
1619 Project Choices

Quarter 2 Essential Questions:

1. How does the legacy of slavery still show up today?
2. What would it mean to start our study of American History with the year 1619? Why is that significant?
3. Which stories in history are elevated, and which are hidden? Why?

Choice 1: Mapping Your Community's Connections to Slavery

- **How does the Legacy of Slavery Still show up today?**

Step 1. For context on how U.S. geography was shaped by the institution of slavery, read "[Chained Migration: How Slavery Made Its Way West](#)" by Tiya Miles (page 22) and/or "[The Idea of America](#)" by Nikole Hannah-Jones (pages 14–26).

Step 2. Research your own state or community in order to answer the following [questions](#):

Step 3. Choose a creative format in which to present your research findings. You might develop a presentation including discussion questions and deliver it to your class or school; write an essay modeled on the essay(s) you read in step 1; create a poster incorporating primary source documents to show your research; or conduct a photography/visual art project in which you show your community's historical and present-day connections to slavery.

Choice 2: Constructing Your Family History: Oral or Imagined History

- **What would it mean to start our study of American History with the year 1619? Why is that significant?**

In Nikole Hannah-Jones' "The Idea of America," she describes having to point out the flag of the country of her ancestors during an in-class assignment. She writes, "Slavery had erased any connection we had to an African country, and even if we tried to claim the whole continent, there was no 'African' flag."

Many black Americans face obstacles in tracing genealogy because of the violent uprooting and dehumanizing record-keeping associated with slavery. *The 1619 Project*

traces how our national history was formed, but what about your personal history? How might you trace—and in some cases, imagine—your family history?

Option 1: [Oral History](#)

Begin your investigation through oral history: Talk to family members, such as parents, grandparents, and cousins, to find out as much as you can about your family history, going back as many generations as possible. Create a visual presentation to share this with your class, answering the questions to the fullest extent possible.

Option 2: Imagined Ancestry

An ancestor can be a person from whom you biologically descend, but they can also be a person "from whom mental, artistic, spiritual, etc., descent is claimed." From whom do you claim descent? Create a family tree poster, but instead of populating it with your blood relatives, populate it with your inspirations. Who are your intellectual, artistic, or spiritual parents, siblings, cousins, grandparents? Be creative; include at least 10 people in your imagined family tree, and explain why you are claiming them.

Choice 3: Highlighting Black American Innovators: Research, Visuals, and Presentations

- **Which stories in history are elevated, and which are hidden?**

"Popular American Music" by Wesley Morris (pages 60–67), and several other articles in *The 1619 Project* emphasize invaluable contributions by black Americans to U.S. society. After reading these pieces, consider: Which innovations were new to you? What other contributions by black Americans should be taught in schools?

Conduct a research [project](#) that investigates an innovation by a Black American. You could research innovators in music, science, technology, or any other arena. Select a person who contributed to a field you are passionate about! Create a visual that presents what you learned.

Choice 4: Writing your own Children's Book (Credit to [Engage NY](#) for Graphic Organizers)

- **Which stories in history are elevated, and which are hidden?**

Using 'Born on the Water' as inspiration, you will choose to create your own narrative and elevate a story which is traditionally NOT included in children's literature.

1619 Project Humanities: Research Extension

Unit by 7th Grade Humanities Educators at Cherokee Heights Middle School, part of the 2021 cohort of *The 1619 Project* Education Network

- Graphic Organizer for Born on the Water [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- Organizing your own book [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)
- Storyboard [\[.pdf\]](#) [\[.docx\]](#)