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## Teacher Materials

### Excerpts for Week 1

Directions: The following excerpts should be reviewed in class with students during the first week of the unit. Some passages are designed to be read aloud to students and some are also printed in their Reader Response Journals for small group reading. Each passage comes with questions for students in their journals.

#### Excerpt 1

\*\* students can write a response to this passage on page 5 of their journals

In June 1776, Thomas Jefferson sat at his portable writing desk in a rented room in Philadelphia and penned these words: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

*Educator note: Students might not be familiar with Thomas Jefferson. I told students Thomas Jefferson was the author of The Declaration of Independence, and later the third president of the United States. He was also a prominent slave owner. If he is saying that all men are created equally and born with rights such as Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness, what groups of people are left out of this statement? [Slaves, women] Older grades can discuss the irony of this situation*

For the last 243 years, this fierce assertion of the fundamental and natural rights of humankind to freedom and self-governance has defined our global reputation as a land of liberty. As Jefferson composed his inspiring words, however, a teenage boy who would enjoy none of those rights and liberties waited nearby to serve at his master's beck and call. His name was Robert Hemings, and he was the half brother of Jefferson's wife, born to Martha Jefferson's father and a woman he owned. It was common for white enslavers to keep their half-black children in slavery. Jefferson had chosen Hemings, from among about 130 enslaved people that worked on the forced-labor camp he called Monticello, to accompany him to Philadelphia and ensure his every comfort as he drafted the text making the case for a new democratic republic based on the individual rights of men.

*Educator note: Jefferson wanted the United States to be a land of liberty. However, he was denying liberty, or freedom from several groups of Americans.*

At the time, one-fifth of the population within the 13 colonies struggled under a brutal system of slavery unlike anything that had existed in the world before. Chattel slavery was not conditional but racial. It was heritable and permanent, not temporary, meaning generations of black people were born into it and passed their enslaved status onto their children. Enslaved people were not recognized as human beings but as property that could be mortgaged, traded, bought, sold, used as collateral, given as a gift and disposed of violently.

\*Excerpt from [“The Idea of America” by Nikole Hannah-Jones](#), *The 1619 Project*, page 17.

Excerpt 2

\*\* students can write a response to this passage on page 5 of their journals. Omit the term rape for younger students.

Enslaved people could not legally marry. They were barred from learning to read and restricted from meeting privately in groups. They had no claim to their own children, who could be bought, sold and traded away from them on auction blocks alongside furniture and cattle or behind storefronts that advertised “Negroes for Sale.”

Enslavers and the courts did not honor kinship ties to mothers, siblings, cousins. In most courts, they had no legal standing. Enslavers could [rape or] murder their property without legal consequence (whites could not go to jail or go to prison for violence against slaves)... Enslaved people could own nothing, will nothing and inherit nothing. They were legally tortured, including by those working for Jefferson himself. They could be worked to death, and often were, in order to produce the highest profits for the white people who owned them.

\*Excerpt from [“The Idea of America” by Nikole Hannah-Jones](#), *The 1619 Project*, page 17.

Excerpt 3

\*\* students can write a response to the questions for this passage on page 5 and 6 of their journals. The questions are: What did he propose the men should do? How do you think the men reacted?

That August day, as the men arrived at the White House, they were greeted by the towering Lincoln and a man named James Mitchell, who eight days before had been given the title of a newly created position called the commissioner of emigration. This was to be his first assignment.

After exchanging a few niceties, Lincoln got right to it. He informed his guests that he had gotten Congress to appropriate funds to ship black people, once freed, to another country. “Why should they leave this country? This is, perhaps, the first question for proper consideration,” Lincoln told them. “You and we are different races. . . . Your race suffers very greatly, many of them, by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence. In a word, we suffer on each side.”

“Although many men engaged on either side do not care for you one way or the other . . . without the institution of slavery and the colored race as a basis, the war could not have an existence,” the president told them. “It is better for us both, therefore, to be separated.

\*Excerpt from [“The Idea of America” by Nikole Hannah-Jones](#), *The 1619 Project*, page 20.

Excerpt 4

\*\*Write this quote on the board at the beginning of the third lesson. Students can respond to the questions about the quote: Based on this quote, who do you think is speaking? What do you think happened after the meeting at the White House?

“This is our home, and this is our country. Beneath its sod (grass) lie the bones of our fathers. ...here we were born, and here we will die.”

\*Excerpt from [“The Idea of America” by Nikole Hannah-Jones](#), *The 1619 Project*, page 20.

[Britannica Kids: Jim Crow Online Resource](#)

\*\*Students read this passage on page 9 of their journals and answer the following questions on page 10: What was the purpose of the Jim Crow laws? Are separate facilities for Black people and white people fair? What groups of people enforced the laws?

Jim Crow laws were an official effort to keep **African Americans** separate from whites in the southern United States for many years. The laws were in place from the late 1870s until the **civil rights movement** began in the 1950s.

The name Jim Crow comes from a once popular stage performance that began in 1828. This type of show, called a minstrel show, involved lively entertainment that encouraged a negative view of Blacks. The term Jim Crow became an unfavorable name for Blacks as well as a term for their **segregation**, or separation, from whites.

Beginning in the late 1870s, Southern **state** lawmakers passed laws that required whites and Blacks to attend separate schools and to sit in different areas on public **transportation**. The laws extended to parks, cemeteries, **theaters**, and restaurants. Blacks and whites had to use different drinking fountains, waiting rooms, housing, and shops. The laws kept Black and white people from relating to one another as equals. The laws limited freedom and opportunity for **African American** people.

Each state had its own set of Jim Crow laws. Segregation spread beyond the South to other states in the country as well. Signs were used to show where “people of color” were not allowed to go. In addition to African American people, Jim Crow law limited many racial and ethnic groups in the United States who were not seen as white.

In 1954 the U.S. **Supreme Court** decided in the case of ***Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*** that segregation in public schools was **unconstitutional**, or against the country’s set of rules. This decision was the beginning of the end for Jim Crow law. The legal argument to end racial segregation was extended to other public areas. Soon Jim Crow law was removed completely.

[Jim Crow Laws. \(2022\). Britannica Kids. https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Jim-Crow-laws/599873#](https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Jim-Crow-laws/599873#)

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Excerpt 5: [Feb. 12, 1946: story by Jacqueline Woodson](#)

Feb. 12, 1946: Isaac Woodard, a decorated 26-year-old Army sergeant, is severely beaten by white police officers while taking a bus to meet his wife. He is still wearing his uniform. Accused of drinking with other soldiers on the bus, Woodard is arrested on a charge of drunk and disorderly conduct and denied medical assistance. The attack leaves him permanently blind.

Keep an eye on the restrooms. They've always come for us through them. 'Cuz who doesn't ever have to use one? Straight peeps and trans peeps, black peeps and white peeps, we all have to go sometime. And back in the day, if the Colored Only signs didn't work or weren't enough, or still had black folks having the audacity to put on a uniform and go fight in a war — let's call this one World War II — they found other ways to come for us. Feb. 12, 1946, 17 years to the day before I was born — and when I was born, know those Colored Only signs were still up all over the South — a South I would live in until I was 7 years old — Sgt. Isaac Woodard, in full uniform, boarded a bus in Georgia, heading home to his wife in Winnsboro, S.C. Ninety- eight miles away from the town in which I was raised, Sergeant Woodard asked the driver if there was time to use the restroom. This was near Augusta, S.C., where the driver said, "Hell no." And then there was an argument. And the driver conceding with a "Go ahead then, but hurry back." Keep an eye on the history of black veterans in America. On the thousands that were attacked, assaulted, killed. Because they were black. Because they were in uniform. Because they had the audacity to believe that leaving this country to fight for it would indeed make it a better place for them to return to. Keep an eye on a white Southern bus driver conceding to a black man. At a later stop, Sergeant Woodard was ordered off the bus by the local chief of police, Lynwood Shull, and another officer. Lynwood beat him blind. Two months later, Woodard's family moved him from the V.A. hospital in Columbia, S.C., to New York City. At trial, Shull admitted to blinding Woodard. After 30 minutes of deliberation, an all-white jury acquitted him. Keep an eye on the long, bleak legacy of police brutality against black men. It happened in America. It happened when many of us were living. It happened again and again. And as Woodard himself said, "Negro veterans that fought in this war ... don't realize that the real battle has just begun in America." It happened on a Greyhound bus. To a man who was just trying to get himself home.

\*Excerpt from "[Feb. 12, 1946: story by Jacqueline Woodson](#)," from *The 1619 Project*, page 69.