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Content Matters--Teaching "The Case For Reparations," 9-12


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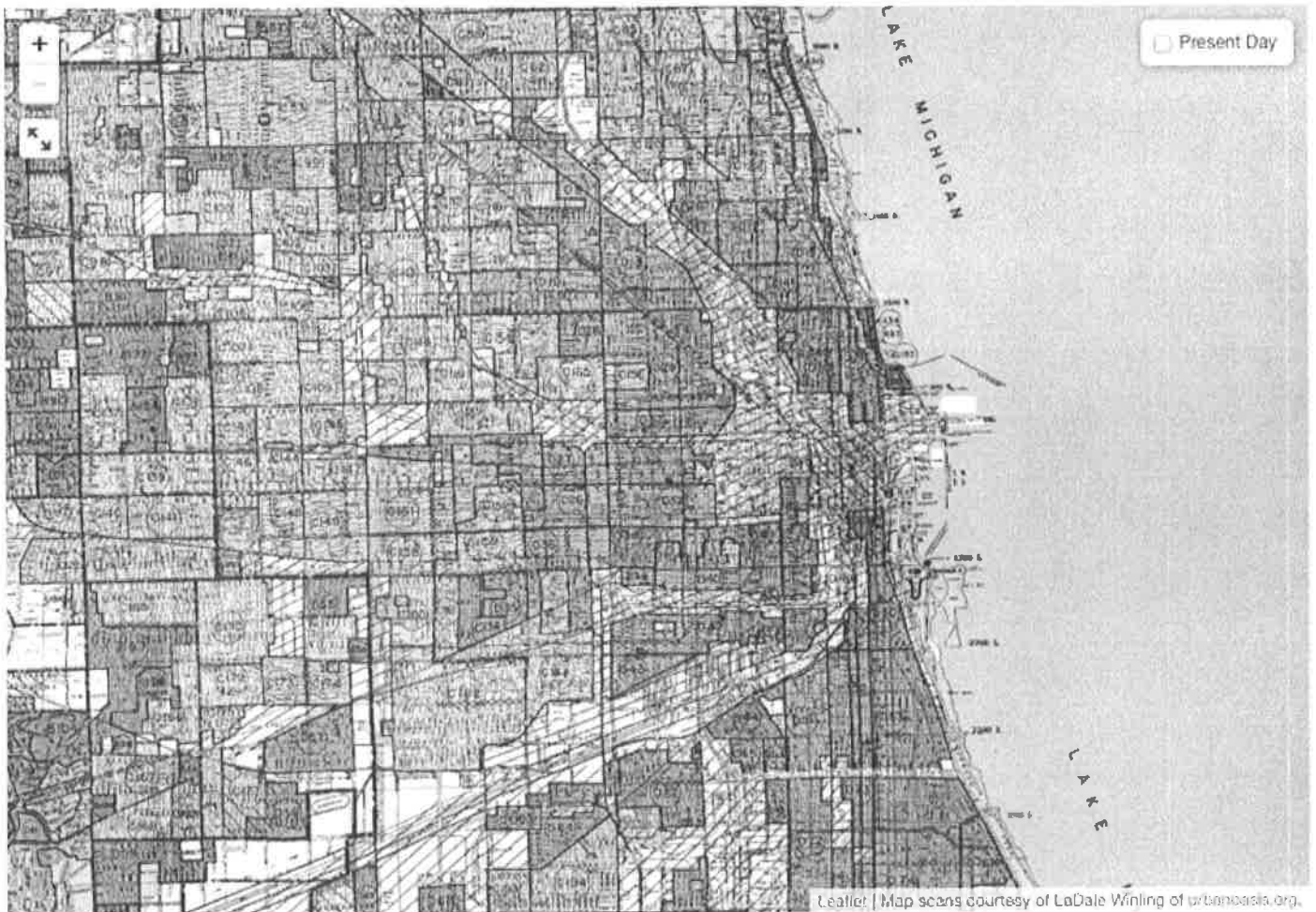
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Teaching “The Case for Reparations” by Ta-Nehisi Coates

IRTE Fall Conference, 2016: “Close to Home”
Bloomington-Normal, Illinois

Explore Redlining in Chicago



Leahler | Map scans courtesy of LaDale Winling of urbanroads.org.
A 1939 Home Owners' Loan Corporation "Residential Security Map" of Chicago shows discrimination against low-income and minority neighborhoods. The residents of the areas marked in red (representing "hazardous" real-estate markets) were denied FHA-backed mortgages. (Map development by Frankie Dintino)

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Teaching “The Case for Reparations” by Ta-Nehisi Coates

- I. Background--Is “The Case for Reparations” important?
- II. How does James Baldwin lay the foundation for the nonfiction work of Ta-Nehisi Coates?
- III. How does Carol Friedman use close-reading techniques with “The Case for Reparations”?
- IV. How does Tamara Jaffe-Notier use close-reading techniques with “The Case for Reparations”?
- V. Questions? What do you think about discussing transatlantic slave trade reparations?

And if thy brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing today.

— deuteronomy 15: 12–15

Besides the crime which consists in violating the law, and varying from the right rule of reason, whereby a man so far becomes degenerate, and declares himself to quit the principles of human nature, and to be a noxious creature, there is commonly injury done to some person or other, and some other man receives damage by his transgression: in which case he who hath received any damage, has, besides the right of punishment common to him with other men, a particular right to seek reparation.

— john locke, “second treatise”

By our unpaid labor and suffering, we have earned the right to the soil, many times over and over, and now we are determined to have it.

— anonymous, 1861

Sources for Current Discussions of Reparations for Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

"The Case for Reparations" (The Atlantic, June, 2014):

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

The online version of this article has interactive maps that illustrate redlining, photos, and videos.

"The Widening Racial Wealth Divide" (*The New Yorker*, October 10, 2016)

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/10/10/the-widening-racial-wealth-divide>

Economic observations of one journalist, wherein reparations are cited incidentally

"Are Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Reparations Due?" (NYT, October 8, 2015)

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/10/08/are-transatlantic-slave-trade-reparations-due>

Four debaters: Do gender and ethnicity influence these academic positions?

"Statement to the media by the United Nations' Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, on the conclusion of its official visit to USA, 19-29 January 2016"

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17000&LangID=E>

UN recommendations based on data.

"Descendants of Slaves Sold to Benefit Georgetown Call for a \$1 Billion Foundation for Reconciliation"

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/09/08/descendants-of-slaves-sold-by-georgetown-call-for-a-1-billion-foundation-for-reconciliation/>

Exactly what the title suggests.

"The Case for Reparations"
by
Ta-Nehisi Coates

**Interactive Mapping: A Student Taught Mini Lesson
Planning Sheet**

Please work together with your group members to plan and teach a mini-lesson (15 min.) on "The Case for Reparations" using one of the maps included in this article or another one your group selects on related topics. Remember to collaborate so that each member plays an important role in preparation and in teaching the lesson.

Group Names:

Title of your lesson:

Objectives: What do you want your classmates to learn?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Methods & Activities: How will you teach these main ideas?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Connections: What important connections will you make between the map's messages and life in Evanston and/or at ETHS?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Check for Understanding: How will you check to make sure your classmates understand your lesson?

Outcomes: What do you expect your classmates to take away from your lesson?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

RUBRIC for INTERACTIVE MAPPING Mini-Lesson

Group Names:

Title of your lesson:

	Exceeds	Meets	Not yet
Clarity of objectives			
Connection with ETHS or Evanston			
Use of map			
Activities			
Outcomes--lessons learned			
Participation of group			
Participation of class			
Grade			

RUBRIC for INTERACTIVE MAPPING Mini-Lesson

Group Names:

Title of your lesson:

	Exceeds	Meets	Not yet
Clarity of objectives			
Connection with ETHS or Evanston			
Use of map			
Activities			
Outcomes--lessons learned			
Participation of group			
Participation of class			
Grade			

“The Case for Reparations”
by
Ta-Nehisi Coates

Section # 1--pp. 2-9

Vocabulary: Select three new words from this section and **define** them using either a dictionary or context clues. Then **copy** the sentence from the book in which the word appears.

Example: franchise: the right to vote. “The state’s regime partnered robbery of the franchise with robbery of the purse.” (3)

1.

2.

3.

Section # 2--pp. 10-18

Section # 3--pp. 19-25

Section # 4--pp. 26-37

Section # 5--pp. 37-45

Section # 6--pp. 45-55

Section # 7--pp. 55-63

"The Case for Reparations"
by
Ta-Nehisi Coates

Response # 1--pp. 1-18

Vocabulary: Select one new word from this section and **define** it using either a dictionary or context clues. Then **copy** the sentence from the article in which the word appears.

Number Statements and Statistics: Select one numeric fact and write it below. **Explain** what you learned from this statistic and why you chose this one.

Learned: Select one new concept and **explain** its meaning within its context. **Why** is this concept important to Coates' argument?

Connections: **Describe** something you have experienced or witnessed that relates to one term or idea in this section.

Detail: **Identify** several details and write them below. **How** does Coates' use of detail add to his writing style?

Tone: **Select** one phrase or sentence that captures the tone of this section. **Explain** why you think Mr. Coates' uses this tone.

Section Titles: Review the section titles and write them below. Which **one is most powerful** in your opinion? **Why?** What do you notice about the **titles as a group?**

**4 English
Friedman**

**A Found Poem
based on vocabulary words from
"The Case for Reparations"
by Ta-Nehisi Coates**

Please use your class's word bank (in your English folder on the Drive) to find ten words to use in a poem which captures the themes and tone of "The Case for Reparations". You may write your poem in any form and use as many other words as you like. Please type your poem.

"The Case for Reparations"
by Ta-Nehisi Coates

In-Class Essay

In a multi-paragraph essay, please respond to the statement below.

"But I believe that wrestling publicly with these questions matters as much as--if not more than--the specific answers that might be produced. An America that asks what it owes its most vulnerable citizens is improved and human. An America that looks away is ignoring not just the sins of the past but the sins of the present and the certain sins of the future. More important than any single check cut to any African American, the payment of reparations would represent America's maturation out of the childhood myth of its innocence to a wisdom worthy of its founders." (61)

Consider these questions: Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why/ why not? What would you add to/delete from his statement to align it with your beliefs? How is this statement related to his argument for reparations to compensate slavery? Please give three examples of the "sins" of America from "The Case for Reparations" and use three brief quotations from the beginning, middle and end of the article to support your interpretation.

Planning Notes

Introduction and Thesis

1. Why does Ta-Nehisi Coates believe that "the payment of reparations would represent America's maturation"? Why is this important to the U.S. as a country and to its individual residents?

Three body paragraphs

2. List one example each of past, present and future sins. Include one quotation for each example including the page number. Please use quotations from the beginning, middle and end of the book (one each).

3. List one vocabulary word from your log to use in describing each of the three examples.

Conclusion

4. What is your view on the usefulness of reparations? Please explain your answer fully.

In-Class Essay Rubric “The Case for Reparations”

	Inadequate 5 – 6	Adequate 7 – 8	Excellent 9 -10
Analysis and Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited or absent thesis statement unclearly previews the focus of the analysis. ● Thesis attempts to convey an opinion, but may lack analysis or be off topic. ● Body paragraphs are present, but they struggle to maintain focus, or they may lapse into summary. ● Conclusion is present, but merely restates some of the introduction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thesis statement sufficiently previews analysis, but focus may be uneven. ● Thesis may struggle to represent an acceptable response to the prompt. ● Most body paragraphs maintain a clear and consistent relationship to the thesis. ● Conclusion attempts to summarize the analysis and draw closure, but may rely more upon restatement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Effective thesis statement, clearly previews the focus of analysis. ● Thesis represents a strong and logical opinion in response to the prompt. ● Body paragraphs maintain a clear and logical relationship to the thesis. ● Conclusion moves beyond summary, synthesizing key points of analysis and providing a sense of closure.
Support / Use of Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Selected evidence insufficiently supports the analysis or may be lacking. ● Context for examples is rarely provided. ● Evidence lacks explanation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Selected evidence supports analysis but may be inconsistent. ● Context is provided for most examples. ● Evidence is inconsistently explained in support of the thesis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Well-selected evidence effectively supports the analysis. ● Context is provided for each example. ● Evidence is clearly explained in support of the thesis.
Style and Mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Basic word choice and confusing sentence structure. ● Spelling and grammatical errors impair understanding of the essay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adequate yet clear word choice and sentence structure. ● Most sentences are fluent and easy-to-read. ● Some spelling or grammatical errors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong word choice and sentence structure. ● Fluent and easy-to-read sentences. ● Rare spelling or grammatical errors.

Dear James:

I HAVE BEGUN this letter five times and torn it up five times. I keep seeing your face, which is also the face of your father and my brother. Like him, you are tough, dark, vulnerable, moody—

James Baldwin

with a very definite tendency to sound truculent because you want no one to think you are soft. You may be like your grandfather in this, I don't know, but certainly both you and your father resemble him very much physically. Well, he is dead, he never saw you, and he had a terrible life; he was defeated long before he died because, at the bottom of his heart, he really believed what white people said about him. This is one of the reasons that he became so holy. I am sure that your father has told you something about all that. Neither you nor your father exhibit any tendency towards holiness: you really *are* of another era, part of what happened when the Negro left the land and came into what the late E. Franklin Frazier called "the cities of destruction." You can only be destroyed by believing that you really are what the white world calls a *nigger*. I tell you this because I love you, and please don't you ever forget it.

I have known both of you all your lives, have carried your Daddy in my arms and on my shoulders, kissed and spanked him and watched him learn to walk. I don't know if you've known anybody from that far back; if you've loved anybody that long, first as an infant, then as a child, then as a man, you gain a strange perspective on time and human pain and effort. Other people cannot see

James Baldwin

what I see whenever I look into your father's face, for behind your father's face as it is today are all those other faces which were his. Let him laugh and I see a cellar your father does not remember and a house he does not remember and I hear in his present laughter his laughter as a child. Let him curse and I remember him falling down the cellar steps, and howling, and I remember, with pain, his tears, which my hand or your grandmother's so easily wiped away. But no one's hand can wipe away those tears he sheds invisibly today, which one hears in his laughter and in his speech and in his songs. I know what the world has done to my brother and how narrowly he has survived it. And I know, which is much worse, and this is the crime of which I accuse my country and my countrymen, and for which neither I nor time nor history will ever forgive them, that they have destroyed and are destroying hundreds of thousands of lives and do not know it and do not want to know it. One can be, indeed one must strive to become, tough and philosophical concerning destruction and death, for this is what most of mankind has been best at since we have heard of man. (But remember: *most* of mankind is not *all* of mankind.) But it is not permissible that the authors of devastation should also

James Baldwin

be innocent. It is the innocence which constitutes the crime.

Now, my dear namesake, these innocent and well-meaning people, your countrymen, have caused you to be born under conditions not very far removed from those described for us by Charles Dickens in the London of more than a hundred years ago. (I hear the chorus of the innocents screaming, "Not This is not true! How bitter you are!"—but I am writing this letter to you, to try to tell you something about how to handle *them*, for most of them do not yet really know that you exist. I *know* the conditions under which you were born, for I was there. Your countrymen were *not* there, and haven't made it yet. Your grandmother was also there, and no one has ever accused her of being bitter. I suggest that the innocents check with her. She isn't hard to find. Your countrymen don't know that *she* exists, either, though she has been working for them all their lives.)

Well, you were born, here you came, something like fifteen years ago; and though your father and mother and grandmother, looking about the streets through which they were carrying you, staring at the walls into which they brought you, had every reason to be heavyhearted, yet they were not. For here you were, Big James, named for me—you were

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James Baldwin

a big baby, I was not—here you were: to be loved. To be loved, baby, hard, at once, and forever, to strengthen you against the loveless world. Remember that: I know how black it looks today, for you. It looked bad that day, too, yes, we were trembling. We have not stopped trembling yet, but if we had not loved each other none of us would have survived. And now you must survive because we love you, and for the sake of your children and your children's children.

This innocent country set you down in a ghetto in which, in fact, it intended that you should perish. Let me spell out precisely what I mean by that, for the heart of the matter is here, and the root of my dispute with my country. You were born where you were born and faced the future that you faced because you were black and *for no other reason*. The limits of your ambition were, thus, expected to be set forever. You were born into a society which spelled out with brutal clarity, and in as many ways as possible, that you were a worthless human being. You were not expected to aspire to excellence: you were expected to make peace with mediocrity. Wherever you have turned, James, in your short time on this earth, you have been told where you could go and what you could do (and *how* you could do it) and where you could live

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James Baldwin

and whom you could marry. I know your countrymen do not agree with me about this, and I hear them saying, "You exaggerate." They do not know Harlem, and I do. So do you. Take no one's word for anything, including mine—but trust your experience. Know whence you came. If you know whence you came, there is really no limit to where you can go. The details and symbols of your life have been deliberately constructed to make you believe what white people say about you. Please try to remember that what they believe, as well as what they do and cause you to endure, does not testify to your inferiority but to their inhumanity and fear. Please try to be clear, dear James, through the storm which rages about your youthful head today, about the reality which lies behind the words *acceptance* and *integration*. There is no reason for you to try to become like white people and there is no basis whatever for their impertinent assumption that *they* must accept *you*. The really terrible thing, old buddy, is that *you* must accept *them*. And I mean that very seriously. You must accept them and accept them with love. For these innocent people have no other hope. They are, in effect, still trapped in a history which they do not understand; and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it. They have had to believe

James Baldwin

for many years, and for innumerable reasons, that black men are inferior to white men. Many of them, indeed, know better, but, as you will discover, people find it very difficult to act on what they know. To act is to be committed, and to be committed is to be in danger. In this case, the danger, in the minds of most white Americans, is the loss of their identity. Try to imagine how you would feel if you woke up one morning to find the sun shining and all the stars aflame. You would be frightened because it is out of the order of nature. Any upheaval in the universe is terrifying because it so profoundly attacks one's sense of one's own reality. Well, the black man has functioned in the white man's world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar: and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations. You, don't be afraid. I said that it was intended that you should perish in the ghetto, perish by never being allowed to go behind the white man's definitions, by never being allowed to spell your proper name. You have, and many of us have, defeated this intention; and, by a terrible law, a terrible paradox, those innocents who believed that your imprisonment made them safe are losing their grasp of reality. But these men are your brothers—your lost, younger brothers. And if the word *integration* means anything, this

James Baldwin

is what it means: that we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it. For this is your home, my friend, do not be driven from it; great men have done great things here, and will again, and we can make America what America must become. It will be hard, James, but you come from sturdy, peasant stock, men who picked cotton and dammed rivers and built railroads, and, in the teeth of the most terrifying odds, achieved an unassailable and monumental dignity. You come from a long line of great poets, some of the greatest poets since Homer. One of them said, *The very time I thought I was lost, My dungeon shook and my chains fell off.*

You know, and I know, that the country is celebrating one hundred years of freedom one hundred years too soon. We cannot be free until they are free. God bless you, James, and Godspeed.

Your uncle,
James

DOWN
AT THE
CROSS

Letter from a Region in My Mind

Sophomore English

Study Guide for "Letter to My Nephew" (30 points)

1. One of the keys to comprehension for James Baldwin's "Letter to My Nephew" is to hear and understand the tone shifts as they happen. Re-read the opening paragraph and circle ONE of the following tone words to describe the tone that you feel dominates most of the sentences in that paragraph: ironic, despairing, sincere, mad, humorous

2. **What is the opening tone** (from question 1), and which **words** and **sentences** in the paragraph helped you identify the tone?

INFORMATION: E. Franklin Frazier was an American sociologist. One of the many subjects he wrote about was how the racial and economic structure of large American cities destroyed the family structures of many rural people who migrated to cities after the Civil War. Frazier detailed the many ways that, in spite of job opportunities, American cities were completely hostile to the long-term survival of African-American families.

3. Baldwin says young James is "vulnerable," susceptible or defenseless, and also "truculent." What is the contrasting context clue Baldwin gives for "truculent"? _____

From that clue, what do you think "truculent" means? _____

4. By closely reading paragraph 2 of this letter you find out many details about "James the elder," the writer, "James the younger," the recipient. **Who else do you learn about? Why is it important for readers to know about him?** _____

5. According to Baldwin, why do we strive to become, "tough and philosophical concerning destruction and death" ? (p. 5) _____

6. In the last two sentences of paragraph 2 there's a huge shift in tone that is *very* important to catch to understand the rest of the letter. Using the same 5 tone words as in question 1 (ironic, despairing, sincere, mad, humorous), describe how the tone of the letter has changed, and why it is important to understand the shift:

7. When Baldwin writes about "these innocent and well-meaning people" and "this innocent country" he gives several very specific details in support of his odd assertion that "It is the innocence which constitutes the crime." a) Explain what you think is the crime: _____

b) What does Baldwin mean when he says "Your countrymen don't know she exists either, though she has been working for them all their lives"? (p. 6) _____

c) What does Baldwin mean when he says "the innocence" "constitutes the crime"?

8. On pages 8 and 9 Baldwin explains to his nephew why so many white Americans are terrified of racial equality. What is his explanation? _____

9. According to Baldwin, what is real integration? _____

10. In complete sentences, explain what you think and feel about this letter: _____

The Case For Reparations--today's reading

Instructions: In each quadrant of the table, write or draw a response to the portion of "The Case For Reparations" that we are reading today.

Upsetting	Interesting
an event	a person

“The Case for Reparations” Part 1: Elegant Racism

1. What does the author mean by “housing discrimination?”

2. Why did African Americans move North? List all reasons.

3. What difference did Clyde Ross experience in living in the North?

a. What was positive?

b. What was negative?

4. What was unfair about Clyde Ross' housing contract?

5. Why was the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) not helpful?

6. What is redlining?

7. Why is redlining detrimental to African Americans? See map.

8. Why do you think the title of this section is called "Elegant Racism?"

For Video: Answer the following questions as you watch the video

1 When did the Second Great Migration occur?

2 What is "redlining?"

3 What does buying houses on contract remind you of?

4 How much was Clyde Ross overcharged for his house?

5 What were Clyde Ross' jobs? How long did he do them for?

6 How did North Lawndale residents fight back?

7 What was the average overcharge price?

8 What was the "Race Tax"?

9 According to Jack Macnamara, who created the ghetto?

10 How did the Contract Buyers League work?

11. What is the difference between buying a house on contract and a mortgage?

12. What was the short-term result of the payment strike?

13. What was the long-term effect on North Lawndale?

Provide an example from the video of:

Ethos:

Logos:

Pathos:

For Contract Buyers League Video embedded in “The Case for Reparations”

Please write in complete sentences.

1 When did the Second Great Migration occur?

2 What is “redlining?”

3 What does buying houses on contract remind you of?

4 How much was Clyde Ross overcharged for his house?

5 What were Clyde Ross' jobs? How long did he do them for?

6 How did North Lawndale residents fight back?

7 What was the average overcharge price?

8 What was the "Race Tax"?

9 According to Jack Macnamara, who created the ghetto?

10 How did the Contract Buyers League work?

11. What is the difference between buying a house on contract and a mortgage?

12. What was the short-term result of the payment strike?

13. What was the long-term effect on North Lawndale?

Provide an example from the video of:

Ethos:

Logos:

Pathos:

Listening, Seeing, and Thinking: "The Case for Reparations," pp. 11-18

Today you have some choices about how to respond to section II and section III of "The Case for Reparations." Ms. Jaffe will read these sections aloud. You may ASK QUESTIONS, WRITE COMPELLING QUOTES, or DRAW WHAT YOU SEE in your mind. Next Wednesday we're going to use words from the first three sections of this article for our "Words on Wednesday" activity. **Monday, February 1, is an Independent Reading Day in class.**

Questions, Quotes, Images

Task: Understand Paragraph 3 on p. 40 of "The Case for Reparations"

Ok, understanding and embracing all of American History is a tiny bit too much to accomplish in 42 minutes on a Tuesday in February, but we're going to try to comprehend Coates' main point today.

1. (p. 35) After studying the three paragraphs containing the beginning of Coates' "summarizing argument," what sentence would you point out as Coates' dominant claim on p. 35? Quote it here:

"

"

2. EXPLAIN what this claim means, and how it connects to the other ideas on p. 35:

[Video about Tulsa Race Riots](#) + p. 33 (reference to Young Invincibles' data on current education/hiring by race)

3. Coates tells us that the reparations Germany paid to survivors of the Holocaust were very controversial. Many survivors did not want German money because they were afraid that it would erase the memory of the extermination camps. However, the Israeli government negotiated to accept the money, and German reparations became an important source of growth for Israel, and a foundation for mending the relationship between Germany and the rest of the world. Coates' suggests that reparations for African-American might achieve a similar possibility in American race relations. What do you think?

4. (p. 40) "John Conyers's HR 40..." What is the most important sentence in this paragraph? Why? Quote it here:

" _____

_____ "

EXPLAIN what this claim means, and how it connects to Coates's other ideas:

Case for Reparations: Sections III & IV--The creation of white/black racism In the United States

1. (p. 15) What did Robert Pleasants do after freeing his slaves? Why? _____

2. (p. 16-17) Who is Congressman John Conyers, Jr., and what is HR40? _____

3. (p. 17) According to Coates, why doesn't HR40 ever come to the floor of the House of Representatives?

4. (p. 18) According to the President of Yale, in 1810, should former slaves receive reparations or not? Why?

5. (p. 18 & 19) In Virginia, in 1619, what were race relations like between white and black servants?

6. (p. 18 & 19) In 1676 Nathaniel Bacon led a racially integrated rebellion against the Jamestown authorities. What shared circumstances made white and black servants natural allies at that time?

7. (p. 19, 20, 21) After Bacon's rebellion, what laws were passed in the colonies in an attempt to segregate servants and turn whites and blacks against each other?

Free Reading: "The Case for Reparations"

(If you did not bring the book you are reading for your Independent Reading Project you will be using "The Case for Reparations" by Ta-Nehisi Coates)

1. Write down the most interesting sentence you've read today: _____

(p. ____)

What does this sentence mean? _____

What makes this sentence interesting? _____

2. Describe one individual that you've read about this period. **Tell me as much as you can about this person/character, so that I can understand a little bit about who s/he is.**
