



## Viewing Guide:

# The Legacy of Eugenics: Facilitating a Classroom Conversation

### Overview

In this classroom video, history teacher Denny Conklin facilitates a conversation with students about the legacy of the eugenics movement in the United States. In the Facing History scope and sequence, attention to the theme of judgment, memory, and legacy always follows the study of history to support students' ethical reflection and help them examine the relationship between the past and the present. During this video, students consider complicated questions: Who is responsible, and how can they be held accountable? Who, if anyone, stood up to the injustices of the time period? The questions pondered extend beyond the immediate aftermath of the eugenics movement: What have students learned from this history? How should it be remembered? What legacies of the eugenics movement do students see today?

### As you watch, consider the following:

1. At 3:19, Mr. Conklin affirms a student's comment by saying, "I like what you said, Nick, because you talk about this idea that their inaction was actually action." How does this classroom conversation encourage ideas to surface about the power of individual decision-making?
2. At 5:02, Mr. Conklin asks, "What would it take for someone to speak out against the eugenics movement? What would be at stake? What would you need to do?" What connections might you make as an educator to students' own ability to speak out when they see injustices in their lives? How do you think this might resonate with your students?
3. At 6:21, Mr. Conklin notes that "one of the great things about the Judgment, Memory and Legacy piece of the Facing History journey is that we don't just end with the history, but we try to look and bring it up to the present." How might you connect the histories you teach to today? What approaches from this video could you use to help students link the past and the present?



### In this video:

Denny Conklin, teacher  
11th grade, Arlington High School  
Arlington, MA

### Video Goals:

The purpose of watching this video is to:

- Witness how an educator frames a classroom discussion about themes of legacy and memory.
- Consider how you might apply this aspect of the Facing History scope and sequence to your teaching of historical time periods.
- Understand how contemporary connections to difficult histories can deepen student engagement.



### Lesson Resources:

- [Reading 12, "Confronting a 'Twisted Science,'" from \*Race and Membership in American History: The Eugenics Movement\* \(pages 283–287\)](#)