is Ethnic Studies?

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Reflect on the meaning and impact of race and ethnicity.
- Describe the history of ethnic studies.
- Examine how and why people are motivated to take action.
- Analyze the portrayal of race and ethnicity in media.

Lesson Introduction

Critical race and ethnic studies (CRES) explores the social, political, economic, and historical formation of different racial and ethnic groups, and examines how different groups have been marginalized. The term *marginalized* in this context refers to people or groups who, because of different histories (such as slavery), have been systematically blocked from access to goods, resources, or opportunities.

Critical race and ethnic studies emphasizes how colonialism and racism impact our world. While traditional ethnic studies may be more focused on history and culture, this course explores the connections between race, class, sexuality, gender, ability, and more. It also looks at how groups confront and challenge marginalization via cultural production (such as art and music), social movements and community organizing (such as civil rights movements or Black Lives Matter), and civic engagement (such as voting or educational forums).

Critical race and ethnic studies emerged in the 1960s as a result of student movements and the civil rights movement. These movements brought awareness to the fact that the histories of Black, Indigenous, Latino/a/x, Asian American, and other racialized groups were excluded from mainstream educational curricula.

As a starting point, you will learn about the history of critical race and ethnic studies in the United States and its roots in youth activism and community organizing. After learning about the history and

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read the lesson introduction and key terms.
- ☐ Read chapter 1 in *A Different Mirror*.
- ☐ Watch the documentary *On Strike: Ethnic Studies 1969–1999*.
- ☐ Complete journal entry #1.
- ☐ Write a one-page reflection on the documentary.
- ☐ Activity A: Race Discussions
- ☐ Activity B: People Emojis

foundational concepts, the course will consider different social processes and dynamics that are central to CRES. This includes settler colonialism, slavery, capitalism, migration, and immigration. In later lessons, the course will look closely at how groups contest, disrupt, and challenge domination and injustice. While CRES often explores global or transnational dynamics (connections across borders), this course will focus primarily on the United States.

Rather than focusing on specific identities or groups, you will learn about the histories that produced different racial and ethnic groups as inferior or superior as well as specific histories and legacies of colonialism and racism. So, for example, while the history of racism against Asian Americans deserves specific examination, how is this history connected to broader anti-immigrant sentiments? A CRES lens promotes an interrelational approach to understand the distinctions between each group's history while also understanding the connections between them and the histories of settler colonialism and slavery.

As you will learn, settler colonialism is an ongoing process (not simply something that happened in the past) where a group of people settle on—and steal—Indigenous peoples' land and exterminate or attempt to eradicate Indigenous populations over time. So, for example, when the British, Spanish, and French settled the Americas, they took land that belonged to Indigenous peoples. This course will explore settler colonialism as a process that is ongoing and continues to have an impact on our society as a whole, with particularly devastating effects for Indigenous populations.

As you move through the course, remember that learning about race and ethnicity can be difficult because many things we learn impact how we think about ourselves and those around us. While race is a *social construct* (something we will explore in lesson 3), it has a very real impact on everyday life. Some of what you will learn might make you uncomfortable, or it might be empowering. Or both. That's okay. Part of learning about how race and ethnicity impact society is unlearning dominant histories that erase or downplay painful pasts or exclude different racial or ethnic groups.

Although learning about painful pasts can be challenging, it is important to remember that ethnic studies help us to understand how power operates in society and impacts groups in different ways; this includes questioning things we might have previously learned and/

Key Terms

The terms listed in this section represent important concepts and information. You will want to be able to define, understand, and use them in the context of your assignments.

Ethnicity: the categorization of a group of people around a language, region, history, culture, and family (“kinship”).

Critical race and ethnic studies (CRES): the study of the connections among forms of social differentiations (such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality) and how these forms of differentiation provide advantages for some groups and disadvantages for others. Broadly, critical race and ethnic studies moves beyond the study of individual identity to consider inequality, power, and social change.

or take for granted as true. As your studies unfold, you are encouraged to embrace empathy. *Empathy* is relating to another's feelings or experiences or an ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes. Empathy takes practice! Throughout the course, imagine or try to understand different perspectives and experiences.

Reading and Viewing

In this section, you will often find questions or reflection prompts accompanying the reading and viewing assignments. These are meant to guide your study. You do not have to write anything down to submit to your teacher, but you are encouraged to take notes to support your learning.

1. In *A Different Mirror*, read chapter 1, “A Different Mirror: The Making of Multicultural America” (pages 3–20), or read chapter 1, “Why a Different Mirror?” in *A Different Mirror for Young People* (pages 5–23). You may want to read the first few pages from each version to see which one will work best for you. Another reading strategy is to begin with the original book, and then switch to the young people's version if the reading becomes too challenging.

Throughout the course, you will be given reading assignments from each book, and you can choose which will work best for you. The readings will cover the same basic content. You can expect the original book to be written at an adult reading level and be more complex; the young people's version uses simpler language and is aimed at students rather than adults. You might find it useful to read the young people's version first to get a clear sense of the topic and then switch to the original version to gain more insight and knowledge about certain topics. You are free to approach these readings in whatever way works best for you.

Because the original version is a complex text, usually only selected sections of the chapters are required. In the young people's version, the full chapters are assigned. Although the assignments for each book differ, the reading time is approximately the same.

Reading tip: As you read, please focus on what Takaki means by “The Master Narrative of American History.”

2. Watch the following documentary about how college students fought for ethnic studies. (Video length: 34:35)

On Strike! Ethnic Studies 1969–1999

www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xovOLk9qE8

Consider why the students felt so passionate about fighting for ethnic studies. Why was this important to them?



Think About It

Whose history counts?

Have you learned about the history of slavery, colonialism, and Indigenous peoples in the United States in school? Have you read novels by nonwhite authors in your English courses? Why are some histories taught in school and other histories excluded?

Ask a few of your peers or older friends and family members about their educational experiences and what they think about how—and whose—history is taught in schools.

Assignments

1. For your first journal entry, write about yourself. How do you feel about taking this course on ethnic studies? Are there things you are excited about learning? Do you have any concerns or things you are unsure about regarding race and ethnic studies? What have you learned in the past about ethnic studies? What do race and ethnicity mean to you? How do race and ethnicity impact your life?

You will complete a journal entry in each lesson. The goal of these assignments is to think critically about the lesson topics and their impact on you personally. You aren't expected to have all the answers. In fact, you might find yourself asking more questions. Honest self-expression matters more than writing style or technique. However, in order to express yourself clearly and powerfully, you'll want to use your command of the English language to its fullest.

You might find that writing by hand in a blank journal helps your ideas flow. Some of your journal assignments will be fairly informal, and others will be more involved. For the more complex assignments, you may want to use your handwritten journal to organize your initial thoughts, and then type your response as you revise and shape it into its final form.

2. After watching the documentary *On Strike! Ethnic Studies 1969–1999*, write a one-page reflection about the student movement. Why were ethnic studies controversial? Why did students want ethnic studies included in the curriculum? How do you think these students handled the issue—was it effective? Would you have done anything different? If you were there at the time, would you have participated? Why or why not?

Activities

Complete both of the following activities. Write a few sentences about each.

Activity A: Race Discussions

Over the course of two days this week, keep track of how many times topics of race or ethnicity appear in media or in conversations you have. Pay attention to everything you normally view or listen to: radio, music, television, YouTube, Instagram and other social media, news outlets, etc. Keep a tally of any mention of race or ethnicity. On the third day, reflect on what you observed about when these topics appeared and why. Do you notice any patterns or trends?

Activity B: People Emojis

Use your smartphone or computer to explore different emojis that represent people. Is there an emoji that looks like you? Do the emojis capture differences in gender or race? How?



(Image credit: Prawny)

Further Study

If you are interested in additional reading about race and ethnic studies, the following texts are recommended. (All of these readings are optional.)

When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America by Ira Katznelson (W.W. Norton and Company, 2006)

The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics by George Lipsitz (Temple University Press, 2018)

Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong by James W. Loewen
(The New Press, 2018)

A People's History of the United States by Howard Zinn (Harper Collins, 2003)

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher. Make sure each assignment is clearly labeled. Please proofread your work and make any corrections before notifying your teacher that it is ready to review.

If you have any questions about the lesson assignments or how to share your work, contact your teacher. If you would like to modify any of the assignments or activities (now or in future lessons), please consult with your teacher first.

Lesson

2

Identity: Who Are You?

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Identify different aspects that can make up a person's identity.
- Examine the process of identity formation in individuals and society.
- Examine how a sense of identity can change over time.

Lesson Introduction

Who are you? What aspects of your identity are important to you and why?

Our identities are shaped by a variety of factors and impact how we move through the world. In this lesson, you will learn about identity and identity formation. To some extent, our identities are formed by the values of our parents and the culture in which we live. The values we absorb affect how we see ourselves. When these values and how we see ourselves are in alignment, we generally feel good about ourselves. When these values and how we see ourselves are at odds, this can create conflict in ourselves and in our lives.

Most people have several identity markers: sister, teacher, athlete, writer, Muslim, dancer, introvert, friend, etc. Many, but not all, people identify with a particular ethnicity as well, and this often becomes a dominant identity and force in their lives. As you consider the different ways you see yourself, think about how each identity influences your behavior and thoughts. What does it mean to you to be an artist or Mexican or an extrovert? How does each label or identity express itself in your life?

As you learn about identity, consider how you might describe your own identity and how others might describe you and your identity. Do these characterizations differ? This question is a starting point to consider how identity is shaped by internal and external factors.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read the lesson introduction and key terms.
- ☐ Read *The House on Mango Street*.
- ☐ Watch the video "The Bear That Wasn't."
- ☐ Complete journal entry #2.
- ☐ Create an identity map, diagram, or other type of graphic.
- ☐ Activity: Family History Interview

Key Terms

Identity: who you are and what characteristics or traits define you. Identity can describe both how you define yourself and how other people might describe you.

Reading and Viewing

1. Read the novel *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros (110 pages). *The House on Mango Street* is a coming-of-age story about a young girl, Esperanza, and her relationship to place, family, culture, and more.

Reading tip: What aspects of identity are important to Esperanza? How do other people try to characterize her identity? How does where she lives impact her identity? As you read, notice how her identity and concept of self change over time.

2. Watch the following video. (Video length: 5:04)

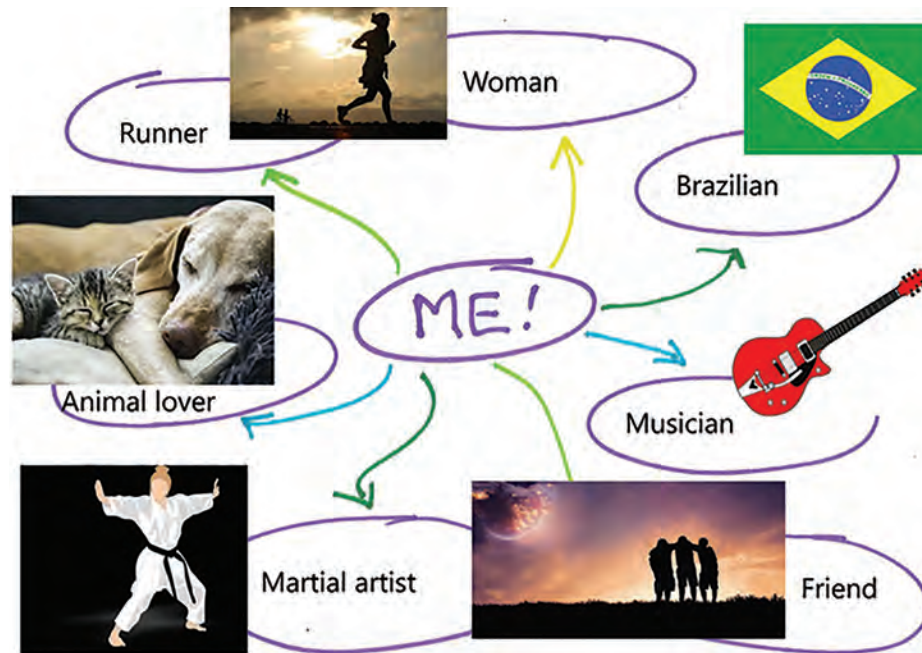
“The Bear That Wasn’t”

www.youtube.com/watch?v=mt106ojXPYE&ab_channel=FacingHistoryandOurselves

Consider the different aspects of the bear’s identity. How did other people characterize the bear’s identity? How did their perspective impact the bear?

Assignments

1. Complete journal entry #2 by writing an identity autobiography using the following prompts:
 - What parts of your identity are important to you?
 - Why are they important?
 - What is your race and ethnicity?
 - Do you remember the first time you learned about your race and ethnicity?
 - Has your sense of self been influenced by the way others see you? If so, how?
2. Based on your journal entry, draw an identity map, diagram, or other graphic using these categories as a starting point: race, gender, sexuality, nationality, religion, birth order, country of residence, or country of birth. You may also highlight other parts of your identity that are important to you.



Activities

Complete the following activity.

Activity: Family History Interview

Interview an older member of your household about their identity and memories related to their family history. Start with the following questions:

- Where and when were you born?
- Where are your ancestors from?
- How did your family end up living in your current region?
- Are you named after anyone in your family?
- What did/do your parents do for a living?
- What is your earliest memory of your family?
- Where did you sleep in your house?
- What was your favorite food to eat as a child? Why?
- What holidays did your family celebrate?

Include any other questions you want to add. Invite your interviewee to share anything else they'd like to include about their family history.

Write a reflection on your interview. Did anything surprise you? Did the interview help you better understand your own personal history and identity?



(Image credit: PickPik)

Further Study

To explore what it means to have a cultural identity, read the following article. (All Further Study activities are optional.)

“What Is Your Heritage? Discover Your Cultural Identity”

www.familysearch.org/blog/en/what-is-heritage

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, proofread your work carefully. Are you showing what you’ve been learning and thinking about? You can always add more than is asked for in the assignment.

When you are ready, share your work with your teacher, and include any questions you might have. Notify your teacher when your work is ready to be reviewed, and then continue to the next lesson.

Lesson

6

Settler Colonialism and Indigeneity

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Understand settler colonialism as an ongoing process (not a past event).
- Describe the meaning of an Indigenous peoples' history.
- Examine the impact of U.S. policies on Indigenous peoples.

Lesson Introduction

This lesson will focus on the ongoing process of settler colonialism. Do you remember learning about the Pilgrims or the early colonizers who landed in what they called “the new world”? Did you learn about the 13 colonies in previous classes? History lessons about the early colonists often emphasize peaceful settlement and interaction with Indigenous peoples. However, these versions of history that are promoted in many history textbooks often erase the experiences of Indigenous peoples and the history of settler colonialism.

Settler colonialism specifically refers to when a people (settlers) aim to permanently settle on someone else's land and establish power over the populations who live there. The term *settler* refers to non-Indigenous people—people whose ancestors are not native to the land on which they live. (In North America, the exception is the African diaspora who were enslaved and forced to relocate.)

Settler colonialism is different than other types of colonialism, where a group does not necessarily settle or live in the place they colonize. Often, colonialism and settler colonialism are defined as finding or discovering new land or, in the case of the colonialism in

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read the lesson introduction and key terms.
- ☐ Read chapters 2 and 9 in *A Different Mirror*.
- ☐ Watch the video “An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People.”
- ☐ Complete journal entry #6.
- ☐ Pose five questions related to the topic.
- ☐ Activity A: Indigenous Peoples' Day
- ☐ Activity B: Native Land
- ☐ Activity C: Change the Mascot

the Americas, a “new world.” However, it is important to remember that people lived on the land thousands of years before the land was “discovered.”

It is crucial to understand that settler colonialism is ongoing. The history of the United States is rooted in the theft of land and the genocide of Native peoples. Indigenous studies scholars assert that the elimination of Indigenous populations is central to settler colonialism. In this lesson, we will critically examine the meaning of *settler* in relation to colonialism and slavery in the United States.

This can be a challenging lesson, particularly because of the past (and ongoing) violence inflicted on Indigenous peoples. You may find it useful to discuss or share the reading and viewing assignments with others to help gain a clearer understanding and sort through any feelings that may arise.

Key Terms

Indigenous: an ethnic group that is considered native to a particular geographic location; also referred to as First Peoples, First Nations, or Aboriginals.

Settler colonialism: “ongoing system of power that perpetuates the genocide and repression of indigenous peoples and cultures” (Alicia Cox, Oxford Bibliographies).

Reading and Viewing

1. Choose readings from either of the texts below.

In *A Different Mirror*, read the following selections from chapters 2 and 9:

From chapter 2, “The ‘Tempest’ in the Wilderness: A Tale of Two Frontiers”:

- “Shakespeare’s Dream About America” (27–28)
- “English Over Indian” (30–33)
- “New England: The ‘Utter Extirpation’ of Indians” (37–44)
- “Stolen Lands: A World Turned ‘Upside Down’” (44–48)

From chapter 9: “The ‘Indian Question’: From Reservation to Reorganization”:

- “The Massacre at Wounded Knee” (214–216)
- “Where the Buffalo No Longer Roam” (216–220)
- “Allotment and Assimilation” (220–224)

In *A Different Mirror for Young People*, read the following:

- Chapter 2, “Removing the ‘Savages’” (25–45)
- Chapter 9, “Dealing with the Indians” (167–186)

Reading tip: How did the treatment of Indigenous peoples change over time?

2. Watch the following lecture by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz at the People’s Forum of NYC. (Video length: 1:11:04)

“An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States for Young People”

www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfjQnrb6h-I&ab_channel=ThePeople%27sForumNYC



Think About It

Consider this quote from the book *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*:

“The history of the United States is a history of settler colonialism—the founding of a state based on the ideology of white supremacy, the widespread practice of African slavery, and a policy of genocide and land theft.” (Dunbar-Ortiz 2015)

What is the meaning of the statement “The history of the United States is a history of settler colonialism”? How does this change how we think about U.S. history?

Share your thoughts with a friend or family member, and ask what they think.

Assignments

1. Complete journal entry #6 by reflecting on the following questions:
 - What have you learned about the histories of Indigenous peoples in your other classes in school?
 - Have you learned about the histories of Indigenous peoples in pop culture or from other sources?
 - Are there any key themes about what you have learned about Indigenous peoples in the United States?
 - How are the histories of Indigenous peoples different from other histories of the United States?

As you reflect on these questions and form your response, keep in mind how the past influences the present. Think about how oppression becomes systematized and taken for granted.

2. Imagine you are a high school history teacher presenting a lesson on the histories of Indigenous peoples. Come up with five or more questions about this topic that you would like students to ponder, discuss, and try to answer. Aim for questions that require explanation instead of just a simple yes/no answer. Apply what you've learned about power and privilege as it relates to settler colonialism to craft meaningful questions.



Around the World: Global Perspectives

In many areas of the world, Indigenous peoples have experienced discrimination, mistreatment, and even genocide. In Guatemala, approximately 40–50 percent of the population is of Maya descent. In ancient times, the Maya empire covered portions of Mexico and Central America. When Spanish settlers arrived in the 1500s, the remaining Maya population was forced into labor, and their land was taken. The ramifications of this settler colonialism lasted for centuries. In the 1960s, a Maya social justice movement gained traction but was quashed by the government. In 1980, military action resulted in nearly 200,000 deaths, a massacre labeled as genocide by a UN commission and called the “third holocaust” by Maya leaders.

You can learn more about the Maya by reading the following article:

“Guatemala: Maya”

minorityrights.org/minorities/maya-2

Activities

Complete the following activities.

Activity A: Indigenous Peoples’ Day

As of 2020, 14 states, the District of Columbia, and 130 cities observe Indigenous Peoples’ Day instead of or in addition to Columbus Day (Hauck 2020). Find out if your state or a nearby city celebrates an Indigenous Peoples’ Day, and if so, how. If not, is there a movement underway to establish it as a holiday? If possible, attend an Indigenous Peoples’ Day celebration.

Activity B: Native Land

Do you know the history of the land you live on? Explore the following map to learn about where you live and who the land belongs/ belonged to:

Native Land

native-land.ca/

Learn what you can about the tribe and if it is still active in the region.

Activity C: Change the Mascot

Change the Mascot is a national campaign to end the use of the racial slur *redskins* by the NFL team in Washington, D.C. Explore their website to learn about the history of the campaign. The campaign was successful in July 2020.

Change the Mascot

changethemascot.org

Find out what other sports teams have names with ethnic references.

Further Study

Here are additional resources to learn more about Indigenous peoples.

Listen to an episode of the following podcast hosted by Matika Wilbur (Swinomish and Tulalip) and Adrienne Keene (Cherokee Nation):

All My Relations

www.allmyrelationspodcast.com

Explore the following blog:

Native Appropriations

nativeappropriations.com

What are the main themes? What is the blog trying to examine and address?

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher, and include any questions you might have. Notify your teacher when your work is ready to be reviewed.



The Tlicho Drummers and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation Drummers performing together during an outreach event about traditional knowledge. (21 October 2014) (Image credit: The Canadian Encyclopedia/Dene)

Lesson

14

Art and Protest

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Investigate how different artists have used their work to provoke social transformation.
- Explore art as a tool in the fight for justice.

Lesson Introduction

For many artists, there is no distinction between art and activism; some artists even prefer the label “artist” to emphasize the connection between their art and activism. Art can take many forms, including photography, writing, painting, dancing, singing, etc.

Art has been central to social justice efforts, both in the past and in recent years. In this lesson, you will explore the different ways artists use their art to fight for social change as part of a longer history of protest.

Reading and Viewing

1. Read the following articles:

“As Liberation Struggles Endure, So Does Chicano Protest Art”

datebook.sfchronicle.com/art-exhibits/as-liberation-struggles-endure-so-does-chicano-protest-art

“Dance of the African Diaspora: Tracing Social and Political Activism”

danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/themes-essays/african-diaspora/tracing-social-political-activism-african-diaspora-dance

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read the lesson introduction.
- ☐ Read the following articles:
 - “As Liberation Struggles Endure, So Does Chicano Protest Art”
 - “Dance of the African Diaspora: Tracing Social and Political Activism”
- ☐ Watch and read about Nina Simone’s song, “Mississippi Goddam.”
- ☐ Watch the music video “Shea Diamond—’I Am America.’”
- ☐ Complete journal entry #14.
- ☐ Course Project: Phase III
- ☐ Activity A: Queer Cultural Center
- ☐ Activity B: Protest Art

2. Watch Nina Simone perform “Mississippi Goddam” in 1965. You can find several versions on YouTube. After listening to the song once or twice, make a few notes about the song. What do you think she is singing about? How do you feel? Are there any lyrics that stand out to you?

Now read the following analysis of the song, and reflect on how Simone used song and performance as protest.

“Behind the Song: Nina Simone, ‘Mississippi Goddam’”

americansongwriter.com/mississippi-goddam-nina-simone-behind-the-song

3. Watch trans artist Shea Diamond’s video “I am America.” Listen to it a second time with your eyes closed. Do you notice anything different? What does Diamond mean when she sings “I am America”? How do the images in the video convey this message?

“Shea Diamond—‘I Am America’”

www.youtube.com/watch?v=dx9sOz_S_9M&ab_channel=SheaDiamond

You may want to record your reflections in your journal.



Around the World: Global Perspectives

Read about art and social change in other countries. Here are two articles to begin with:

“Art Can Be a Catalyst for Change in Uganda”

www.theguardian.com/katine/2008/oct/06/musicandart.news

“In Open Cut Exhibition, Protest Art Challenges Visitors to Take Action”

theconversation.com/in-open-cut-exhibition-protest-art-challenges-visitors-to-take-action-93574

Assignments

1. In journal entry #14, reflect on the role of art in your life. This can be in terms of consumption (what you watch, read, or listen to) or production (what you create). Be broad with your interpretation of art! Art can come in many forms—music videos, graffiti, dance, spoken word poetry, architecture, etc. Artists can include fashion designers, puppeteers, gardeners, and more. What art do you like and why?

Course Project: Phase III

Continue working on your story. Is there anything you want to change or add to your draft? This week, you should finish your first draft of writing and begin to visualize how you will illustrate your book. (The next lesson is dedicated to choosing or creating the artwork.) Your goal is continue developing your story and imagining the visuals.

Share your rough draft with your teacher.

Activities

Complete one or both of the following activities.

Activity A: Queer Cultural Center

Learn more about the history of art and protest at the Queer Cultural Center (QCC) in San Francisco.

“The Birth of QCC: The Center for Lesbian Gay Bi Transgender Art & Culture”

queerculturalcenter.org/about/history/

Write down something you found interesting or something you learned.

Activity B: Protest Art

Get creative! Make a piece of protest art. This can be a painting, drawing, collage, or protest sign for an issue you care about.



(Image credit: Aaron T. Harvey)



(Image credit: Penn State Special Collections)



(Image credit: Pixy.org)

Further Study

Here are some resources to help you learn more about the role of art in protest and social justice.

Read different artists' reflections on Pride Month and protests in the following article:

"10 Black Queer Artists Get Real About the Intersectionality of Resistance During Pride 2020"

www.billboard.com/articles/news/pride/9408146/10-black-queer-artists-intersectionality-pride

Read the following article about painters' portraits as a form of protest against injustice.

"'Art Can Touch Our Emotional Core.' Meet the Artists Behind Some of the Most Widespread Images Amid George Floyd Protests"

time.com/5846424/george-floyd-protests-art/

Listen to a segment from a panel featuring Jeff Chang, Alicia Garza, Ben Davis, Steven W. Thrasher, and Christian L. Frock and moderated by Elizabeth Trivelpiece. (Audio length: 2 hours and 34 minutes)

"Who We Be: Superpanel on Art, Protest, and Racial Justice"

soundcloud.com/artandactivism-org/whowebe-superpanel

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher, and include any questions you might have. Notify your teacher when your work is ready to be reviewed.



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