



INTERNATIONAL
STORYTELLING CENTER

Curriculum Guide for Freedom Stories Discussion
“How Do We Talk to Each Other? Storytelling for Racial Justice”

Notes about this guide:

First, it is just that—a guide. It is meant to offer suggestions for how you might approach these important yet sensitive topics in your classroom, as well as ideas for how you might augment existing curriculum in your classroom. Please adapt it as necessary to fit your classroom’s needs.

Second, while it is aimed for 10th grade, many of the activities can easily be adapted both for lower and higher grades, and we encourage you to do so.

Third, since the International Storytelling Center is based in Tennessee, we have used the Tennessee state academic standards for Social Studies as our guide, but have also included Common Core standards where appropriate in an attempt to provide some reciprocity between and among state curriculums. Please feel free to use your own state standards in place of Tennessee’s or Common Core’s.

Fourth, our collective understanding of the subject matter covered in this and the other Freedom Stories Curriculum Guides is ever-evolving as we unearth forgotten narratives and seek out more complete truths. As such, there may be instances where certain instructional approaches are no longer useful, or where certain resources are no longer applicable. We encourage you to keep this in mind as you use this guide and adapt activities with new information as it becomes available.

Last, we welcome your feedback about this guide and its role in your classroom. Please reach out to us at FreedomStories@StorytellingCenter.net with comments, questions, and suggestions.

Lesson Title	Storytelling for Racial Justice
Grade Band	10th Grade
Standard(s)	<p>Common Core State Standards, ELA:</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1</u></p> <p>Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A</u></p> <p>Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.</p>
Lesson Objective(s)	<i>For these lesson objectives, I've included broader themes and included examples that can be used in addition to the essential understanding questions for the instructor's discretion:</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations on racism/ability to express empathy: Examples: What are the effects of racism on the individual? The community? • Review, Peer Mediation skills, navigate difficult conversations, reframe conflicts for peers, and create solutions. • Critical Thinking and Reasoning: Thinking Deeply, Thinking Differently. Effective problem-solving strategies require high-quality reasoning. • Power: How do feelings of power/powerlessness impact the actions of individuals? What are the consequences for those individuals? For others? • Community: How do we create environments of inclusion rather than exclusion? How do we build each other up rather than tearing each other down? • Authors/Storytellers as Social Commentators and bridge builders: What is the author's/storyteller's message about our society? What techniques does an author use to create a theme and convey their message? <p>Optional/For expanded discussions: Able to define: Critical Race Theory, Social Justice Theory, Social Justice Competency (debunk myths about each)</p>
Essential Understanding/ Essential Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the effects of racism on the individual? The community? • What can artists (writers, musicians, creators) tell us about a culture or society? • How do social injustice past and present influence creative expression? <p>Optional/For expanded discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do artists have a responsibility to their audiences? • Do audiences have any responsibility to artists?
Lesson Activities	<p>Lesson 1: Setting the stage and preparing for deeper discussion. <i>(Divided into Unit 1 & 2)</i></p> <p>Unit 1: Establishing Class Agreements/Opening up the discussion around Race. This unit will explore what this means for each student through journaling, group work, and open discussions. <i>(Instructor's discretion [they will know best how to navigate their classroom environment and if establishing these agreements makes sense for them.]</i>)</p> <p>Primary Goals of Unit 1:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To promote a sense of intellectual, emotional, and physical safety in the classroom. 2. To ensure active involvement of students in the planning and implementation of the agreements <p>Resources for teachers:</p> <p>Establishing a classroom environment where students feel safe, heard, and respected. Instructors can follow the guidelines from NEA EdJustice: 2020 Home Page</p> <p>Below is an example of classroom agreements that instructors can use as an outline that can help guide students' suggestions:</p>

1. Intro: Creating the Space to Talk About Race
2. Create a Welcoming Classroom and School
3. Root Out Biases and Barriers
4. Encourage Self-Expression
5. Be Open Yourself
6. Engage, Don't Avoid
7. Create Opportunities for Discussion
8. Talk About Racism and Racial Equity
9. Establish and Enforce Group Norms
10. The process is as Important as Content
11. Model Your Values and Vision

Other resources that can help instructors with classrooms of primarily white students: [Talking about Race in a mostly white classroom](#)

Unit 2: Why are discussions about Race important? *(This half of the lesson can be done in tandem with Unit 1 or the following class.)*

The instructor can choose from two activities with which they'd like to lead this discussion.

Activity #1: [Passive Tolerance vs. Active Insistence](#)

The purpose of this activity is to have students model a process of selecting "neighbors" according to certain "rules." By moving about the classroom according to simple decision parameters, they will see patterns both of segregation and integration develop from seemingly innocent decisions.

Additional activities for instructors to select from: [Classroom Exercises: Inclusion of Socioeconomic Status in Psychology Curricula \(apa.org\)](#)

Activity #2

1. The instructor can select a video, podcast, or article (options below) to open up the conversation on "Why are discussions about race important?"
2. Then, the instructor can share a series of guided questions for an open discussion with students. (Again, these are optional for the instructor.)
3. Optional: during the selected media (viewing, listening, or reading) encourage students to journal while listening with initial thoughts to share after.

Guided Questions:

- Have students discuss how the discussion of Race makes them feel?
- Do they feel that society encourages these discussions? (instructors can encourage students that no emotion should be excluded or is "Wrong.")
- Have students identify personal connections to the explored media
- Why is talking openly about Race important as a society?

The instructor may want to close out the discussion by doing a round-robin where each student shares something they didn't know/realize/consider before today's lesson.

Media Options:

- This is a powerful 5-minute video to open up the discussion around Race. [Opinion | A Conversation About Growing Up Black](#)
- Additional videos on Race: [26 Mini-Films for Exploring Race, Bias and Identity With Students \(Published 2017\)](#)
- Podcast: NPR politics podcasts How Black and White Americans view on Race differ [How Black and White Americans' Views on Race Differ](#)

Lesson 2: How storytelling can help navigate complex discussions and build bridges.

Activity: Annotating text and media. Introducing Authors/Storytellers as Social Commentators and bridge builders.

Purpose: Annotation in this activity includes adding purposeful notes, keywords and phrases, definitions, and connections tied to specific sections of text or videos viewed.

Through the use of collaborative annotation (annotations made by multiple individuals on the same text), learners are allowed to "eavesdrop on the insights of other readers" (Wolfe & Neuwirth, 2001).

Both peers and instructors can provide feedback to call attention to additional vital ideas and details.

Materials:

- Writing utensil (colored if desired)
- Optional: sticky notes
- Optional: Applications such as Notability, which allow you to annotate PDFs and electronic text.
- Printed or digital copies of suggested reading and video excerpts outside of the Freedom Stories lecture.
- Toni Morrison's full autobiography [Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am](#) is incredible but almost 120 minutes (if the instructor has time to dedicate to this, it is undoubtedly valuable.)

Key ideas/guiding questions:

- Identifying the main idea and supporting details
- Analyzing the validity of an argument or counterargument
- Determining author's purpose
- Giving an opinion, reacting, or reflecting
- Identifying character traits/motivations
- Summarizing and synthesizing
- Identifying patterns and repetitions
- Making connections/making predictions

Procedure:

1. Have students watch the introduction to the Freedom Stories lecture (12 minutes) [How Do We Talk to Each Other? Storytelling for Racial Justice - International Storytelling Center](#)
2. Next select additional excerpts, short stories, or videos for students to work with within this activity:

- a. [Harlem by Langston Hughes](#)
 - b. [Toni Morrison interview | American Author | Award-winning | Mavis on Four | 1988](#)
 - c. [Toni Morrison Recitatif](#)
 - d. [Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am - Exclusive Clip - Toni Morrison and Angela Davis Talk 'Beloved'](#)
 - e. [Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am - Exclusive Clip - My World Is A Black World](#)
 - f. [33 Books by Contemporary Black Authors](#)
3. Select one paragraph of text from the reading or video and highlight (discuss) or physically (if reading text) underline keyword(s) or phrase(s) related to race/racial justice and the African American experience.
 4. Have students describe what they think each author is saying about community and inclusion in the works chosen. (Use the "think aloud" strategy to share with students why you marked/made note of certain selections of the passage or video.)

Additional instructor resources: For an in-depth study of annotation and options for annotations, explore [Briefly Noted: Practicing Useful Annotation Strategies - The New York Times](#)

Lesson 3: Allyship and Education. The far-reaching impacts of racism on community, including psychological effects on the individual.

Activity #1: Open class discussion with the question, "What is Allyship?"

The instructor can open with a powerful quote defining and addressing what allyship is. "True allyship demands that it move from conversation to action. And that action will include risks. This isn't the 1830s or the 1930s, 1950s, or 1968, but I won't lie to you and say it'll be easy. The risks might be something as small as a distant social media friend unfriending you. But it could be something more severe, like ostracism from an intimate friend group, job insecurity, public or private ridicule, friction with loved ones." – Emmanuel Acho, *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man*

Activity #2:

- 1) Have students view: [The Inaugural Episode - Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man](#) (9 minutes)
- 2) The instructor chooses 1-2 panelists' discussions from the video [How Do We Talk to Each Other? Storytelling for Racial Justice - International Storytelling Center](#)

After viewing the videos, the instructor can place students into small groups to discuss the following concepts:

- Did allyship mean something different than what Emmanuel Acho expresses in his quote/video?
- How would you want your classmates to provide allyship to you?
- How do you show allyship to individuals? Are there times you've fallen short?
- How will you provide that support in the future?

Additional activity option:

Have students individually or in small groups (2-3) discuss what current artists/musicians/writers they have been influenced by and their commentary on the black experience and BLM. Have them provide examples to present to the class.

This is an additional topic that I think could be incorporated in some facet within any or all of the Freedom Stories curriculum. I've provided some resources that I believe are helpful for instructors that want to include this in their lesson plans.

Guiding question: How do psychological impacts experienced by the African American community through inequality, marginalization, and limited educational opportunities affect a person over time? How does this influence an individual's art as a creator?

Additional resources for instructors and students who are interested in more articles on this topic: [Physiological & Psychological Impact of Racism and Discrimination](#)

Take home assignment:

Have each students research an organization working towards racial equality (this article can be used as a reference: [10 Organizations That Support Racial Equality](#))

Have each student select an organization they want to work and complete the following:

- Write a one-page assessment that answers the following:
- Were there any myths about this organization or movement you debunked?
- How does the organization you selected personify what we have discussed in class?
- What are specific class topics and experiences that align with what this organization wants to accomplish?
- Brainstorm three ways to help support or volunteer within your chosen organization.

Optional Activity: A Day of Action. Planning an all-day volunteer activity with one or more organizations promoting racial justice and change.

The instructor will review each student's paper assignment and allow for a class vote on the top two organizations.

This resource gives an outline for community service reflection questions and an all-day volunteer activity (either virtually or in-person.) [Community Service, Virtual Volunteer Opportunities](#)

- **Additional Options:** If the virtual volunteer opportunity makes more sense for the students, each student can select (potentially) a different organization and have a dedicated class to review everyone's experience through open discussion or more formal presentations.

Materials	<p>For all of the activities featured within the lesson plans, I referenced this helpful protocols guide but incorporated my ideas and verbiage: Protocols.pdf</p> <p>This is an excellent lesson plan resource for the instructor would like to incorporate more concentrated content Southern Oral History Program</p> <p>Additional Resources for more focused content for instructors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More content on the Highland Center • Background on Martin Luther King joining Highlander and developing the Southern Christian Leadership conference. • Southern Christian Leadership Conference • Protests: The History of Racism in America History • Additional Activity: on privilege and social mobility (instructions in video link) Students Learn A Powerful Lesson About Privilege • A present-day example: An African American woman describes the experience of being discriminated against in a grocery store: • Cracking the Codes: Joy DeGruy, A Trip to the Grocery Store <p>Difficult but essential conversations:</p> <p>The country's sordid history of lynching that is often neglected within education can be addressed with these powerful resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This resource will help the teacher explain how lynching was used as racial terror and white supremacy: Lynching in America, Equal Justice Initiative • Lanham, J. Drew. (2016). <i>The Home Place</i>. Minneapolis, Minnesota, Milkweed Editions 2016 <p>Notes on Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplies for break out activities are listed in the materials section of the lesson plans • All articles, video clips, and PDF activity downloads are free and have been included within the lesson plans • A TV or projector to view designed video clips (I've provided alternatives within the lesson plans) • The text materials can be utilized at the instructor's discretion. Options: printed out, incorporated within a PowerPoint, or read via a projector to the class <p>All podcasts listed can be played for free via Spotify or YouTube</p>
Accommodations	<p>Different types of multimedia can be used for students' preferred methods of learning abilities and styles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual aids, written lists/instructions, podcasts for those who retain better without visual stimulus can be supplemented, and articles for reading comprehension can also be read aloud by either students or the instructor.