

Reading Guide for The 1857 Project Essays

“The 1857 Project: Extracting the Poison of Racism from America’s Soul” by William H. Freivogel, pgs 4-8 [Graphic organizer for this essay](#)

Excerpt	<p>“The soul of America is its promise of ever expanding freedom, equality and opportunity. The paradox of America is that over four centuries, our Founders and our leaders reneged on this promise by embracing a devil’s bargain with slavery, segregation, racial superiority and racism. It’s like opposite sides of the same coin—good and evil, shiny and tarnished. They are opposite ends of the long arc of the moral universe that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and President Barack Obama said “bends toward justice.” Anyone who doubts the centrality of slavery, segregation and racism to the American story—from 1619 through today and for generations to come—isn’t paying attention. Over the past two centuries, perhaps no other region of the country has been so entwined as St. Louis, Missouri and Illinois with America’s struggle to extract the poison of 1619 from its soul. Race is at the heart of the biggest stories in St. Louis, this century.”</p>
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	<p>1619 Project, Emancipation Proclamation, The Missouri Compromise, The 1857 Dred Scott Case, Lincoln-Douglas debate, “The Great Emancipator”, Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871, Three-Fifths Compromise, Northwest Ordinance of 1787, Plessy vs. Ferguson, Brown vs. Board of Education, 13th Amendment, 14th Amendment, 15th Amendment, Civil Rights Cases of 1883, 1916 Housing Segregation Law, 1917 East St. Louis Riot, COINTELPRO plot, Veiled Prophet, 1964 Civil Rights Act, 16th Street Baptist Church</p> <p>Abolitionist, Paradox, Segregation, Racism, Justice, Equality, Equity, Systemic racism, “welfare queens”</p>
Supplemental Texts	<p>Primary Sources: Emancipation Proclamation The Missouri Compromise 1853 Sermon by Theodore Parker 1968 Speech, “Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution” by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. President Barack Obama’s 2nd Inaugural Address</p> <p>Essays: “The Idea of America” by Nikole Hannah Jones in <i>The New York Time Magazine’s</i> 1619 Project “Mass Incarceration” by Bryan Stevenson in <i>The New York Time Magazine’s</i> 1619 Project “Vulnerable neighborhood faces shorter life expectancy and COVID-19 dangers” by Richard H. Weiss, <i>Gateway Journalism Review</i></p>

	<p>Film: Spanish Lake Documentary</p> <p>Poetry: “Let America Be America Again” by Langston Hughes</p>
Guiding Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How has the U.S. benefitted from slavery?• How has slavery harmed the U.S.?• Who benefited from segregation, and how? Who was harmed by segregation, and how?• How have laws, policies, and systems developed to maintain slavery and segregation influenced laws, policies, and systems in current times?• How did race become such an important part of a person’s identity?• What can we learn from tracking the history of racism within our region?