



FACING
HISTORY &
OURSELVES

US History Curriculum Collection: DEMOCRACY & FREEDOM

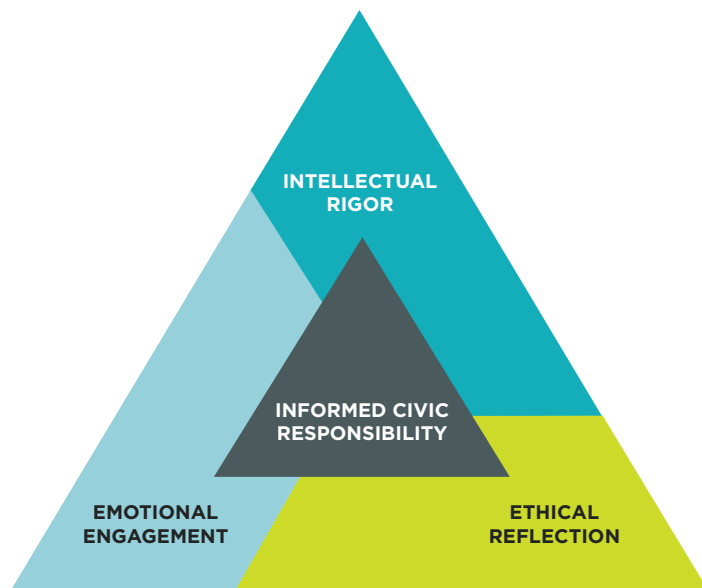
Our US History Curriculum Collection: Democracy & Freedom invites students to **see themselves in the struggle for freedom and self-determination** throughout United States history and embrace their role in **expanding and preserving a healthy democracy**.

Our Approach to Teaching US History

The resources in this collection help teachers structure their US History course around a thematic throughline of democracy and freedom — concepts that remain powerfully relevant today.

Through sources that highlight the struggle for freedom by those who have often been excluded from the historical narrative, this collection asks students to think critically about what democracy and freedom mean throughout US history and in their own lives.

Building on Facing History's unique pedagogy, students explore the complexity of identity, membership, and belonging; analyze US history through a critical and ethical lens; and develop a sense of civic agency.



The Collection

Our collection is designed to shape and supplement a US History course. It consists of a set of flexible resources that help you establish the themes of democracy and freedom in your course and create a reflective classroom community.

The inquiries and units within the collection feature expertly selected primary sources, classroom-ready student handouts, and teaching strategies that support perspective-taking and historical thinking skills. The collection's **Course Planning Guide** supports you to strategically integrate these resources into your existing US history course.

FIRST WEEKS

MID-COURSE

FINAL WEEKS

COURSE FOUNDATIONS

- The Back to School Toolkit
- My Part of the Story
- In Pursuit of Democracy & Freedom Inquiry

UNITS & INQUIRIES

- “We the People”: Expanding the Teaching of the US Founding
- Angel Island Immigration Station: Exploring Borders & Belonging in US History
- The Reconstruction Era
- Japanese American Incarceration in World War II
- “I Wanted the Whole World to See”: The Murder of Emmett Till

CAPSTONE PROJECT

- Democracy & Freedom: US History

The collection includes:

- **The Back to School Toolkit**, designed to help you build community with your students at the beginning of the year
- **My Part of the Story**, an introductory unit that helps students explore the complexity of both individual and national identity
- **In Pursuit of Democracy and Freedom**, an inquiry that establishes the thematic throughline of the collection by asking students to think critically about what democracy and freedom mean to them
- Three additional inquiries that explore critical moments in US History through analysis of primary sources:
 - **We The People: Expanding the Teaching of the US Founding**
 - **Angel Island Immigration Station: Exploring Borders and Belonging in US History**
 - **Japanese American Incarceration in WW II: A US History Inquiry**
- **The Reconstruction Era and the Fragility of Democracy**, a three-week unit that explores the implications of this time period on our democracy today
- **“I Wanted the Whole World to See”: The Murder of Emmett Till**, a unit that urges students to reflect on the lessons this history holds for contemporary racial justice movements
- **Democracy and Freedom: US History Capstone Project**, a culminating project for a US History course

Core Principles of Teaching US History and Democracy

Our approach to history education is evident throughout the materials in this collection.

Meet students where they are

Only by acknowledging what many students already know from their own lives — that progress towards greater freedom, equality, and justice is not linear or inevitable — can we teach the history of the United States in a way that is authentic and meaningful to all students. Only if students see their story as part of the story of the United States will they envision themselves as the founders and caretakers of the future of the nation's democracy.



Use the study of history to reveal the messy work of democracy

The study of history illuminates key aspects of democracy that are missing when the functions of government are taught in the abstract. Our resources on the founding era, Reconstruction, and the Civil Rights movement, to name just a few, reveal the complex social and political context in which governments function: the conflicts, institutions, historical legacies, and human behaviors that shape — and sometimes distort — the democratic process.



Emphasize social-emotional learning and skills

Beyond laws, political parties, and elections, democracy depends on how citizens relate to one other. Democracy can't thrive when citizens define who is included and who is excluded from the polity on the basis of attributes like race or language, or when they fail to see the humanity in those with whom they share a community and a country. We understand that empathy, respect for difference, and perspective-taking are not only social-emotional skills but also key qualities of responsible citizenship, because they support students' ability to imagine and act on a notion of the "common good."



Provide models of civic choices

While principles such as equality, human rights, and consent of the governed were features of the nation's original documents, there has never been a point in our history when they were extended to or applied equally to all Americans. Nevertheless, throughout US history, these ideals have been seized upon by groups and individuals to assert their own rights and expand the definition of who is included in the phrase "we the people." Studying these groups and individuals helps students discover the power of their own choice to participate today.



Components of the US History Curriculum Collection

While we recommend using the collection in full within your US History course, you can also choose the resources that are best suited to your unique context. This collection will continue to grow as we develop additional resources that examine inflection points throughout US History.



Back to School Toolkit

This toolkit will help you lay the foundation for a reflective and caring classroom community in the opening days of the school year. It includes daily routines for creating continuity and activities that foster trust and a sense of belonging.

1 week



My Part of the Story

This six-lesson unit launches a US history course through an examination of students' individual identities. The activities also develop students' understanding of how we all contribute in different ways to our national context.

5-7 days



In Pursuit of Democracy and Freedom: A US History Inquiry

This C-3-aligned inquiry introduces the thematic throughline of the US History Curriculum Collection. Students examine their own ideas about democracy and freedom and examine sources that demonstrate the ways in which these concepts have been taken up across eras.

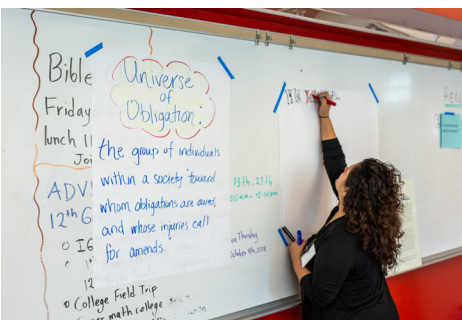
5-7 days



We the People: Expanding the Teaching of the US Founding

This inquiry helps students analyze the complexities and contradictions of the US founding through primary sources and contemporary perspectives. It centers the voices of those in early US history who were excluded from formal political participation, but nonetheless appealed to the nation's founding democratic ideals to assert their own rights and freedoms.

5-7 days



The Reconstruction Era

This study of the Reconstruction era is guided by the essential question, “What can we learn from the history of Reconstruction as we work to strengthen democracy today?” In this unit, students investigate the challenges of creating a just democracy in a time of deep division.

3 weeks



Angel Island Immigration Station: Exploring Borders and Belonging in US History

In this inquiry, students interpret historical and contemporary sources on the Angel Island Immigration Station and draw connections between the exclusionary US immigration policies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the borders that exist within American society today.

5-7 days



Japanese American Incarceration in WWII: A US History Inquiry

Through this inquiry, students gain a historical understanding of a period of prejudice and persecution, not just toward Japanese Americans but toward all people of Asian descent in the United States. They will also consider how acts of resistance by Japanese Americans against their incarceration forced the nation to live up to its own civic ideals and made significant contributions to the project of building and sustaining democracy in the United States.

5-7 days



“I Wanted the Whole World to See”: The Murder of Emmett Till

In this six-lesson unit and accompanying assessment, students explore the history and legacy of the murder of Emmett Till. Students reflect on the lessons this history holds as we work to achieve racial justice and consider how it might inform their civic choices.

5-7 days



Democracy and Freedom: US History Capstone Project

This culminating project engages students in the act of “freedom dreaming”— visualizing the future they want to build and the tools necessary to achieve that vision. Students reflect on the actions of past and present civic actors as they endeavored to preserve and expand democracy; then they identify and take action on an unresolved issue related to the struggle for freedom and democracy in the United States.

5-7 days

Aligned Professional Learning

Facing History offers a wide variety of professional learning experiences that support making the most of our US History Curriculum Collection.

These offerings also develop educator competencies that are foundational to our approach, including: nurturing student-centered classrooms; promoting inquiry-based learning and deliberative skills; and fostering empathy and ethical reflection.

Professional Learning for the US History Curriculum Collection: Democracy & Freedom

Introducing Facing History's US History Collection: Democracy & Freedom

On-demand webinar | 60 minutes

This webinar is an engaging orientation to our new US History Curriculum Collection: Democracy and Freedom. The collection can shape and supplement a US History course and invites students to investigate the essential question, *"What do democracy and freedom mean in US history and in our society today?"*

Teaching the US Founding: An Inquiry-Based Approach

On-demand webinar | 60 minutes

During this webinar, we explore our C3-aligned inquiry, *We the People: Expanding the Teaching of the US Founding*, in which students use an array of primary sources to address the compelling question, *"How do we reckon with a history full of complexities and contradictions?"*

Borders & Belonging in US History: The Angel Island Immigration Station

On-demand webinar | 60 minutes

In this panel discussion with Dr. Erika Lee and staff from the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, we discuss the history of the immigration station, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, immigrant stories, and contemporary connections. In addition, we share our C-3 aligned inquiry focused on the history of Angel Island.

Teaching Reconstruction: A Conversation with Dr. Kidada Williams

On-demand webinar
60 minutes

Listen to writer and historian Dr. Kidada Williams as she discusses her research on African Americans' fight for liberty and equality during and after the Civil War and Reconstruction era.

Reexamining Reconstruction: A Conversation with Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries

On-demand webinar
60 minutes

Examine how the Reconstruction Era is remembered and its impact on contemporary society with Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, Associate Professor of History at The Ohio State University and scholar of African American history and contemporary Black politics.

Unsung Women of the Civil Rights Movement

On-demand webinar
60 minutes

Examine the impact of Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Constance Baker Motley, and other women whose contributions to the Civil Rights Movement have not always been recognized.

Highlighted Features of the US History Curriculum Collection

Our collection reflects both current trends in the field of K-12 history education and Facing History's long-standing commitment to nurturing students' capacity for civic action.

C-3 Style Inquiries

The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies Standards organizes social studies instruction around inquiry methods and disciplinary concepts and skills. Within this collection, C3-style inquiries are 5-7 day units that respond to a compelling question about an issue in US History.

They utilize the Inquiry Design Model (IDM), which has three main components: a compelling question, three or four supporting questions, and taking informed action. Students consider the issues introduced by the compelling question and build content knowledge and historical thinking skills through analysis of primary and secondary sources that address the supporting questions. Finally, the taking informed action component asks students to plan a civic action project based on learning from the unit.



Formative and Summative Assessment Options

All units and inquiries within the collection include summative performance tasks. In addition, each inquiry within the collection includes formative tasks aligned to each supporting question, following the Inquiry Design Model (IDM). The formative performance tasks help students move toward the creation of an evidence-based argument in the summative assessment.

The performance tasks cover a range of modalities, allowing students to express and extend their learning in different ways. Each task offers detailed instructions but is also easily adaptable for your students and your context.



Choosing to Participate

A key element of Facing History's scope and sequence, "Choosing to Participate," is evident throughout the Democracy and Freedom collection. This step typically occurs at the end of a Facing History course or topic of study and asks students to reflect and act on their growing sense of agency.

Within this collection, the taking informed action component of each inquiry and the culminating capstone project support students in this part of the Facing History journey. By reflecting on the connections between past and present, students consider how they can apply the lessons of "freedom dreamers" throughout history in order to bring about a more just, equitable, and inclusive society today.



How We Know it Works

Our most important measures of success are meaningful academic and civic outcomes for students.

“When you study history, you might be learning the facts, learning the dates. But when you face history, you’re absorbing what it meant for the people who experience them and applying it to your own life when you go forward and have to make choices and decisions.”

– Facing History student

In studies conducted over the past 20 years, students report the following as a result of their experiences with Facing History:

Academic Engagement

94%

Students in a Facing History classroom were 94% more likely than their peers to report that the class motivated them to learn.

Civic Agency

93%

of Facing History students agreed that it is important to work for positive social change.

School Culture

95%

of students in Facing History partner schools have observed ways that Facing History positively impacts their school community.

Facing History’s impact on students has been affirmed by organizations such as Johns Hopkins University’s Center for Research and Reform in Education; the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL); and the US Department of Education.