

TEACHING STRATEGIES & LESSON PLANS



EMPOWERING EDUCATORS

USING NEWS ARTICLES & VIDEOS

This resource covers guiding students in their understanding of race-related events covered in the news, including distinguishing fact from fiction and respectfully sharing opinions and feelings. Journal prompts and lesson plans related to race and racism are also included.

When incidents of racism and injustice are covered in the news, students deserve to be part of the conversation. Use these steps to help students feel safe, ask questions, evaluate sources, learn more, and take action.

1 CREATE A SAFE SPACE

PREP: Make sure your classroom guidelines include listening, confidentiality, responding to put-downs, and how to deal with bias and stereotyping.

REVIEW: Ensure that students understand classroom guidelines before beginning conversations.

CONSIDER: Remind students (and yourself!) that every individual has a unique identity and lived experience.

POST: Make sure the guidelines are posted where all students can see them and give each student a copy to keep as a reference at their desk.



FIND OUT WHAT STUDENTS KNOW, SOME OF WHICH MAY BE FACT, OPINION, OR UNTRUE.

TEACH THEM IT'S A PROCESS: NEW QUESTIONS BRING NEW INFORMATION, AND NEW INFORMATION SHOULD SUGGEST NEW QUESTIONS

2 EXPRESS FEELINGS

- Make sure students can respectfully listen to the feelings of others even if they feel differently.
- Teach students to distinguish between thoughts and feelings and facts and opinions, all of which are valuable.
- Consider students' identities and lived experiences.
- Give students the right to express their feelings verbally or in writing as well as permission to pass.

3 GENERATE QUESTIONS

- Find out what students know, some of which may be fact, opinion, or untrue.
- Teach them it's a process: new questions bring new information, and new information should suggest new questions.
- Have them brainstorm questions as well as where to find answers.

USING NEWS ARTICLES & VIDEOS

4 SHARE FACTS

- Find out what students know and clarify misunderstandings and misinformation.
- Give them the tools to find out what happened and determine what's still unknown.
- Help them understand [bias related vocabulary](#), such as the difference between prejudice and discrimination.

FACTS

TELL US WHAT HAPPENED, AND
CAN BE PROVEN TRUE OR FALSE

Source: [A Teacher's Guide to Fact and Opinion | Literacy Ideas](#)

A fact generally refers to something that is true and can be verified as such. That is, a fact is something that can be proven to be true.

Fact and opinion are often woven together in many forms of communication, from news articles and blogs to social media posts and speeches. Students will take in large quantities of news and information throughout their lives. Learning how to distinguish fact from opinion and how to recognize when and how opinions are biased is an important life skill.

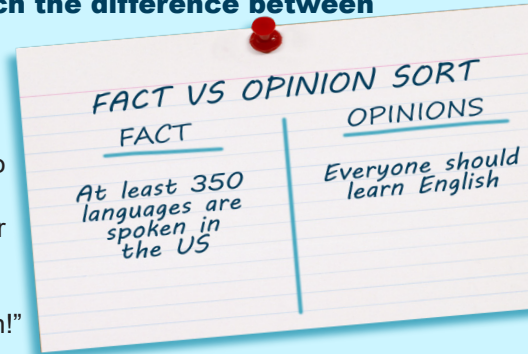
OPINIONS

ARE ATTITUDES OR JUDGEMENTS THAT
CAN'T BE PROVEN RIGHT OR WRONG

An opinion refers to a personal belief. It relates to how someone feels about something. Others may agree or disagree with an opinion, but they cannot prove or disprove it. This is what defines it as opinion.

Some ways to teach the difference between fact and opinion:

- Have students write down one fact and one opinion on index cards. Ask students to read their statements out loud (as a class or in small groups) as their classmates call out "Fact!" or "Opinion!"



- Use a graphic organizer and have students sort the index cards into two groups.

5 COMPLICATE THINKING

- Students' thinking should be complicated by hearing about and considering different points of view.
- Give students practice making arguments by assigning essays, opinion pieces, and persuasive letters.
- Try different types of discussions like debate, dialogue, pairs, small groups, and fishbowls. Download [Challenging Conversations About Race & Racism](#) for tips and scripts to help you facilitate.
- Give students an editorial ([such as this one about the Derek Chauvin verdict in George Floyd's murder](#)) and have them underline the facts and highlight the opinions.

- Great sources for a variety of articles include [NEWSLA](#), [Commonlit.org](#), and [Kelly Gallagher: Article of the Week](#)

OPINION PIECES AND ESSAYS

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:

- [Should Schools Ban Junk Food?](#)

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL:

- [Student Opinion Questions](#) from *The New York Times*
- [The Case for Reparations](#) by Ta-Nehisi Coates (A video interview is available [here](#).)

USING NEWS ARTICLES & VIDEOS

6 TEACH TECHNOLOGY

When there are public instances of injustice and tragedy, students are often overwhelmed by social media and news reports. To help students handle anxiety and media overload:

- Teach [digital citizenship](#).
- Teach [media literacy](#).
- Teach students to [assess credibility, perspective, motivation, and bias](#).



DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP LESSONS FROM COMMON SENSE MEDIA

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:

- [Is Seeing Believing?](#) (GRADE 3)
- [My Media Choices](#) (GRADE 4)
- [Reading News Online](#) (GRADE 5)

MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- [Finding Credible News](#) (GRADE 6)
- [My Social Media Life](#) (GRADE 7)
- [Responding to Online Hate Speech](#) (GRADE 8)

HIGH SCHOOL:

- [Hoaxes and Fakes](#) (GRADE 9)
- [Challenging Confirmation Bias](#) (GRADE 10)
- [The Change You Want to See](#) (GRADE 12)

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN TEACHING MEDIA LITERACY

1. Who created it?
2. Why did they make it?
3. Who is the message for?
4. What techniques are being used to make this message believable?
5. What details were left out, and why?
6. How did the message make you feel?

FACT-CHECKING & BIAS-DETECTING SITES

- [Center for News Literacy, Stony Brook University School of Journalism Civic Online Reasoning, Stanford University](#)
- [PolitiFact.com](#)
- [Allsides.com](#)
- [Snopes.com](#)
- [Factcheck.org](#)

HOW TO IDENTIFY BIAS IN THE NEWS

Distinguishing between fact and opinion is an important skill and is the first step in being able to identify bias.

1. When reading an article, blog, or social post, notice how much of the content is fact-based versus opinion.
2. Determine whether the opinions are biased by considering whether the author has:
 - Provided incomplete information
 - Intentionally ignored or left out information to persuade the reader
 - Allowed their own personal experiences to cloud any sense of objectivity

Source: [A Teacher's Guide to Fact and Opinion | Literacy Ideas](#)

USING NEWS ARTICLES & VIDEOS

7 TAKE ACTION & BE AN ALLY

If students feel passionately about a cause, help them take action, confront injustice, and become allies.

- Educate others through teach-ins, peer-to-peer programs, and social media forums.
- [Protest Peacefully](#)
- Advocate for legislation by [writing letters to legislators](#).
- Assign [performance tasks](#) that let students demonstrate their anti-bias awareness and civic competency in a real-world context.

The Difference Between Ally, Accomplice & Co-conspirator:

ALLY:

Allies support social justice and equality and educate themselves through reading and listening.

ACCOMPLICE:

Accomplices actively work to fight against injustice, racism, and oppression and use their privilege or advantage, if any, to disrupt institutional bias.

CO-CONSPIRATOR:

Co-conspirators work with the communities they support; don't co-opt the cause; and use their reputation, resources, time, and connections to support those already doing the work.

HOW TO BE AN ALLY

If you **witness an act of racism**, your job is to create a safe atmosphere for the targeted person—not confront the attacker.

1. **Speak Up** when you witness racism, including microaggressions.
 2. **Report** hate crimes to local or federal authorities and to the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) for tracking purposes.
 3. **Listen** and be open to learning when you talk about race.
 4. **Educate** yourself (See Our Favorite Tools & Resources) and don't expect the people and communities that experience racism to do that work for you.
 5. **Write** to your [politicians](#) and be civically engaged.
 6. **Donate** to causes that are working to protect rights, promote activism, and share diverse stories. Donations do not have to be monetary and can include time, material, or whatever skills or resources one has to offer.
- QUESTIONS TO ASK AFTER
VIEWING A VIDEO OR READING AN I

• What moments in the film stood out to you?



QUESTIONS TO ASK AFTER VIEWING A VIDEO OR READING AN ARTICLE

- What moments in the film stood out to you? Why?
- Were there any surprises? Anything that challenged what you know—or thought you knew?
- Whose point of view was represented? Whose point of view or voice was missing?
- What messages, emotions, or ideas will you take away from the video? Why?
- What questions do you still have?

Enhance the discussion with relevant activities and learning strategies.

- Use anticipation guides or a four corners poll to assess opinions and feelings before watching a video or reading an article.
- For videos, use a close viewing protocol.
- For articles, review the three main types and use a news article analysis.
- Have students demonstrate their engagement with a text using the SIT (Surprising, Interesting, Troubling) strategy.

Find articles and opinion pieces from reputable sources of local and national news or explore curated content from:

- [Colorlines](#)
- [The New York Times](#)
- [PBS Learning Media: Confronting Anti-Black Racism](#)
- [U.S. News & World Report](#)



JOURNAL PROMPTS

After teaching a lesson about race and identity, or covering a relevant news event, allow students to relate what they've learned to their own lives and experiences through writing. Journaling allows students to reflect on personal experiences with race and racism without having to share verbally or with a large group. Here are three *New York Times* visual writing prompts about race and identity as well as related strategies, lessons, and literature that can be used to extend the conversation.

? HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR IDENTITY? WHAT SETS YOU APART FROM OTHERS IN YOUR GENERATION?

([See the video and full lesson online.](#))

? WHAT ASSUMPTIONS HAVE PEOPLE MADE ABOUT YOU BASED ON YOUR RACE, RELIGION, GENDER, THE WAY YOU DRESS, OR ANYTHING ELSE?

([See the full lesson online.](#))

? DO YOU FEEL CONNECTED TO YOUR FAMILY AND CULTURAL ROOTS? OR DO YOU FEEL DISTANT OR CUT OFF FROM THEM?

([See the full lesson online.](#))

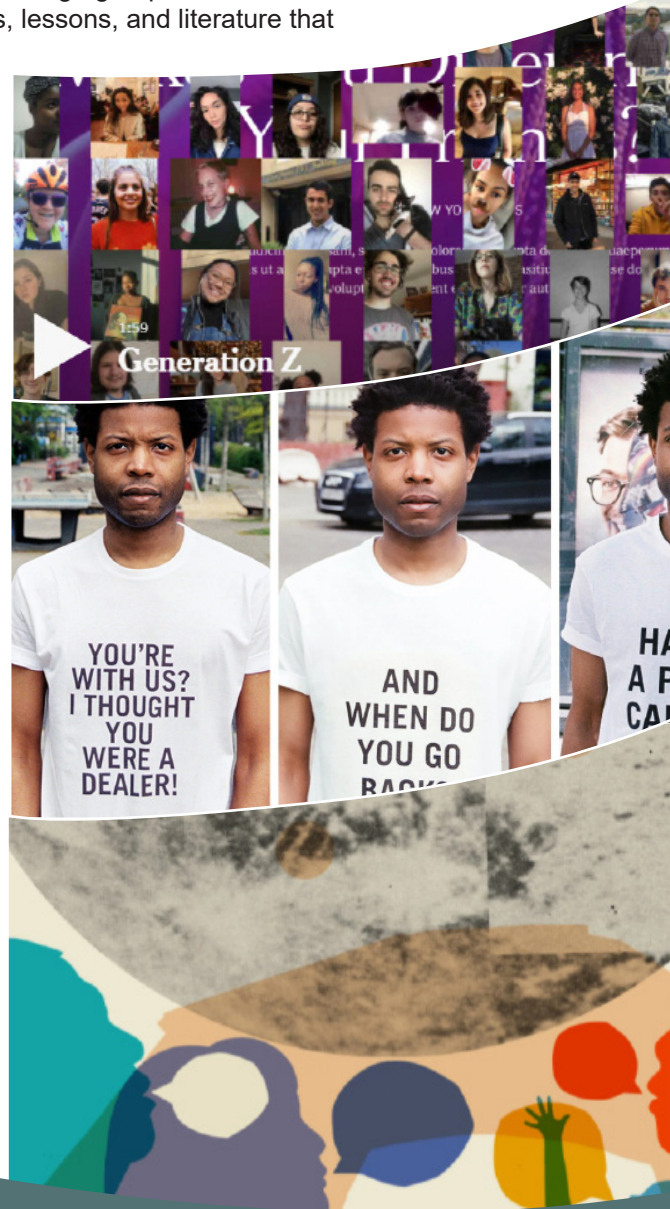
RELATED STRATEGIES, LESSONS, AND READING

FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- [Teaching Strategy: Identity Charts](#) (Facing History)
- [Teaching Strategy: Bio-poem: Connecting Identity and Poetry](#) (Facing History)
- [Lesson: My Family Heritage: A Lesson for Honoring Cultures](#) (Scholastic)
- [Lesson: Identity](#) (GLSEN)
- [Poem: What If There Were No Black People](#) by Sean Mauricette, AKA Subliminal (Learning for Justice)

FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

- [Teaching Strategy: Bio-poem: Connecting Identity and Poetry](#) (Facing History)
- [Teaching Strategy: Social Identity Wheel](#)
- [Lesson: Challenging Assumptions with Curiosity](#) (Facing History)
- [Poem: Sure You Can Ask Me a Personal Question](#) (Learning for Justice)
- [Poem: Peaches](#) by Adrienne Su (Academy of American Poets)
- [Poem: "Two Names, Two Worlds"](#) by Jonathan Rodríguez
- [Essay: "The Danger of a Single Story"](#) by Chimamanda Adichie



Source: *The New York Times*

LESSON PLANS

WHERE TO FIND ABAR LESSON PLANS:

- [Facing History and Ourselves](#)
- [Learning for Justice](#)
- [Anti-Defamation League](#)
- [Race and Racism Lesson Plans & Resources](#)
Share My Lesson
- [Resources for Teaching About Race and Racism](#)
The New York Times
- [The 1619 Project Curriculum](#)
Pulitzer Center



FEATURED LESSON PLANS

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

EXPERIENCES WITH RACE AND RACISM **- ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE**

(ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOL)

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn about the language of bias and racism, explore a range of stories (through video and written pieces) of young people's first encounters with race and racism, and reflect on their own early experiences through a writing assignment.

EXPLORING THE HISTORY **OF LATINO CIVIL RIGHTS** **- LEARNING FOR JUSTICE**

(GRADES 3-5)

Students will create a personal timeline, play a card game, and talk about the "superpowers" of Latino icons and leaders in our country.

DIFFERENT COLORS OF BEAUTY **- LEARNING FOR JUSTICE**

(GRADES K-2, 3-5)

A series of related lessons to help students develop their racial or ethnic identities in a safe and open classroom environment. Because issues of skin color, race, and racial identity can be complicated, each lesson offers additional guidance for educators in a section on professional development.



LESSON PLANS

FEATURED LESSON PLANS, CONTINUED

MIDDLE SCHOOL

FIRST ENCOUNTERS WITH RACE AND RACISM: TEACHING IDEAS FOR CLASSROOM CONVERSATIONS **- THE NEW YORK TIMES**

(MIDDLE SCHOOL)

This resource offers several activities and lesson ideas based around the personal narratives of four American teens recounting their first encounters with racism.

EXPLORING THE HISTORY OF LATINO CIVIL RIGHTS **- LEARNING FOR JUSTICE**

(GRADES 6-8, 9-12)

Students will have the opportunity to create annotated timelines, relate the Latino struggle for civil rights to other civil rights movements, and evaluate their textbooks.

REFLECTING ON AMANDA GORMAN'S "THE HILL WE CLIMB" - FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES

(MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL)

Amanda Gorman's Inauguration Day poem is a powerful call to action focusing on themes of hope, unity, healing, and resilience. This resource offers teaching ideas for either a 20-minute discussion or a full class period and encourages students to consider how their own experiences and voices can help America "forge a union with purpose."



HAIR, IDENTITY AND BIAS **- ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE**

(MIDDLE SCHOOL)

In this lesson, students will begin by exploring what identity is and the aspects of identity that are important to them, especially those related to appearance. They will learn about a real-life situation in which two teenage girls were suspended for violating a school policy about hair styles and consider/debate different points of view related to this event.

ACCOUNTABILITY, JUSTICE, AND HEALING **AFTER DEREK CHAUVIN'S TRIAL** **- FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES**

(MIDDLE SCHOOL)

This resource provides teaching ideas to help guide a class discussion about the verdict in Derek Chauvin's trial. Students will explore the complicated concepts of justice, accountability, and healing and engage in a deeper study of policing and the legacy of racial injustice.

Additional Resources for Teaching Poetry

USE POETRY TO TEACH ABOUT IDENTITY

Use poetry to help students grapple with the complexities of identity and inspire them to tell their own stories.

HOW TO BRING SPOKEN WORD POETRY INTO THE CLASSROOM

Introduce students to spoken word poetry and explore its power to give voice to issues that impact our communities.

SLOW DOWN WITH THE SLOWDOWN

Use poetry to spark personal reflection and to open doors for discussion about what's happening in students' lives and the world.

Source: [Facing History and Ourselves](#)

Photo by Jonathan Choe on [Twitter](#)

LESSON PLANS

FEATURED LESSON PLANS, CONTINUED

HIGH SCHOOL

YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT - ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE

(HIGH SCHOOL)

This lesson will teach students about Ruby Bridges and Stokely Carmichael, two young activists who made a difference during the Civil Rights Movement. Given that student activism is on the rise again across the U.S., learning how those young voices were able to make change will prepare today's students to continue that legacy.

A RISE IN ATTACKS ON ASIAN-AMERICANS - THE NEW YORK TIMES

(HIGH SCHOOL)

This lesson will help educators teach about the recent wave of harassment and violence against Asian Americans, most notably in the San Francisco Bay Area and in New York City. Students will consider how they can take action when they encounter anti-Asian discrimination in their school or community.

BLACK LIVES MATTER: FROM HASHTAG TO MOVEMENT - ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE

(HIGH SCHOOL)

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn more about Black Lives Matter and the activists involved in the movement, explore the controversy around "All lives matter," and share their point of view by writing to a person of their choice.

WHAT IS THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE? - ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE

(HIGH SCHOOL)

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to understand more about the School-to-Prison Pipeline, learn about its history and evolution, plan activities to teach others about it, and take action.

EXPLORING "THE IDEA OF AMERICA" BY NIKOLE HANNAH-JONES - PULITZER CENTER

(HIGH SCHOOL)

This lesson plan begins with a review of the Declaration of Independence and continues with an introductory reading and discussion of an excerpt from Nikole Hannah-Jones' "The Idea of America." It includes graphic organizers and relates to themes of [The 1619 Project](#).



Photo by Miki Jourdan
on Flickr

ABOUT BLACK LIVES MATTER:

- Black Lives Matter is a global movement that began as a hashtag (#BlackLivesMatter) when George Zimmerman was acquitted in the murder of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed Black teenager killed in 2013.
- The Black Lives Matter movement gained more attention after two high-profile murders of unarmed Black men, Eric Garner and Michael Brown in 2014.
- Created by activists Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, [BlackLivesMatter](#) is now a member-led global network of more than 40 chapters whose members organize and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities.



Photo by
Clay Banks
on Unsplash

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