



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2023 Volume I: Histories of Art, Race and Empire: 1492-1865

This is America: Images and Histories of Racism and Exploitation

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by Adriana Lopez

This is America: Images and Histories of Racism and Exploitation is an educational unit that links the history of slavery, segregation, and racial injustice from the end of slavery, 1852 to the present. This unit is intended for grades 11 and 12. The unit was created in response to the George Floyd riots and students asking the question, “What is the difference between Black Lives Matter and All Lives Matter?” The unit will cover the texts, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July” by Frederick Douglass, “Strange Fruit” written by Abel Meeropol and recorded by Billie Holiday, and “This is America” by Childish Gambino. Each of the texts will have several images that will help give visualization and deeper understanding to the time period of each text. The images were inspired by the Yale National Initiative seminar, “Histories of Art, Race, and Empire: 1492-1865” led by Timothy Barringer. The images selected feature visualizations of enslaved people as well as free Black people from the same time period. Segregation photography by Gordon Parks and photography from James Van Der Zee during the same time as segregation with contrasting images of Harlem. Images by Lorna Simpson and Fabiola Jean Louis will show visualizations and reimaginations of the current racial injustice from the present.

(Developed for English IV Self-Contained, grade 12, and Argumentative Literature, grades 11-12; recommended for English, Social Science, and Art History, grades 11-12)

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