



Grade Level Gavel Student Court: Justice for All

Curriculum Unit 19.03.04, published September 2019
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Introduction: Identity Genocide

What is identity? To some it is how we look, what we drive, what zip code we live in or what our ancestry looks like. To others it is our families, careers and the people we choose to be around. Some may give an even looser version that it is who we are. The actual definition of identity is “The distinguishing character or personality of an individual; the relationship established by psychological association.”¹ Who we are matters. It is where we get our pride, where we stake our purpose and how we align ourselves with reality. The unfortunate truth about working in inner-city schools, is that the epidemic of identity theft becomes impossible to deny and it can be seen in the faces of the students I teach. Rene’ Descartes, the famous philosopher stated, “I think, therefore I am.”² This simple quote with a profound truth highlights the crux of this epidemic. My students have little to no connection to their history or who they are, therefore they do not think they are much at all. This is not to assume that they do not try to create identity for themselves, but to state that there is a true psychological disconnect that was not born but created. The creation of this disconnect lies where the true epidemic ultimately began.

African Identity Genocide

It is public knowledge that between the 1500 and 1900s, an estimated 12 million slaves were taken from their homes on the resource and culture rich continent of Africa and brought to the United States to work land that the Europeans in fact originally stole from the Native American people.³ This was one of the greatest, and arguably the greatest identity genocide based on numbers and facts alone. Of those 12 million slaves, only 10 million made it to the United States alive and by the 1800s only a stifling six percent of that original number had made it to North America and survived.⁴ Along with mistreatment, torment and brutality inflicted on slaves, many families were separated upon arrival. Almost all the original Kingdoms and Tribes of Africa were stripped of their children and ancestral ties were lost forever along with the lives of all those who were taken as property.

Injustice and Student Identity

Of the twenty-four thousand students in our district, seventy-five percent of that figure are African-American.⁵ Many of these students are taught from an adapted history workbook that paints the settling of America as

just and righteous with their ancestral heritage beginning with the role of slavery in the United States. The astounding truth of this matter is that the founding of the United States was largely unjust to the majority of those who occupied this nation. The facts about race relations in the United States boil down to a truth: “Americans have rarely reformed racially oppressive practices simply because it was the right thing to do.”⁶ In addition to these known truths, it is accessible knowledge that the history of African-American people originates in the name. The continent of Africa is rarely explored or explained in American Public Schools, let alone in a manner that is applicable to students or paralleled with ancestral studies with the belief that *all* the students in our public schools should be well versed in and proud of who they are in their history. African American students should be taught their history prior to slavery. This should begin with the origins of man, the original Kingdoms of Africa with Kings and Queens like Cleopatra, and the Resources that occupied these lands of their ancestors.

Evidence for the Necessity of Identity

Teaching students who they are should come first as paralleled with Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs which refers to the theory that students should be connected to who they are and have a good sense of self.⁷ This is the educational background of the identity crisis issue. We as educators know what students need to be successful. One of the health components that students need in order to even have the basis for learning, is a sense of identity. The psychologist David Straker sums up this point well:

“Beyond the basic need for sense of control, we are deeply driven by our sense of identity, of who we are; we are in the middle of our individual world, where we place a sense of central importance on our sense of self.”⁸

These are regarded as the necessities that are required to be able to teach students. This hierarchy regarding student need is designed in a pyramid depicting the need for sense of self at the top three levels, while self-control occupies the bottom.⁹ Everyone not only needs but deserves an identity. Our students deserve more than a textbook that begins with slavery and ends with a tolerance for others rather than willingly given freedom. They deserve a textbook that is a true depiction of their ancestry from the beginnings of man to the present day. The fact that there are no textbooks printed yet educating this major part of our population about their identity shows how little effort has in fact been put in to solving or acknowledging this problem of inequality and prejudice. Helping build identity within my students is the single most effective way I have reached some to guide them towards success. This alone reflects there is a great need for identity within our inner-city schools as well as others. Without the basis of who they are, where they come from or what they believe in, how can we expect to teach our students, or expect them to learn or be engaged?

Historical Comparisons and Rationale

What is needed to feel the stifling weight of this issue, seems so overlooked by the American people, the comparison of the genocide of African Americans to the horror that was the Holocaust in Nazi Germany. According to the Jewish Virtual Library, an estimate of six million Jewish people lost their lives in the horrors of the holocaust.¹⁰ After the holocaust, it is known that the United States did in fact eventually pay reparations to

the Jewish people for their stifling losses more than once, the second time adding up to more than 30,000,000 dollars.¹¹ No amount of capital could ever justify or undue the pain and loss of the families of these victims and especially the victims themselves. It is interesting the ancestors of the African people currently living in the United States have never received reparations for the astounding losses they burdened during the period of slavery, but also received opposition to ethnic equality in various forms leading up to the present day. No other proof is needed for this than the fact that the Ku Klux Klan was spotted in Hanover, Virginia in full force protesting for “White is Right” in July of this year 2019, almost sixty years after the civil-rights movement. However, when one stops to think about this fact, there is no denying these heinous events did not occur one-hundred years ago to this day yet, and it is as though stripping the identity from these people was not enough, as people are still opposing their rights as citizens.

Educational and Pedagogical Rationale

The lack of guidance in the lives of my students directly correlates with the introductory point regarding identity. Many of the students at my school are keenly aware that while slavery is technically outlawed, many of their people still live in physical bondage as Virginia is currently standing with a higher incarceration rate than the national average.¹² They are growing up without positive role models, or present adults, and in very unjust situations they did not ask for or deserve. My students truly do not have a sense of identity and the majority are not proud of who they are. Many of my students will say they do not want to talk about history, because all they learn about is slavery. Although at first encounter this may seem an exaggeration of sorts, sadly, this is not the case.

Curriculum Crisis

Currently, the history curriculum in our inner-city district is not being addressed as any more than a list of events, to make up for lost time in other subjects in desperate need of improvement. The result has been increasingly less history instruction time for the students in our school. Until I began to share ancestry and identity with my students, the other subject matter and content was not received well. If a staff member picks up one of the history books that the students are rarely exposed to on our school shelves, one will find that the curriculum does in fact begin with slavery. I posed a question for my students after realizing this fact and received their feedback regarding detest for learning about history based on their past experiences. I asked my students where the country of Egypt was located on a World Atlas. The responses made me extremely unsettled. My students articulated answers such as Europe, or South America. My students were not aware that Egypt lies on the vast continent of Africa. Even further removed from their knowledge on the subject thus-far is the fact that Africa was, and remains one of the wealthiest nations in terms of resources on the planet and it has been overrun and farmed to the point of destruction and devastation.¹³ My students are unaware that there were original kingdoms of Africa. Students require the basic understanding of identity, a solid foundation of their identity as well as the confidence in themselves regarding who they are, to be able to learn any content we deem necessary or important. My students deserve to know who they are, and where they come from. The climate in our country regarding matters of ethnicity is changing still and it has become vitally important, now more than ever, that our students learn who they are, to find who they are meant to be. If this task is not taken up soon, the results could be catastrophic for our future generations.

Demographics

There are currently twenty-four thousand students in Richmond Public Schools. Seventy-five percent of these students are African-American, twelve-point-eight percent Hispanic and nine percent White. In my specific institution, the demographics are reflective of these figures. The number of African-American students far outweighs the number of students in other ethnic groups. Hispanic groups make up a small portion of the population and there are very few if any Caucasian students present in the school at any given time. The demographics of my school and classroom are a very significant indicator for the purpose of my unit. My students live in communities in Richmond City, Virginia; a state that has incarceration rates that are higher than the rates of the entire United States.¹⁴ Richmond is a city that is not foreign to violent crime and high incarceration rates. Our school is situated in a neighborhood where even elementary students are in jeopardy at any given time. My students must deal with these dark realities of their existence as children. Twenty percent of my class this past year had a close or direct family member in jail, or recently released from jail. Fifty-percent more knew someone who has been directly impacted by the effects of incarceration in our region. African American students in my class comprised seventy percent of my classroom, and ninety percent of them were living with a single parent, a grandparent, or were homeless due to parental passing, abandonment, divorce etc. One-hundred percent of the students in our school receive free or reduced lunch. Many of my students come to school unkept, unfed and unable to focus due to their current circumstances.

Unit Objectives

This is a year-long implementation unit being created to deliver history instruction to students who are currently not receiving it, let alone in a meaningful way. It is necessary to provide students a vehicle with which to explore and learn about their history and ancestry; to learn to articulate thoughts and opinions in speech and on paper, and to inform, impact and persuade audience. These are vital skills that many students in our community of Richmond, Virginia are currently lacking. They should primarily be able to explore, study and become a part of their own heritage and ancestry. This is priority number one that many students are currently missing. In addition to understanding their history and where they come from, students also need to be able to articulate thoughts and opinions in speech and in text to inform, impact and persuade an audience. This requires us to teach them to be skilled public speakers, using proper tone, wording and volume, as well as teaching them to be more developed and advanced writers through practice, creative expression and structure. For students to be able to impact a relevant audience. This is going to be vitally important as the current generations of elementary school students will need to be able to solve many of the issues of race relations and politics in the United States in the future.

Preliminary Ancestry Study Content

Students are frequently taught about the origins of the United States of America in school, whether or accurately depicted or not. They are exposed to the information regarding the origins of man much less frequently. In this three-week opening to my Unit on Ancestry, it is important that I not only teach the origins of a continent but of man entirely. This will be vital as some of my students are from places in South and Central America. It is a little known and stunning fact that the earliest accounts and archeological remains of man in any form were found on the continent of Africa.¹⁵ More specifically, in Omo Kibish, Ethiopia 200,000 years ago.¹⁶ Not only is this the continent where the earliest traces of human life were found, but scientists continue to find evidence of this. There were recently archeological remains found in Morocco that would prove even earlier accounts of humans by about 315,000 years.¹⁷ There are many resources to be pulled for my students from these archeological findings, including three-dimensional images. Even more interestingly regarding the origins of human life, scientists now believe that the Garden of Eden, referred to in the Bible as the birth place of life, was in Africa or was the continent of Africa as a whole.¹⁸ It has been researched and predicted, that groups of humans would have eventually migrated out of Africa and into places like Europe, Asia and Australia.¹⁹ Scientists have come to this conclusion, based on the in-text clues given about the whereabouts of the garden of Eden as well as the rivers surrounding it.²⁰ The concrete evidence and argument are found in other facts as well. Due to the early mega-continent known as Pangea, the Garden of Eden, which many people believe to be in the middle east near Iraq and Sudan, would have at the time of Eden, been included on the continent of Africa.²¹ There are many maps and archeological findings used to support this claim. Jean Jaques-Hublin works at Germany's Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology as the director of the Human Evolution department;²² he sums up these findings and scientific beliefs about Eden: "If there was a 'Garden of Eden', it's Africa; So, the Garden of Eden is the size of Africa."²³ All these claims and more lead to the astounding conclusion that we are all in some way of 'African Descent' and in fact from the place that many native people call *TheMotherland*²⁴.

The Seven Kingdoms

After addressing and exploring the origins of man as a class, my students will be introduced to a synopsis on the Seven original Kingdoms of Africa. The Seven original Kingdoms of Africa were: The Kingdom of Kush, The Land of Punt, Carthage, The Kingdom of Aksum, The Mali Empire, The Songhai Empire and The Great Zimbabwe.²⁵ Some of the extension content that will be explored following the seven empires includes: Egypt and Cleopatra's Kingdom, The Empire of Ghana: a cosmopolitan and Islamic History, as well as the Twelve Sultans of Kilwa.²⁶ Many have never explored the great Kingdoms that once thrived on this land. For example the Kingdom of Kush, was a neighbor and military partner with the land of Egypt, ruled by Nubian Kings over what is now Sudan near the Nile River.²⁷ Additionally, The Land of Punt has a mysterious location and was said to be home to Queen Hatshepsut as well as the Gods of the people.²⁸ There were said to be plentiful resources in the Land of Punt such as gold, and leopard furs.²⁹ The last of the original Kingdoms the students will focus on but certainly not the least influential was The Great Zimbabwe. The Great Zimbabwe was home of the Queen of Sheba and was frequently looted for its bronze and gold resources, including early findings of gold and glass bronze statues that were excavated and taken while its own people were admitted into servitude as laborers while European explorers looted the Land.³⁰

Stolen Resources

The extensive resources of Africa are the common thread that links all the kingdoms together. Many explorers and pillagers gave shocking opinions and quotes such as an excavator of Great Zimbabwe that claimed that: “the Shona people were too ‘backwards’ ever to have built the ruins.”³¹ Not only were many accounts made of explorer and excavator’s opinions displaying proof that they felt these people inferior, but many accounts were made that clearly tried to understate the level of resource that Africa had to offer at the time. Whether this was due to the archeological methods at that time being ineffective is unclear; what is clear however is that people took from others, berated the native people and made accounts that portrayed these resources as less than plentiful, when in fact that is not the case. It appears a more accurate reason is that more gold was found in some regions rather than others, therefore some regions were not as highly regarded by excavators. For example, the documented archeological accounts of the gold resources in a region called Luanze, a part of The Great Zimbabwe, was regarded as having astonishing levels of gold, so much that gold dust can still be found in the soil today as the result of heavy excavation.³² In contrast, the Kingdoms of West Africa were regarded as having sparse and inconsistent levels of gold.³³ We know however, that Africa is in fact a region that has an abundance of natural food sources, and farming capacity.³⁴ Although many have understated, Africa is one of the most resource rich continents in the world.³⁵ The list of resources in the major regions of Africa includes: Diamonds, Gold, Nickel and Uranium, Pozzolana, Fish, Timber, Titanium, Graphite, Tobacco, Iron Ore, Phosphates, Aluminum and Gas and Copper.³⁶ In an analysis by Nick Dearden from Global Justice now, there is roughly two-hundred and three billion dollars leaving Africa to places like London, as Africa receives only one-hundred sixty-one billion for the resources taken.³⁷ This is attributed to not only blatant evasion of taxes, but also: “twenty-nine billion that is: stolen in illegal logging, fishing and trading in wildlife.”³⁸ The content of the first two weeks of the Unit will be focused on this analysis of Africa’s major regions, kingdoms and resources.

Student Court Room Content

My students are all sitting in their desks in the morning completing their first tasks of the day. The morning announcements come on and the concluding line rings out: “*With Liberty and Justice for All*”.³⁹ Many of my students no longer stand for these words, because these words do not stand for them. Justice has in fact, not been served to many of the ethnic groups living in the United States. It is a well-known fact, however unacknowledged or disregarded, that racial progress and reform were not achieved through willingness, nor were they done on moral principle.⁴⁰ “Americans have rarely reformed racially oppressive practices simply because it was the right thing to do”.⁴¹ It is a fact that is often denied, as much as overlooked, and that action creates a skewed and inaccurate picture of American History for our students. “Racial progress has often been an unintended consequence of other developments.”⁴² It is vitally important that our students learn not just about their ancestry to uncover their identity, but all the events after their ancestors that led to their existence and more specifically the state of their existence in relation to American History. This is a very difficult task however, as there are many textbooks that not only skew historical events regarding slavery, but in fact try to cover up, the fact that slaves were brought to the United States as slaves against their will.⁴³ In 2015, a high school student named Cody Burren found a caption in his textbook that states that Black Americans were once workers who immigrated here with Europeans to do agricultural work.⁴⁴ This is not only

a blatant disregard for the history of an ethnic group of people; it is a tragic understatement and show of indifference to print things like this for our students to learn from, as we know full-well this information is not the truth. If we do not believe our students believe the truth. What do we believe they deserve?

Debate Content Approach

It is a clear call to action then that not only are we undertaking a task that is to write something into reality that is being misprinted, but to keep what we write from being misconstrued and re-written in the future. The best way to accomplish this is to let our students be part of the process of uncovering their identity and writing their history. For students to be a part of this process, it requires that teachers become fully invested and involved in the truth. It equally requires teachers to view and analyze history through the lens of truth for themselves, for others and for the people who have been hurt and mistreated, since this country's inception. This is the foundation, upon which change is built. I have, since coming to this realization, devoted much of my time to understanding the scope of American History through the lens of African American people, and other ethnic groups. It will be best following the ancestry opening unit for my students, and for us, to start at the beginning of American History.

Debate Topics and Questions

The Debate topics and corresponding questions are as follows: The French and Indian War 1754, Debate: Native American allies of the French v. Non-allies of the French Perspective, The American Revolution and The Revolutionary War 1765; Debate: American Indians in the War, African Americans in the War; The Declaration of Independence 1776, Debate: "All Men are Created Equal?"; The Signing of the Constitution the Federalist Papers and The Constitutional Convention 1788, Debate: Federalist 10, 54 and the Constitution-Were they written for everyone?; Westward Expansion and The Louisiana Purchase 1790, Debate: Explorers-Heroes or Thieves?; The Missouri Compromise 1820, Debate: Slave in Free State vs. Freed in North; The Indian Removal Act and The Trail of Tears 1830, Debate: Adoptive Baby Girl; Nat Turner's Rebellion 1831, Debate: Violence vs. Non-violence; The Fugitive Slave Act 1850, Debate: Fight or Flight; Dred Scott 1857, Debate: Constitutional Review; John Brown's Raid 1859, Debate: Progress or Regression; The Civil War 1861, Debate: Did it aid in Ending Slavery? (Reconstruction); Jim Crow 1865, Debate: Violence vs. Non-Violence Revisited (Confronting Regression); The Reconstruction Act 1867, Debate: Reconstruction Failed or Succeeded? The 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments and the Emancipation Proclamation 1865-1870, Debate: To End Slavery or Appease the South? (A Look at Lincoln); Plessy v. Ferguson 1896, Debate: Separate but Equal-Is it freedom if it's forced? ; The World Wars 1930, Debate: Should African Americans have fought in the World Wars?; Brown v. Board 1954, Debate: Separate but Equal-Is it freedom if it's forced?; The Civil Rights Movement 1960, Debate: Separate but Equal-Is it freedom if it's forced?; Malcom vs. Martin 1964, Debate: Separate or Forced Equal (Competing Ideologies).

Approach to Content Examples

The students will begin their exploration of the history in the Americas at its origins. Between the year 1500 and 1900s, an estimated 12 million slaves were taken from their homes on the resource and culture rich continent of Africa to the United States to be forced to labor over the land that the Europeans in fact stole from others.⁴⁵ This was arguably the greatest identity genocide as of those 12 million slaves, only 10 million made it to the U.S. and by the 1800s only a stifling six percent of that original number had made it to North America and survived.⁴⁶ This is the crux of the American foundation that is uncomfortable, which is the fact that people were either viewed as property or an inconvenient obstacles, and land was often stolen, much like

people.

The Revolutionary War

Fast-forward through the settling of the colonies and their unhappiness with Britain to the American Revolution and the Revolutionary War of 1765. There were roughly fifteen-thousand enslaved African Americans that were either required to or willingly fought for the British or the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War.⁴⁷ This is just one of the many rarely discussed yet crucial topics of American History. Slaves were a means to win many wars.⁴⁸ Many Native Americans lost their homes and tribal lands during the War.⁴⁹ After the Revolutionary War, North America began to claim independence from the British. The signing of the constitution and the authorship of the Federalist papers were both pivotal points in American History, but not for African Americans. These documents signified a free nation that they lived in but were not a part of. The rights and regulations were not written with African American people, Native Americans, or women in mind. The line in the declaration that states: “All Men are Created Equal”,⁵⁰ was referring to all white men being created equal and certainly not the women. This truth is glaring as we look at the events following the signing of these original documents and can plainly see that African American people were in fact not seen as equal in any way and any freedoms, they attained had to be forcibly taken instead of freely given.⁵¹

The Missouri Compromise and the Fugitive Slave Act

Shortly following this era, the settlers of the United States began expanding their ventures west and taking more of the previously owned Native American Territories, and the Louisiana Purchase was made at fifteen-million dollars that expanded the United States twice over.⁵² Following the expansion of the United States territories, the Missouri Compromise arose. This was a compromise that was made purely for peace-keeping reasons as the founders were trying to form a Union: “Most northerners who supported restricting the spread of slavery did not wish to abolish it in the South, nor did they endorse racial equality.”⁵³ The Missouri Compromise split the states so that there were some slave states, and some free states. Following this blatant act of resistance for equality or human rights, another came around the corner. The Fugitive Slave Act was an effort yet again to keep people enslaved and oppressed due to pushback and other significant events. The Fugitive Slave Act “criminalized the obstruction of fugitive slave renditions.”⁵⁴ The Dred Scott v. Sandford case was one that outlined the blatant lack of power congress had at the time, as the ruling: “Invalidated the Missouri Compromise on the ground that congress lacked the power to bar slavery from federal territories.”⁵⁵

The Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation

The Civil War was a tipping point in American History, and it was evidence for many things. It was evidence that people cared more about protecting the Union than anything else. The south was ready to secede from the Union and President Lincoln stated: “What I do about slavery, I do because I believe it helps save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union.”⁵⁶ So as the civil war was fought over the union, with slavery being a disputed matter, even slaves began to fight in the civil war and were viewed as contraband. The Reconstruction Era is largely reflected by the opinion that the Civil War was one of America’s greatest failures.⁵⁷ This is largely because no sooner did Reconstruction start, when white supremacists began to under-mine it, to the degree that it largely did not occur and turned into a lie. At the end of the Reconstruction Era, African American people were working for white sharecroppers again.⁵⁸

“In 1876, Rutherford B. Hayes was declared the winner of a controversial presidential campaign which he had lost in all probability; In order to gain Southern support for his claim, Hayes agreed to officially end Reconstruction.”⁵⁹

Lincoln slowly inched his way through the Amendments and finally to the Emancipation Proclamation. In 1862 the first draft of the Emancipation was accepted.⁶⁰ This Emancipation would eventually serve its purpose. This proclamation eventually freed around 4 million slaves.⁶¹ Although at this time it was clear that freedom still was not freely but reluctantly given, if not forcibly taken. Once the Emancipation had been passed, white Americans still found many ways to keep African Americans separate throughout all the Civil Rights Movement.

Teaching Strategies

Ancestry Study

Students will begin the academic year with a three-week structured beginning segment on ancestry, wherein they will be completing a rubric based, research and presentation project exploring a chosen Ancient Kingdom of Africa once they have learned about and explored each one. Students will begin this three-week intro on Day one with a survey about their feelings on ancestry and learning about their history. The time after the survey will be spend in classroom discussion. Day two of the ancestry project students will learn about the origins of man through a power-point presentation with images and archeological findings. Day three of the intro unit will be a walk through the resources portion of the African continent. Students will be given an exploratory task. A picture of the coded regions of Africa based on resources will be displayed on the board. Students will then be given a scavenger hunt sheet with different resources on it to complete. The scavenger hunt list contains objects that represent all the different resources that are currently found in Africa. Students will write a reflection piece about the scavenger hunt where they will answer a series of fact and opinion-based questions within their writing. The subsequent three days will be a presentation on the Seven Kingdoms of Africa (with extensions on Egypt and Cleopatra’s Kingdom, The Empire of Ghana: a cosmopolitan and Islamic History, as well as the Twelve Sultans of Kilwa) using a power point, text and photos. On Day six of the two-week introduction, students will take a quiz on and choose one of the Seven Kingdoms to create their own presentation board and research project on. The next four days will be allocated for the students to work with the teacher to complete their presentations and essays. The presentation boards and essays will be graded using a specific teacher-created rubric. The following week, three to five students will be presenting their projects per day. Each student will give a ten-minute presentation with five minutes for questions and giving feedback, as well as a class rating chart for each presentation to facilitate that feedback. Every student will also self-report their own interpretation of the grade they should get based on their work and feedback of their writing and presentation (the teacher will use a rubric and student conference to give feedback on the writing components). The goal is to immerse students as much as possible in their ancestry and cultural history, as well as to connect them with parts of their identity so they will eventually apply historical context to this in a responsible, effective and purposeful way.

Student Courtroom Debates and Discussions

The Historical Events listed above will be delivered on a timeline. This timeline will be handed out following the three-week ancestry project (see Figure 1). The unit will take form as we spend the first week discussing the elements of debate, as well as the rules and expectations for our Student Court-Room. Day one of this set-up week will be to discuss what a student court room is and consists of. This will contain a teacher-created power-point presentation, as well as some written outlines for the students to use as a structure. At the end of day one, students will discuss and write about what it means to argue a point responsibly. This will be structured around the concept of getting one's point across through debate. Day two will be the Student Courtroom Rules Document. This will be a teacher and student created document that will be transferred to a poster that will act as the "Rule Book" for our courtroom. The students will use the rule outlines the teacher presents for a traditional debate if adding their own input to the document. At the end of the second day of the opening week, students will sign the document of regulations for the debates. Days three and four of the opening week will include a practice debate with the students using the debate components. Day five of the opening week will consist of a class reflection followed by individual write-ups of the practice debate. Once the Student Courtroom has been established, students will begin learning about the historical events listed on their provided timeline (see Figure 1). These events will form the basis and structure for the debates and discussions had in class.

Timeline

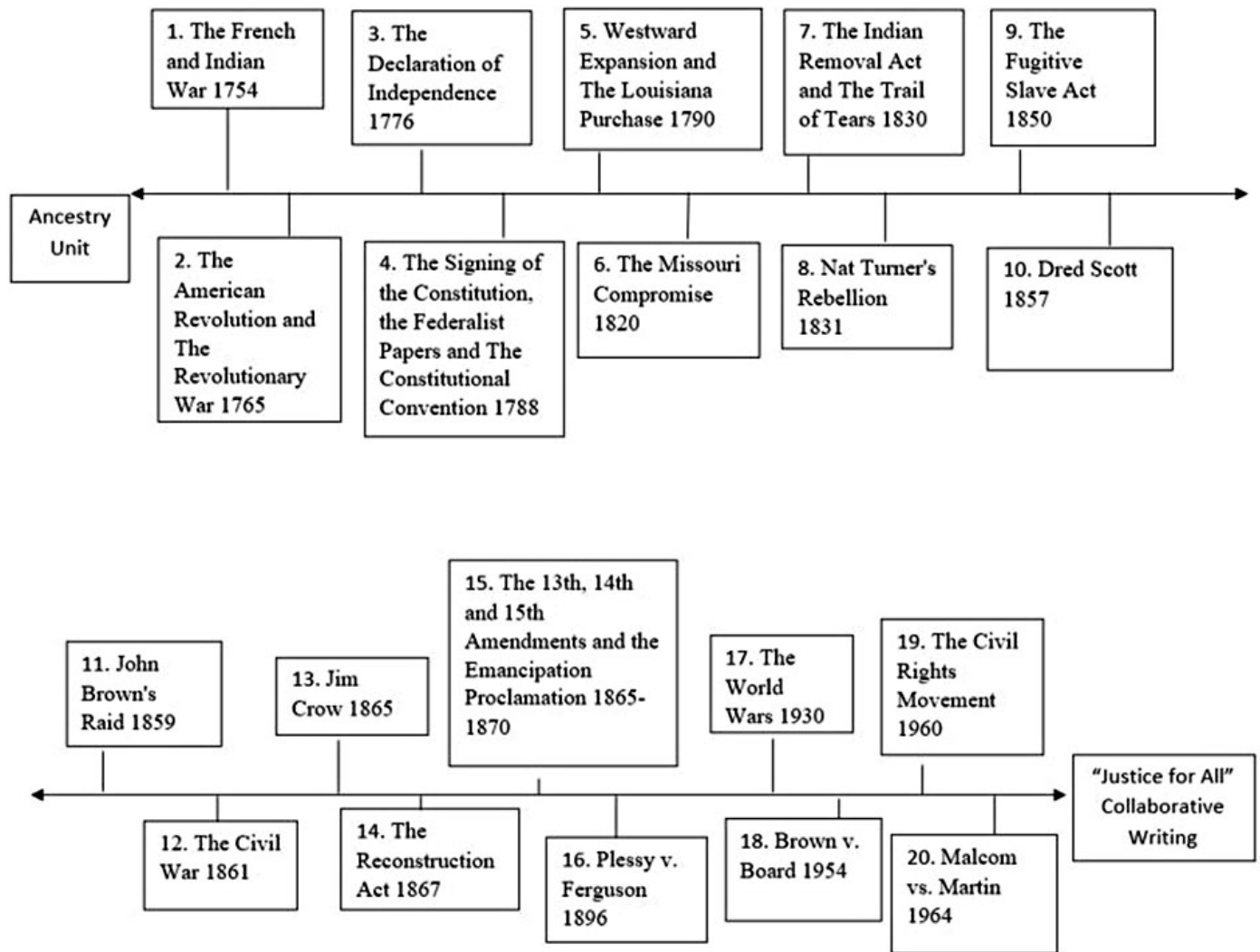


Figure 1: The Figure above is a timeline of all the events students will discuss, debate and learn about by participating in the student courtroom.

Culminating Writing Project

Students will end the Unit with a two-week reflection of the events discussed; this will also be used as a writing and editing period. Students will use their reflections that will be housed in notebooks, to develop and complete a collaborative writing piece. They will type and collectively publish their own student-friendly adaptation of a history book with perspective pieces from all the students regarding their ancestry, as well as their perspectives on the chronological story of America's founding regarding justice using the parts of the writing process. These parts of the writing process include: Pre-writing, Drafting, Editing, Revising and Publishing. The writing piece will describe the relation of justice to American History as well as their perception of justice today, and how it should be achieved moving forward.

The final writing project will be entitled: "Justice for All: A Historical Perspective by Students, For Students".

The teacher will help model the outline of the book as it will be structured like a novel and will assist in the publishing. Students will work together to collaborate on a book cover and illustrations for the inside. Students will all sign the last page of the book and it will be scanned and added to the final publication.

Classroom Activities

The Seven Kingdoms of Africa

Objective:

The student will be able to research and gather information on their chosen African tribe using print and online resources, in order to create a presentation as well as write a research paper on the tribe of their choice.

Materials:

- Research Notebook
- Printed articles and online research material
- Index cards for exit tickets
- Puzzle strategy forms

Procedure:

The students will begin the year by learning about the seven Ancient African tribes of The Kingdom of Kush, The Land of Punt, Carthage, The Kingdom of Aksum, The Mali Empire, The Songhai Empire and The Great Zimbabwe.⁶² Students will be researching one of their Seven African Empires by using the puzzle research strategy. This requires students to take on varying roles in order to learn more about a topic. During the research, one student will be the recorder, one student will be the researcher, one will be the analyzer and one will be the presenter who will help share the findings with everyone to record in their notebooks. This allows the students practice in working together prior to the student courtroom. Students will record their research across multiple days in order to prepare for a writing a research project to follow.

The Fugitive Slave Act: Debate Team Discussion

Objective:

The student will be able to understand, analyze and communicate the elements of Fugitive Slave Act, in order to formulate a justice-focused argument and present it for the debate team.

Materials:

- Student Courtroom Debate Team Folders
- Historical Documents/Artifact
- The Argument Sheet
- The Response Sheet
- The Consensus Sheet
- Reflection Notebook

Procedure:

The students will begin by learning about this historical event of the Fugitive Slave Act through presentation. Based on a historical question or argument given by the teacher (Should slaves have fled to the Canadian border as the result of the Fugitive Slave Law or Stood in Opposition? Did this act lead us closer to Justice for all or not?). The students on one side of the court will argue for one side of the question or perspective, while the other side will give a counter-argument. The teams will write up these argument stances. The students will then follow the debate team rules and structures for timing and responses (*Appendices*) to complete the debate. The students will end the week-long debate by completing a reflection writing or response to the debate. The procedure of the debate structure can be seen below.

The class will be split into two teams and will be given (One Hour and Thirty Minutes) to complete the task. Team A will argue Perspective A. Team B will argue Perspective B. Both Teams will receive: 30 Minutes to construct their arguments for by gathering 2 pieces of historical or factual evidence to pair with their opinions about the topic per person. Once the 30 minutes are complete, each team use the following time constraints to deliver their arguments: Team A will have 10 minutes to talk and try to convince Team B, as well as the teacher, about their stance. (During this block of time, one student will talk at a team as the teacher will encourage the students to take turns talking by dividing up parts of the argument). While Team A is speaking, Team B will be taking notes (must gather at least 3 points from the other team. Team B will have 5 minutes to deliver a response. Team A will have 5 minutes to prepare a rebuttal, and an addition 5 minutes to deliver the rebuttal. Team B will have 10 minutes to talk and try to convince Team A, as well as the teacher, about their stance. (During this block of time, one student will talk at a team as the teacher will encourage the students to take turns talking by dividing up parts of the argument). While Team B is speaking, Team A will be taking notes (must gather at least 3 points from the other team. Team A will have 5 minutes to deliver a response. Team B will have 5 minutes to prepare a rebuttal, and an addition 5 minutes to deliver the rebuttal. There will be a 5-minute window for any thoughts or questions. The Final 15 minutes of the debate will be spent devising a consensus statement. Students will have to put aside their perspective or stance to come up with an overall viewpoint of the event or topic. The Consensus will be recorded as a group and each student will be responsible for documenting the Debate Topic, the stance of Team A, the stance of Team B and the Consensus reached including a Verdict Sentence.

Culminating Writing Project

Objective:

The student will be able to understand, analyze and communicate the historical events debated and discussed in a writing project that will consist of individual essay reflections by the students, in order to articulate and prove their understanding of the content learned throughout the year.

Materials:

- Student Courtroom Reflection Notebooks
- Writing Folders
- Computers or Laptops
- Editing Checklists
- Peer Editing Forms.

Procedure:

The students will begin working on their collaborative and culminating writing project by completing the individual task of choosing a different historical reflection piece (written earlier in the year) to contribute to the writing project. Students will read, re-write, format, type and edit their reflection writing on the computer using an editing checklist. At the end of the writing process, students will be assigned two other classmates to peer-edit their writings to ensure that they are ready for publication.

Adaptations and Extensions

There are adaptations I would like to develop to give students opportunities to apply the skills and content knowledge they learn during the Unit. I would like to choose the students that show an exceptional level of skill in articulation and debate in the Student-Court room to be part of a debate team and would like to nominate students who display leadership skills to be a part of creating a student council for the fifth grade as the upper level elementary school students. It is more vital now than ever, that students in our communities begin to learn who they are and strive for excellence. I am looking forward to implementing this Curriculum Unit that will not only be memorable but that will change my students' lives by helping them discover who they are, what they believe and how they can impact the world around them.

Conclusion

Without the basis of who they are, where they come from or what they believe in, we cannot expect students to learn. The climate in our country regarding matters of ethnicity is changing still and it has become vitally important, now more than ever, that our students learn who they are, to find who they are meant to be.

Resources

Annotated Bibliography for Teachers

AICE. *Documenting the Numbers of Victims of the Holocaust & Nazi Persecution*.

Jewish Virtual Library, 2019. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/documenting-numbers-of-victims-of-the-holocaust>. This source provides updated statistics and numbers on the victim count of the Holocaust.

Aljazeera. *Mapping Africa's Natural Resources*. Aljazeera Online. 2018.

[https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2016/10/mapping-africa-natural-resources-](https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2016/10/mapping-africa-natural-resources-161020075811145.html)

161020075811145.html. This article maps the resources that are farmed from the African continent. The map and information give a color-coded, and regionally organized depiction of which resources come from each province.

Aljazeera. *Nick Dearden*. Aljazeera. 2018

<https://www.aljazeera.com/profile/nick-dearden.html>. This source gives information into the African Resources article author Nick Dearden. This information is useful in citing these sources, as well as locating other relevant information on this topic and other global issues.

Allyn, N. *Nat Turner's Rebellion, 1831*. The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American

History, 2019. <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/content/nat-turner%E2%80%99s-rebellion-1831>This resource is an article on the factual, historical account of Nat Turner's Rebellion. This account is one that will serve as a useful resource for a debate regarding this specific event.

Andrews, E. *7 Influential African Empires*. History, 2017.

<https://www.history.com/news/7-influential-african-empires>. This article gives a detailed description of the seven original African Empires. This information will be very useful to my students in the ancestry portion of this Unit as the introduction to African American History.

Belz, H. *Abraham Lincoln, Constitutionalism and Equal Rights in the Civil War Era*.

New York: Fordham University Press, 1998. This book was used as a timeline and analytical look at the Lincoln Presidency regarding the Civil War Era. This is a valuable research tool for teachers to create lessons on the many sides of the American President and the issues that arose during his term.

Bennet, C. *African Civilizations Map-Pre-Colonial*. New World Encyclopedia, 2008.

<https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/File:African-civilizations-map-pre-colonial.svg>. This source is an image source for a map depicting the original Empires of Africa. This is a useful image source to add to a presentation to give a better visual representation of the geographical locations of the African Empires.

Bourne, J. *Slavery in the United States*. EHnet, 2019.

<https://eh.net/encyclopedia/slavery-in-the-united-states/>. This article gives statistics on the number of slaves brought to the U.S. during the time of the founding of the Americas. It also outlines the stifling number that lost their lives.

Dearden, N. *Africa is not poor, we are stealing its wealth*. Aljazeera. 2017.

[https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/05/africa-poor-stealing-wealth-](https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/05/africa-poor-stealing-wealth-170524063731884.html)

[170524063731884.html](https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/05/africa-poor-stealing-wealth-170524063731884.html). This article is an analytical and factual look at why Africa is now considered a poor continent while it is one of the richest places regarding resources across the globe. This information is incredibly useful in conveying the reasons why Africa is in its current state to students and colleagues.

Dunn, J. Horowitz, D.L., Botting, E.H., Shapiro, I. *The Federalist Papers*. New Haven,

Connecticut, London, England, Yale University Press 1992. This book is a transcribed version of the Federalist Papers with an analytical introduction by Ian Shapiro. This book is a great teacher resource for gaining and understanding of the Federalist Papers, their intent and how to share that with students regarding history.

Digital Scholarship Lab. *Redlining Richmond*. University of Richmond, 2019.

<https://dsl.richmond.edu/holc/>. This source provides information on the Redlining of Richmond, Virginia since the 1930s. This source offers visual representation as well as information on the redlining and segregation which is useful in teaching content about the civil rights movement.

Editors, H. *Westward Expansion*. History Online, 2009.

<https://www.history.com/topics/westward-expansion/westward-expansion> (accessed July 15, 2019). This article shares information regarding Westward Expansion in the United States. This is valuable research source.

Finkelman, P. & Kennon, D. R. *Lincoln, Congress and Emancipation*. Ohio: Ohio University

Press, 2016. This book was used as a timeline and analytical look at the Lincoln Presidency regarding the Civil War Era. This is a valuable research tool for teachers to create lessons on the many sides of the American President and the issues that arose during his term.

Fortson, D. *The Garden of Eden-Black History in the Bible*. WordPress.com

<http://www.blackhistoryinthebible.com/africa-and-arabia/the-garden-of-eden/> (accessed July 15, 2019). This source contains evidence to support the claim the earliest forms of life originated on the continent of Africa. This source provides cartographical and historical evidence that pre-dates things like the publishing of any written text.

Garlake, P. *The Kingdoms of Africa*. New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1990.

This book is an illustrated narrative of the archeological and historical findings on the continent of Africa. This can be used as a teacher or student resource book.

Geo, 2.0, *Map of Human Migration*. Genographic Project. National Geographic Online.

<https://genographic.nationalgeographic.com/human-journey/> (accessed July 15, 2019). This resource is a map depicting the migration of humans after originating on the African Continent. I used this cartographical representation to show the migration patterns of humans and the paths they took across the globe to create the populated regions we have today.

Geology, C. *World Map-Political*. Geoscience News and Information.

<https://geology.com/world/world-map.shtml> (accessed July 15, 2019). This resource is a well coded and depicted World Map that depicts the various regions of Africa well. Students can use this resource for research, while teachers can use this for demonstrations and geographical segments of lessons.

Goldfield, D. *America Aflame: How the Civil War Created a Nation*. Bloomsbury Press, 2011.

This book is an analytical narrative regarding the Civil War and its implications on the United States. This is a great resource text to pull from for teachers and students in terms of looking at Historical Perspective.

HMHSP. *Virginia Social Studies: Virginia Studies*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Publishing Company, 2011. This is the fourth-grade history workbook used by Richmond Public Schools. This is a student resource book and interactive workbook.

Holzer, H. & Gabbard S.V. *Lincoln and Freedom: Slavery, Emancipation and the*

Thirteenth Amendment. Illinois, Southern Illinois University Press, 1992. This book was used as a timeline and analytical look at the Lincoln Presidency regarding the Civil War Era. This is a valuable research tool for teachers to create lessons on the many sides of the American President and the issues that arose during his term.

Isensee, L. *Why calling slaves 'Workers' is more than an Editing Error*. NPRed, 2015.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/10/23/450826208/why-calling-slaves-workers-is->

[more-than-an-editing-error](https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/10/23/450826208/why-calling-slaves-workers-is-more-than-an-editing-error). This online resource is a news article narrating the events of a student in Houston discovering a blatant lack of truth regarding slavery in his History textbook at school.

Joyce, C. *315,000-Year-Old Fossils from Morocco Could be the Earliest Recorded Homo*

Sapiens. NPR.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/06/07/531804528/315-000-year-old-fossils-from-morocco-could-be-earliest-recorded-homo-sapiens> (accessed July 14, 2019). This article gives information and recent archeological findings of human remains in Morocco on the continent of Africa. This information helps further validate that the earliest recorded humans did in-fact originate from Africa prior to the split of Pangea.

Klarman, M. J. *Unfinished business*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

This novel by Michael J. Klarman paints a descriptive portrait of the sheer scale of unacknowledged injustice and wrong-doing to African American people in this country. This work goes back to very origins of the United States to offer accurate historical events as well as numbers and statistics to aid in research.

Kredo, A. *U.S. to Pay Out New Reparations for the Holocaust*. The Washington Free Beacon.

<https://freebeacon.com/issues/u-s-to-pay-out-new-reparations-for-holocaust/> (accessed July 14, 2019). This source provides information regarding reparations paid by the U.S. to victims of the Holocaust in Nazi Germany. This information shows the various accounts when reparations were paid. I used this information for comparative and analytical research.

Maslow, A. H. *A Theory of Human Motivation*. Originally Published in *Psychological*

Review, 50, 370-396, 1943.

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.318.2317&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

This psychological theory text outlines intrinsic human motivation. Maslow developed what we know as the “Hierarchy of Needs” which allows us to better understand what children and students need to learn and thrive.

Michell, P. Haour, A. Hobart, J. *Researching Africa's Past*. Oxford: Oxford University School of

Archaeology and the Individual Authors, 2003. This book is an illustrated narrative of the archeological and historical findings on the continent of Africa. This can be used as a teacher or student resource book.

Miceli, C. *Descartes: I think therefore 'I Am'*. 1000 World Philosophy, 2018.

<https://1000wordphilosophy.com/2018/11/26/descartes-i-think-therefore-i-am/>.

This is a citing of the famous quote by the philosopher Descartes.

National, A. *Declaration of Independence: A Transcription*. National Archives, 2019.

<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

This resource is a transcription of the Declaration of Independence in the National Archives. This is a valuable resource for students to read the exact wording of the original founding document.

PPI. *Prison Policy Initiative: Virginia Profile*. Northampton, MA, 2019.

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/VA.html>. Virginia's Incarceration rates are higher than the national average. "69,000 people from Virginia are behind bars today" (PPI, 2019).

Schools, RPS. RPS March 15 [Brochure]. Richmond1: Richmond Public

Schools, 2016. <http://web.richmond.k12.va.us/Portals/0/assets/HR/pdfs/CGCS21%20>

[Recommendations/Appendix%20C%20-%20MARCH15HRBROCHURE_B.pdf](http://web.richmond.k12.va.us/Portals/0/assets/HR/pdfs/CGCS21%20Recommendations/Appendix%20C%20-%20MARCH15HRBROCHURE_B.pdf). This is the online demographics chart for Richmond Public Schools. This chart gives a detailed breakdown of the different ethnic groups that make up the school division.

Schurr, N. *John Brown's Raid on Harper's Ferry*. Tennessee: University of Chattanooga, 2019.

Digital Public Library of America. <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/john-brown-s-raid-on-harper-s-ferry>. This article outlines and discussed the facts regarding the historical event of John Brown's Raid. This is a useful research resource for information during the Jim Crow Era.

Straker, D. *The Need for Sense of Identity*. Changing Minds, 2019.

<http://changingminds.org/explanations/needs/identity.htm>

This online composition by David Straker, the psychologist is an analytical review of Abraham Maslow's theory on the hierarchy of needs. It takes a closer look at the correlation between this theory and a child's need for identity.

UTEG. *Atrocities Against Native Americans*. United to End Genocide, 2016.

<http://endgenocide.org/learn/past-genocides/native-americans/>. This resource is an informational activism page that raises awareness and donations for the violence and injustice inflicted on Native American people and other ethnic groups.

Waack, S. *Hattie Ranking: 252 Influences and Effect Sizes Related to Student*

Achievement. Visible Learning, 2019. <https://visible-learning.org/hattie-ranking-influences-effect-sizes-learning-achievement/>. This online resource is a list of Hattie's effect sizes for 252 different teaching strategies. This is an invaluable resource for teachers as it can be used to track the effect sizes of your own teaching strategies and classroom practices, as well as any unit or curriculum in the process of being written.

Webster, M. *Definition of Identity*. Dictionary Reference Material, 2019.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity>. This is the dictionary definition of identity. This helped support my thesis on the intrinsic need for identity in order to learn and grow.

Wormser, R. *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003.

This text is a book that paints a very clear picture of the hatred and abused inflicted on African Americans during the Jim Crow Era.

Student Reading List

Brimner, L. *Black & White the Confrontation of Reverence Fred L Shuttlesworth and*

Eugene Bill Connor. Pennsylvania: Boyds Mill Press, 2011. This student resource should be used for students to explore the concept of debate regarding the civil rights movement.

Meyers, W.D. *Malcom X: A Fire Burning Brightly*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

2003. The students will use this reading resource to help gather information for their Malcom vs. Martin debate. This book gives detailed information about Malcom X at the upper elementary level.

Fradin, D.B, J.B. Velasquez, E. *The Price of Freedom: How One Town Stood Up to*

Slavery. Pennsylvania: Walker & Co, 2013. This story gives a student-friendly approach to the Fugitive Slave Act.

List of Materials for Classroom Use

HMHSP. *Virginia Social Studies: Virginia Studies*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Publishing Company, 2011. This is the fourth-grade history workbook used by Richmond Public Schools. This is a student resource book and interactive workbook.

Musgrave, G.M. *Competitive Debate: Rules and Techniques*. New York: H.W. Wilson, 1957.

This is an overview of the components of debate. This version will be adapted for students and given to them to use in their debate reflection notebooks.

Appendix on Implementing District Standards

VDOE. *Virginia Studies Standards of Learning*. Virginia Department of Education, 2019.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/history_socialscience/index.shtml

Some of the skills and standards students will need to address are:

VS.1-The student will demonstrate skills for historical thinking, geographical analysis, economic decision making, and responsible citizenship.⁶³

VS.2-The student will demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between physical geography and the lives of the native peoples, past and present, of Virginia.⁶⁴

Students will demonstrate and address these skills by completing their ancestry project. Students will be analyzing maps, economics and historical thinking regarding the continent of Africa. Students will also be exploring these geography skills of native peoples by exploring, learning and studying about the Native

American peoples of the U.S. and the true depiction of the mistreatment of these native peoples during this country's founding.

Some other relevant standards include:

VS.3- The student will demonstrate an understanding of the first permanent English settlement in America.⁶⁵

VS.7-The student will demonstrate an understanding of the issues that divided our nation and led to the Civil War.⁶⁶

VS.8-The student will demonstrate an understanding of the reconstruction of Virginia following the Civil War.⁶⁷

Students will demonstrate these skills by completing their debate team discussions, as well as their research and exploration of the different historical events. The students will be demonstrating their knowledge of these events by completing these debates, as well as the reflections of the debates. Specifically, regarding the civil war, students will be exploring the issues surrounding the civil war and its effects, especially relating to reconstruction.

Additionally, V.10-the student will demonstrate an understanding of Virginia government, geography, and economics.⁶⁸

Students will be following up their exploration of debate and the structure of government, to analyze and understand the makeup of the Virginia State government and how they can be involved in impacting change within that system.

Notes

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2. Miceli, C. *Descartes: I think therefore 'I Am'*. 1000 World Philosophy, 2018. <https://1000wordphilosophy.com/2018/11/26/descartes-i-think-therefore-i-am/>.
3. Bourne, J. *Slavery in the United States*. EHnet, 2019. <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/slavery-in-the-united-states/>.
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5. Schools, RPS. RPS March 15 [Brochure]. Richmond1: Richmond Public Schools, 2016. http://web.richmond.k12.va.us/Portals/0/assets/HR/pdfs/CGCS21%20Recommendations/Appendix%20C%20-%20MARCH15HRBROCHURE_B.pdf.
6. Klarman, M. J. *Unfinished business*. (Oxford: University Press, 2007), 5.
7. Maslow, A. H. A Theory of Human Motivation. *Originally Published in Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396, 1943. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.318.2317&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
8. Straker, D. *The Need for Sense of Identity*. Changing Minds, 2019. <http://changingminds.org/explanations/needs/identity.htm>
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10. AICE. *Documenting the Numbers of Victims of the Holocaust & Nazi Persecution*. Jewish Virtual Library, 2019. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/documenting-numbers-of-victims-of-the-holocaust>.
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14. PPI.
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<https://www.history.com/topics/westward-expansion/westward-expansion>.
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61. Holzer, H. & Gabbard S.V., 124.
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http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/history_socialscience/index.shtml
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