

**An *Unspeakable Act*: Disciplinary Literacy, Racial Literacy,  
and the Tulsa Race Massacre**

Jeremiah C. Clabough

*University of Alabama at Birmingham*

Caroline C. Sheffield

*University of Louisville*

**Abstract**

A current topic in U.S. public schools is teaching issues of racial discrimination in American history. There are those motivated by political gain for elected office that are trying to shut down conversations about slavery and Jim Crow segregation laws in K-12 schools while others point out the central role that race has played in U.S. history and stress our schools must explore such topics. In this article, we focus on a one-week project with the Tulsa Race Massacre implemented in a sixth grade U.S. history class at a free public charter school in a mid-size Southern city. The conceptual framework of our project was an emphasis on disciplinary literacy skills and the inquiry-based teaching practices argued for in the C3 Framework by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). We coded students' essays summarizing the Tulsa Race Massacre. Seven themes emerged from coding students' essays, which we discuss with excerpts from their work. Finally, we offer a discussion section to reflect on the findings from students' essays and suggest future areas of scholarship with the Tulsa Race Massacre.

*Keywords:* Tulsa Race Massacre, racial literacy, disciplinary literacy skills, social studies trade books, C3 Framework

Historically, the United States has struggled to come grips with its racist past. This struggle continues in contemporary U.S. society. The 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments were supposed to put an end to slavery and racial discrimination in the laws of the United States. However, racial discrimination persisted on through the creation of Jim Crow segregation laws to separate whites and African Americans. Southern whites also took steps to suppress the African American vote through state poll taxes and literacy tests (Gates Jr., 2019; Logan, 1965; Woodward, 1951). The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s attempted to remove Jim Crow segregation laws and policies that suppressed the African American vote (Lewis, 2015; Mann, 1996). Southern segregationists abandoned the Democratic Party since changes to Southern society occurred under the leadership of two Democratic Presidents, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, and enthusiastically embraced the Republican Party. Under Richard Nixon, the Republicans invented new tactics for subtly discussing issues of race. Nixon's Southern Strategy invented a new playbook for Republican politicians by using words and language to imply certain messages about race by using phrases like "states rights," "busing," and "law and order" to continue in a modified form the racism before the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act (Carter, 2000; Kornacki, 2018; Perlstein, 2001, 2008). The Republican Party made a Faustian bargain by selling its soul for Southerners' votes to allow a safe haven for white nationalism to continue to flourish after the 1960s.

Nixon's Southern Strategy has continued and only escalated over the last 60 years, especially with the rise of Donald Trump (Dovere, 2021; Halperin & Heilemann, 2013; Heilemann & Halperin, 2010; Kornacki, 2018; Perlstein, 2020). Trump did not usually offer specific policies; rather, he spoke to Republican voters' resentments to the changes in U.S. society with the election of the first African American President Barack Obama. He leaned into racist elements that have been present over the last 60 years in the Republican Party, as typified by his presidential campaign announcement where he made the nativist claims that people from Mexico were "rapists." Demonizing immigrants became the foundation upon which Trump built his campaign, claiming that he would construct a wall on the Southern U.S. border (Hansen, 2022; Phillips, 2017). This does not include the fact that Trump made his entry into the Republican Party by leading the birther movement, claiming that former President Obama was not born in the United States (Halperin & Heilemann, 2013). Since Trump, a former Democrat, switched to be a Republican, he had to establish his political brand by going further to the

political right on issues as possible, which carried over into his administration. This helps to explain why he was hesitant to call out white supremacists in the Charlottesville incident during August 2017 (Dovere, 2021). As Trump's problems escalated with his administration's mishandling of the global health pandemic COVID 19, he became desperate to hold onto the presidency and really turned to issues of race during the 2020 presidential election. Trump attacked the 1619 Project by *The New York Times* and threatened to pull funds from any school that used the curriculum (Harvey, 2020; Serwer, 2021).

After Trump's defeat in the 2020 presidential election, Republican members of Congress and governors have continued to use the teaching of race issues in public schools as a wedge issue. Some of these issues connected to race include slavery, Jim Crow segregation laws, and racist rhetoric with President Nixon's Southern Strategy. Some Republican politicians have crafted state legislation to ban the teaching of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and prevent issues of race throughout U.S. history from being discussed in the social studies classroom (Krauth, 2022; Miles, 2021; Schuessler, 2021a, 2021b; Simonson & Chavez, 2022). The recent public policies from Republicans put social studies teachers in a delicate place with fulfilling the requirements of teaching about slavery, Jim Crow segregation laws, and other examples of racial discrimination within their curriculum and state standards. Additionally, many social studies teachers are hesitant to discuss controversial issues, such as topics connected to race due to parental complaints and lack of administrative support (Dunn et al., 2018; Gross & Terra, 2019; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Journell, 2016; Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017).

In this article, we discuss a one-week project on the Tulsa Race Massacre completed in a sixth grade U.S. history class at a free public charter school in a mid-size Southern city. This one-week project is part of a year-long research study being completed by the Social Studies Trade Book Collaborative (SSTBC) examining potential benefits of thematically teaching civil rights issues since the U.S. Civil War. It models one way that social studies teachers can explore issues of racial discrimination in U.S. history by exploring the Tulsa Race Massacre. The project also models one approach to meeting current national social studies standards focused on developing students' disciplinary literacy, thinking, and argumentation skills that are outlined in the C3 Framework by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). Each of the nine one-week projects is driven by a social studies trade book that discusses civil rights issues for an

historical era. The project focusing on the Tulsa Race Massacre was driven by the following research questions.

1. In what ways, if any, did students apply disciplinary literacy skills to convey racism that African Americans faced in the 1920s in their summative writing activity?
2. How did students convey in their summative writing activity the racial discrimination present during the Tulsa Race Massacre?

First, a brief historical overview of the Tulsa Race Massacre will be given. Next, we provide a brief literature review on trade books as an instructional tool in the social studies classroom and the best practices in teaching controversial issues. We will focus on arguments scholars have made for teaching about issues of race. We follow this with a discussion of our conceptual framework, disciplinary literacy skills (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008), and the inquiry-based teaching practices advocated for in *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) that helped us structure our project (NCSS, 2013). After a discussion of the methods employed, we focus on the seven themes that emerged from coding students' essays. Finally, a discussion section is provided to unpack the findings from students' essays and propose future areas of scholarship with the Tulsa Race Massacre.

### **Historical Overview of the Tulsa Race Massacre**

The U.S. Civil War ripped asunder the economic, social, cultural, and political fabric of Southern society. In the aftermath, a new South was created, but this new Southern society still had some remnants from the past, especially regarding race relations. Southern whites took calculated steps to disenfranchise African Americans after the Reconstruction era. Political tools like poll taxes, literacy tests, and Jim Crow segregation laws were created to perpetuate African Americans' second-class status (Gates Jr., 2019; Logan, 1965; Woodward, 1951). Many African Americans decided in the late 1800s and early 1900s to leave the South for a higher quality of life, and one destination for these migrants was Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The economic prosperity of Tulsa's segregated Greenwood District made the city a desired destination for African Americans to settle. Financial successes from the oil business in Tulsa's white community trickled down to higher wages for African Americans. The Greenwood District became a prosperous African American community with its own movie theatre, doctor's office, and various department stores. The economic successes of the Greenwood District earned

the area the nickname of “Black Wall Street,” and Tulsa was considered by many African Americans as the “Promised Land” (Brophy, 2002; Hirsch, 2002; Madigan, 2001). However, all of this changed on May 30, 1921.

The 1921 event in Tulsa began from the most innocent of accidents. Historical evidence suggests that Dick Rowland, a young African American male, was taking an elevator ride and accidentally stepped on the foot of the white female elevator operator, Sarah Page. This incident was misconstrued to be more than it was, as some claimed Mr. Rowland physically assaulted Ms. Page. This accusation led to the arrest of Dick Rowland on charges of assaulting a white woman, which was a pretense that led to the lynching of many African American males in the century after the U.S. Civil War (Caro, 2002; Gates Jr., 2019). *The Tulsa Tribune* ran a sensational story filled with yellow journalism techniques that inflamed the passions of whites in Tulsa about Mr. Rowland’s encounter with Ms. Page.

The *Tulsa Tribune*’s story along with simmering resentments of African Americans’ financial successes led to whites invading the Greenwood District, systemically destroying symbols of African Americans’ successes. These symbols included burning down African Americans’ businesses, hospital, churches, the junior high school, and homes. After the two days of conflict, over 1,000 buildings were destroyed in the Greenwood District, with an estimated \$30 million dollars of damage in contemporary U.S. dollars. The casualties vary but high estimates placed over 300 African Americans losing their lives during the Tulsa Race Massacre (Ellsworth, 1982; Eulinberg, 2020; Johnson, 2020).

The Tulsa Race Massacre has a distinct place in U.S. history for the level of violence and destruction, but it fits within the themes and events of the broader Nadir of race relations. From 1890 to 1940, the United States experienced an overwhelming degradation of race relations, best termed the Nadir (or lowest point) of race relations. Lynchings became more frequent. African Americans were forced into increasingly menial and unskilled jobs, sundown towns spread throughout the nation, and the Ku Klux Klan experienced a resurgence of popularity (Baker, 2011; Gordon, 2017; Loewen, 2018). There were numerous of what were dubbed “race riots” that broke out in cities across the United States during the summer of 1919. These rash of incidences earned the nickname “Red Summer” by many due to the excessive violence during the 1919 summer. “Race riots” is not the best term for these incidents because in the majority of the cases whites generally started these events by assaulting African Americans’ communities.

African Americans were, in many cases, simply defending their homes and neighborhoods. The causes of these outbreaks generally stemmed from whites perceiving African Americans wanting to change the social, cultural, and political fabric of U.S. society after their military service in World War I (Duster, 2021; Franklin, 1974; Johnson, 2020). These perceptions combined with the success of the film *Birth of a Nation*, romanticizing the actions of the Klan in Reconstruction era, inspired the second wave of the Ku Klux Klan (Baker, 2011; Gordon, 2017). When combined, these factors made this time period very bloody for African Americans attempting to actualize the privileges of being democratic citizens.

### **Using Trade Books in the Social Studies**

The term *trade book* refers to the novels, biographies, informational texts, picture books, and graphic novels available in retail establishments and libraries (McGowan & Guzzetti, 1991). Social studies teachers have long embraced using trade books as teaching tools. Since 1972, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) in collaboration with the Children's Book Council (CBC), has published the "Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People" list in the May/June issue of *Social Education* (Clabough, 2021). Two years later, NCSS awarded the first Carter G. Woodson Book Awards, presented annually in recognition of outstanding informational trade books for depicting ethnicity in the United States (Clabough, 2021).

There are numerous benefits associated with utilizing trade books in the social studies. Trade books are more engaging and better written than the typical textbook (Bickford & Schuette, 2016; Palmer & Stewart, 1997). They highlight individuals and events that are inherently interesting and frequently excluded from traditional textbooks (Chick, 2008). Trade books offer a way to address the twin weaknesses associated with history textbooks, being both shallow in content and difficult to read (Berkeley et al., 2016; Richgels et al., 1993; Tracy, 2003). To counter the lack of depth, social studies teachers can choose trade books that focus on a specific individual or event. Diverse perspectives about a specific time or event can be accessed by using several trade books told through divergent narratives (Palmer & Stewart, 1997). The plethora and diversity of available trade books, in content, format, and readability, allows social studies teachers to select texts that best match their students' reading and learning needs while also exploring diverse groups' values and beliefs about historical events and issues (Clabough & Wooten, 2016; Liang, 2002; Saul & Dieckman, 2005; Sheffield & Clabough, 2022).

Trade books offer students a chance to step into a new time or place (Beck & McKeown, 1991), to meet lesser-known historical figures, and to make affective connections to the events depicted in the text (Brugar & Clabough, 2017). It is through these connections that trade books can be used as learning tools to develop students' historical empathy skills, which is the effort to better understand historical figures, their actions, decisions, and lived experiences (Endacott & Brooks, 2013; Nokes, 2013). Trade books also offer social studies teachers a way to teach disciplinary literacy skills (Shanahan & Shanahan 2008). Analyzing trade books for perspective, bias, and purpose helps students to develop the thinking, literacy, and argumentation skills employed by social scientists.

### **Teaching Controversy and Issues of Race**

Over the last century, the social studies education movement has been driven in large part by preparing K-12 students to assume the responsibilities of democratic citizenship. This means that social studies teachers need to design classroom activities that allow students to meaningfully grapple with public issues that they will soon face (Dewey, 1916; Evans, 2004). Public issues are topics that drive public discourse not only in one time period but extend into numerous historical eras (Evans et al., 1996; Hess & McAvoy, 2015). Examples of such public issues include the role of the federal government in people's daily lives and policy plans to lower healthcare costs for the average American. These issues are not easy to solve, as solutions are often based on people's values, biases, and beliefs (Blevins et al., 2018).

Contemporary U.S. politics make many middle school social studies teachers reluctant to discuss controversial public issues. Teachers are worried that parents may complain to administrators when discussing certain topics. They also fear a lack of support from school administrators with teaching such issues. There is also the concern that some teachers do not feel that they possess the knowledge and skills to guide the discussion of controversial issues and may possibly upset the students (Dunn et al., 2018; Gross & Terra, 2019; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Journell, 2016; Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017). These fears have been elevated as many Republican lawmakers on the state level have used topics that they label as controversial, especially with issues of race, as off limits for discussion in the K-12 social studies classrooms (Harvey, 2020; NCSS, 2020; Serwer, 2021).

Issues of race have a daily impact on many of our middle school students (Bolgatz, 2005a; Howard & Navarro, 2016). This makes discussion with issues connected to race difficult

for both the students and teacher (King et al., 2018). However, discussions of historical and contemporary issues connected to race are important to help prepare students to interact within a pluralistic democracy that contains diverse ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural groups (Bolgatz, 2005b). U.S. history teachers need to create learning opportunities for their students to examine different groups' lived experiences. These learning experiences enable students to relate to diverse perspectives and beliefs about public issues (Banks, 2014), highlighting how systemic racism has and still does impact all facets of oft-marginalized groups' daily lives (Freire, 1970).

One way that U.S. history teachers can examine issues of race is through implementing the racial literacy approaches advocated for by King and colleagues (2018). They argue that racism in the United States is a result of institutional components through social, economic, and political factors that resulted in the systematic exclusion and suppression of oft-marginalized groups' rights and civil liberties (King et al., 2018). Racial literacy is defined to contain five elements:

1. Understanding the intersections of power and race.
2. Being able to locate and analyze racial systems.
3. Possessing the grammar and vocabulary terms associated with racial discourse.
4. Differentiating among terms that connect to concepts of race and racism.
5. The ability to analyze and take civic action with racial situations and issues (King et al., 2018).

These elements of racial literacy let students explore many topics in U.S. history with inquiry-based teaching practices advocated for by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) in its C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013). One tool to help strengthen students' racial literacy skills is social studies trade books. As described above, trade books offer teachers a vehicle to engage students in critical reasoning, explore diverse perspectives, and encourage affective connections with the people in a different time and place (Clabough & Wooten, 2016; Sheffield & Clabough, 2022).

### **Conceptual Framework**

This project was based upon the best teaching practices advocated for in the C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013). The C3 Framework emphasizes that social studies teachers should design open-ended questions that students utilize primary and secondary sources to research and answer. Students should use evidence from sources examined to take civic action (Lee & Swan,

2013; Levinson & Levine, 2013; NCSS, 2013). These steps change the dynamics of the U.S. history classroom to be student centered and driven by inquiry-based activities (NCSS, 2013).

Inquiry-based teaching practices are centered around the idea that students research and create their own solutions to questions based on evidence. With inquiry-based teaching, the teacher helps facilitate students' research. Students are applying background knowledge to construct new knowledge gained from examining an open-ended question (Kohlmeier & Saye, 2019; Van Hover & Hicks, 2017). All of the steps involved with inquiry-based teaching change the dynamics of the U.S. history classroom. Students go from being passive observers to active participants that are having meaningful discussions to create knowledge about a social studies topic (Nokes, 2019; Wineburg, 2018). U.S. history classrooms that implement inquiry-based activities create powerful learning opportunities that enable students to analyze issues, historical figures, and events in-depth.

### **Methods**

This project was implemented in March 2022. In the seven months prior to this one-week project, the teacher spent a great deal of time working with her students on how to analyze primary and secondary sources. Due to COVID-19 restrictions of the past two years, students were not used to being in a school full time, negatively impacting many of their academic skills. At the beginning of the year, most of the students did not answer questions in complete sentences. Instead, they wrote sentence fragments, typically of correct information, to convey their answers to analysis questions. This reality informed how the teacher and researchers designed this one-week project. To save classroom time, we provided the students with the text in the form of the trade book to examine and discuss in groups. Over the course of the academic year, the teacher worked to incrementally build her students' historical research skills. Our hope with this one-week project was to build on already existing student knowledge of how to explore social studies content in the manners advocated for in the C3 Framework. Specifically, our goal was for the students to analyze a trade book to explore the research questions of how the Tulsa Race Massacre demonstrated the racial discrimination that African Americans faced for the century after the U.S. Civil War.

We received administrative approval to conduct this project as well as obtained parental consent and student assent to use students' essays for this study. Students' essays were used to

answer the following two research questions that framed our project about the Tulsa Race Massacre.

1. In what ways, if any, did students apply disciplinary literacy skills to convey racism that African Americans faced in the 1920s in their summative writing activity?
2. How did students convey in their summative writing activity the racial discrimination present during the Tulsa Race Massacre?

### **Participants**

This project on the Tulsa Race Massacre took place in a sixth grade U.S. history classroom at a free public charter school in a mid-size Southern city. It was implemented with all of the teacher's U.S. history classrooms, totaling 100 students in her four classes. Of these 100 students, 93% are African Americans. The remaining 7% of the students identify as Latinx, white, or Asian. We were given codes for each student to maintain student confidentiality; consequently, demographic information about gender was not provided for the students' essays. As a result, we assigned gender neutral names as pseudonyms for students' essays discussed in the findings section. The school would be labeled as an urban middle school serving many students that live in poverty. The social studies teacher, Mrs. Parker (a pseudonym), identifies as white and has more than ten years of experience teaching social studies in both middle school and high school settings.

### **Steps of the Project**

The teacher started day one of the project by reading aloud the trade book *Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre* (Weatherford & Cooper, 2021). This 2022 NCSS Notable Trade Book gives a good overview of the Tulsa Race Massacre and includes vivid, and visually appealing, artwork. Some questions students answered during the read aloud include the following.

1. Why did African Americans move to Tulsa?
2. How does the author describe the Greenwood District?
3. What events lead to the Tulsa Race Massacre?

Afterward, the students completed a plot map to articulate the events leading to the Tulsa Race Massacre.

On day two, the teacher and students did another read aloud of *Unspeakable* (Weatherford & Cooper, 2021). The teacher focused on impactful quotes and imagery from the trade book with the following analysis prompts.

1. How does the artist use images to show the economic successes of the Greenwood District? Use evidence to support your arguments.
2. Why were some whites in Tulsa threatened by African Americans' economic successes in the Greenwood District?
3. How were African Americans negatively impacted by the Tulsa Race Massacre? Use evidence to support your arguments.

The focus here was to help students deconstruct why the author used certain words in the narrative and why the artist utilized particular imagery to convey the events of the Tulsa Race Massacre. By using these questions, students were able to analyze the author and artist's messages about pages in *Unspeakable* (Weatherford & Cooper, 2021). This close reading process took the entirety of the second day.

On day three, the students completed the graphic organizer OREO Summaries to collect evidence to use in their essays. They worked in pairs to find evidence from the trade book to include. One of the researchers received financial support from his university to provide enough copies of the trade book to where each pair of students had a copy of *Unspeakable* (Weatherford & Cooper, 2021). The OREO Summaries graphic organizer is provided in Appendix A. The completion of this graphic organizer is designed to make writing less intimidating for students by adding structure to the process.

On day four, the teacher and students started by discussing how to find and use evidence from the text as well as reviewing the OREO Summaries graphic organizer (Appendix A) from day three. Then, the students completed the Adding Details and Evidence graphic organizer, which is provided in Appendix B. The purpose of this graphic organizer is for students to decide what details to include at the beginning, middle, and end of their essay to accurately capture the order of events with the Tulsa Race Massacre. This graphic organizer helps to give structure to the students' essays and allows them to construct arguments by drawing on evidence from the trade book. With the remaining time on day four, students began putting their essays together.

On day five, the teacher started by modeling for students what good textual evidence is and answered any student questions. Then, the students took the graphic organizer from day four and collapsed the parts of the OREO together to create their essays. The process of completing the essay in parts was designed to help students grasp the components that go with writing assignments by having a beginning, middle, and end to their narrative. Students also practiced

the skills of using textual evidence to support their arguments. The OREO process also ensured that students supported their statements with evidence by either paraphrasing arguments or quoting sentences from the trade book.

### **Student Data Set**

There was one student data set collected to answer the two research questions for this project: students' summative essays summarizing the events of the Tulsa Race Massacre. More information about the students' summative essays on the Tulsa Race Massacre and steps of the project are provided in the following sections.

### **Data Analysis**

Students' essays were coded employing qualitative content analysis with inductive and deductive elements (Elo & Kyngas, 2007; Kline, 2008; Krippendorff, 2013; Maxwell, 2010; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). One of the authors read all 100 of the students' essays and looked for themes repeated in their writing. Qualitative methods are appropriate for this one-week research project because we wanted to learn more about how students articulated in a writing assignment the racial discrimination African Americans faced in the Tulsa Race Massacre (Dinkleman & Cuenca, 2017). During open coding, observations of and outliers to patterns that emerged were created and synthesized into testable codes for axial coding. During axial coding, or deductive analysis, all students' essays were utilized to focus on the presence, absence, and frequency of the codes. Data were collected and analyzed.

The overwhelming majority of students' essays focused on disciplinary literacy skills. Upon further examination, one of the researchers noticed four distinctly different themes about the ways students convey disciplinary literacy skills that will be discussed in the findings section. Additionally, students spent a lot of time in their essays discussing the racial discrimination African Americans faced before, during, and after the Tulsa Race Massacre. One of the researchers noticed three common themes that students talked about the racial discrimination African Americans faced in connection to the Tulsa Race Massacre, which will be discussed in the findings section. Our approach was to focus on the most reoccurring trends that we noticed from students' essays. Patterns are discussed, and their significance is extrapolated in the following sections. The following sections have samples from 17 students' essays. As previously mentioned, pseudonyms are used for all students' writing samples to maintain confidentiality.

## Findings

### First Research Question: Disciplinary Literacy

It should be noted that improvement in basic literacy was observed in all of the student essays. Specifically, students' writing in this assignment showed considerable growth, as compared to their writing at the beginning of the year. This growth was observed in both length of writing, from sentence fragments to complete paragraphs, as well as in the use of evidence to support claims. Additionally, in email correspondence with the teacher, Mrs. Parker reported a high level of interest in both the Tulsa Race Massacre content, as well as student engagement with the focus text, the picture book *Unspeakable* (Weatherford & Cooper, 2021).

From coding all 100 students' essays, we notice several themes that emerged. The overwhelming majority of the students demonstrated social studies disciplinary literacy skills in their essays. They did so in mainly four ways: economic thinking skills through symbols of prosperity, the intersection of economic and geographic thinking skills with the targets for destruction by whites in Tulsa, the intersection of economic and geographic thinking skills with the ripple effects of how the Tulsa Race Massacre impacted African Americans in Tulsa, and students' demonstration of historical and civic thinking skills by talking about people forgetting and remembering events of the Tulsa Race Massacre. We discuss each of the four themes in the following sections.

#### ***First Theme for First Research Question: Economic Thinking Skills***

Students' essays demonstrated their disciplinary literacy skills about racism African Americans faced in four ways. First, a handful of students demonstrated economic thinking skills in how they discussed the ways in which the economic successes of African Americans were manifest in symbols of prosperity in the Greenwood district. Finley said, "It (Greenwood District) was so successful it was called Black Wall Street with black owned businesses." Numerous students expanded on the fact that there were numerous black owned businesses in the Greenwood District. River expanded on the argument of black owned businesses by quoting part of *Unspeakable* (Weatherford & Cooper, 2021).

In the beginning of the book *Unspeakable*, it talks about how wealthy Greenwood was once upon a time on Black Wall Street, there were dozens of restaurants and grocery stores. There were furriers, a pool hall, a bus system, and an auto shop- nearly two hundred businesses in all.

Some students took their economic thinking a step further by arguing that African Americans' economic successes in the Greenwood District created a sense of accomplishment within the community; these statements looped in geographic thinking, specifically human geography, with how the area of Greenwood was changed for the better by African Americans' economic successes. Casey argued that, "Black Wall Street was thriving with blacks being successful; blacks were on top." Students' statements in their essays demonstrated that they connected African Americans' economic successes to the thriving business community that was dubbed "Black Wall Street."

***Second Theme for First Research Question: The Intersection of Economic and Geographic Thinking Skills***

Second, the majority of students demonstrated their economic and geographic thinking skills intersected in how they noted that whites attacking the Greenwood District targeted specific landmarks (e.g. African American businesses) for destruction as symbols of African Americans' wealth. Dakota said that the supposed attack by Dick Rowland allowed "simmering hatred to boil over" by whites with resentment for African Americans' economic successes in the Greenwood District. Finley elaborated on Dakota's statement. "White people were upset that Greenwood was thriving. They looted and burned down the Greenwood District." Jamie built on Finley's statement by saying that the white mob burned down "homes" and "businesses" in the Greenwood District. The students consistently said that the white mob's actions were calculated to destroy all symbols of African Americans' wealth. This was arguably best captured by Drew's statement. "The whites were so mad they decided to storm into Greenwood and burn all of the things that the black economy had worked so hard for." Students' statements shared here demonstrate that they could articulate the strategy of the white mob targeting in a pre-meditated fashion for destruction all symbols of black wealth in the Greenwood District.

***Third Theme for First Research Question: Ripple Effects of the Tulsa Race Massacre***

The third way that the overwhelming majority of the students demonstrated their disciplinary thinking skills, specifically economic and geographic, was in how they talked about the economic ripple effects of the white mob's actions on African Americans in the Greenwood District. They articulated the tragedy of the violence with this event. Charlie said, "300 people were killed." Denver built on Charlie's idea to discuss the toll on African Americans that survived the Tulsa Race Massacre. "People gathered what they could and fled Greenwood." In a

similar vein, Emerson said, “Everything (buildings and homes in the Greenwood District) was DESTROYED! They (African Americans) were now poor.” Casey expanded on Charlie, Denver, and Emerson’s arguments to capture the full scope of the impact of the white mob’s actions on African Americans in the Greenwood District by using a quote from the trade book. “More than three hundred black people, including Mr. Jackson, were killed. Hundreds more were injured. More than eight thousand people were left homeless. And hundreds of businesses and other establishments were reduced to ash.” As demonstrated by students’ comments, they successfully made the connection between how the actions of the white mob altered the economic fortunes of African Americans in the Greenwood District.

#### ***Fourth Theme for First Research Question: Historical and Civic Thinking Skills***

The fourth and final theme connected to the first research question was students’ demonstration of historical and civic thinking skills by talking about people forgetting and remembering events of the Tulsa Race Massacre through the creation of a monument with public funds. There were four students that discussed this theme. Stevie said, “The few people who survived didn’t want to talk about what happened.” Two students talked about how the Greenwood District was rebuilt and attempts were made to remember the Tulsa Race Massacre. Skyler said, “There’s now a memorial in Oklahoma at Tulsa’s Reconciliation Park.” Bellamy built on Skyler’s point by saying that, “... after seventy-five years they (African Americans) got their justice” for what happened during the Tulsa Race Massacre. With the few students that did talk about the importance of remembering, there was a student that talked about the Tulsa Race Massacre being remembered. Blake said, “That is the story of *Unspeakable* (RIP everyone who died. You will be remembered.)” The focus on memory was an interesting theme since it was not heavily focused on in the trade book, with only one two-page spread devoted to this idea. The teacher also did not spend much time with the one-week project on the Tulsa Race Massacre with the importance of remembrance. The fact a few students talked about remembering an historical event shows that they could apply historical literacy skills to talk about the importance of an event to help grasp issues from the past as well as the lingering effects of previous actions on a community.

#### **Second Research Question: Exploring Racial Discrimination**

From coding all 100 students’ essays, we noticed several themes that emerged connected to our second research question. The overwhelming majority of the students articulated the racial

discrimination that African Americans faced before, during, and after the Tulsa Race Massacre in three ways. These include white Tulsans' feelings of resentment for African Americans' successes, Dick Rowland's innocence of committing a crime, and the white mob's actions in destroying the Greenwood District. We discuss each theme in the next sections.

***First Theme for Second Research Question: Feelings of Resentment***

Students' essays talked about racial discrimination connected to the Tulsa Race Massacre in three ways. First, most of the students talked about racial discrimination that African Americans faced prior to the Tulsa Race Massacre based on white Tulsans' resentments of African Americans' economic successes. For example, Spencer argued that "white people became upset that there was such a thing as 'rich black people.'" Other students argued that African Americans being financially successful challenged white Tulsans' worldview. This sentiment was articulated by River in saying that "white people felt threatened that black people were also becoming successful." Stevie elaborated on River's point by arguing that "In 1921 not everyone in Tulsa was pleased with the signs of black wealth- undeniable proof that African Americans could achieve just as much, if not more than whites." These three students' comments showed the economic component to racial discrimination that African Americans faced in Tulsa.

***Second Theme for Second Research Question: Black Innocence***

Second, the majority of the students consistently talked about black innocence and white guilt with the events associated with the Tulsa Race Massacre as opposed to what was said to have happened by whites in Tulsa. The majority of the students talked about Dick Rowland's innocence when he accidentally stepped on Sarah Page's foot in the elevator and what happened as a result of this incident. For example, Max said,

... one day, a black shoe shining man got into an elevator with a white elevator operator, and the woman figured it was just enough for the man to be accused of assaulting a white woman. Later on that day, the man was arrested.

There were several other students' statements that echoed this sentiment. One of the most creative statements was from Casey. "There was a very petty and racist white woman named Sarah. She had a black man put in jail because he SO CALLED ASSAULTED her- lies I tell you lies." Students took it a step further arguing that Dick Rowland's claims of innocence fell on deaf ears. River said, "All it took was one elevator ride when Sarah Page accused Mr. Rowland for something he did not do. But the angry mobs only listened to Sarah because she was a young

white girl.” Students consistently described whites’ beliefs of Dick Rowland’s presumed guilt and Sarah Page’s assumed innocence and truthfulness. They went further to say that the punishment for black guilt was the fear of lynching Dick Rowland. Stevie said, “People were scared he (Dick Rowland) would get lynched.” Students’ statements around the second theme related to the second research question also stressed that the perceived black guilt for the “supposed crime” of Dick Rowland and assumed white innocence of Sarah Page is the event that lit the spark leading to the Tulsa Race Massacre.

### ***Third Theme for Second Research Question: White Mob’s Actions***

The third and final way students talked about racism that African Americans faced during the Tulsa Race Massacre was in the white mob’s actions after the invasion into African Americans’ neighborhood in Tulsa, the Greenwood District. Four students focused on the actions of the white mob with preventing firefighters from entering the Greenwood District to put out the fires that the whites caused. Alexis said, “Threatening to shoot, the (white) mob blocked firefighters from putting out the blazes.” Two other students, Justice and Ryan, made this same argument. Casey took this argument a step further to talk about the ramifications of the white mob’s actions. “Then, they (members of the white mob) blocked the firemen from saving the Greenwood District that was then rebuilt.” Casey’s statement and those of the other three students provided talk about the ripple effects of preventing firefighters from saving the buildings in the Greenwood District.

## **Discussion**

The findings from the analysis of student essays indicate four over-arching takeaways about the students’ learning as they grappled with the Tulsa Race Massacre connected to the two research questions of our study. The first two takeaways connect to our first research question and are provided below.

1. There was observed growth in students’ basic literacy skills, specifically in writing.
2. The students demonstrated disciplinary literacy and thinking as defined in the C3 Framework, particularly in the areas of economic and geographic thinking.

The third and fourth takeaways provided below connect to our second research question.

3. Students demonstrated aspects of racial literacy as described by King and his colleagues (2018).

4. The context within which this study occurred is of importance when considering student engagement with the content and how connections were made between issues of racial discrimination in the past and present.

Please note for the purposes of this discussion, we are using the terms disciplinary literacy and disciplinary thinking synonymously. In the next sections, we discuss each takeaway.

### **Basic Literacy**

As described in the findings, our first takeaway connected to the first research question. The students' writing analyzed as part of this project was longer and included more detail than their previously submitted assignments. The students began the year by writing in sentence fragments. Although the information students included in these fragments was typically accurate, they did not utilize writing conventions one would expect from a sixth-grade student. It is important to note that this study was conducted during the second year of a global pandemic. This year was the students' first consistent in-person instruction without many interruptions since the pandemic started in the spring of 2020. The students' failure to utilize writing conventions, such as punctuation and complete sentences, is likely an artifact of the context of the global pandemic and their lack of consistent in-school experience. By the time this project was conducted in March 2022, the students had seven months of consistent instruction with an experienced social studies teacher. Also, the writing instruction Mrs. Parker utilized in this project provided students with a scaffold upon which to build their answers. The multi-step writing process utilized with the OREO graphic organizers encouraged students to provide more detailed summaries and evidence, like the direct quotations included in the findings, than previously observed in earlier assignments. The students' interest in both the topic and trade book should not be overlooked. Their engagement, as described in correspondence with Mrs. Parker, likely led to the students' increased attention to detail and ability to convey the information obtained from the trade book.

There is not a deep body of research in social studies education on improving students' writing (Bickford et al., 2020; Monte-Sano, 2012; Monte-Sano & Harris, 2012; Monte-Sano et al., 2014). This may be due to the fact that some social studies education scholars see research with student writing as the province of English language arts scholars. Therefore, the findings of this study show the potential benefits of using the OREO graphic organizers discussed in this manuscript to strengthen students' writing skills. The OREO graphic organizers give social

studies education scholars another approach to employ in order to improve students' writing skills.

### **Disciplinary Literacy**

The disciplinary literacy the students engaged in throughout this project typifies the integrated nature of the social studies. The students in Mrs. Parker's sixth-grade classes utilized disciplinary constructs and thinking skills in all four core areas of the social studies. They made economic and geographic, as well as civic connections with the content, often blending the disciplines together to explain the events of the Tulsa Race Massacre. Table 1 provides a list of the disciplinary concepts demonstrated by the students in their essays. Their historic and civic thinking will be explored in the discussion of remembrance; their economic and geographic thinking are discussed below.

It is telling the number of students' statements demonstrating economic concepts as outlined in the C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013). Although they did not use the terms "entrepreneurship" or "standards of living," the students made numerous observations about the number of African American businesses in the Greenwood District and how the presence of flourishing businesses indicated wealth and success for the community. The students concluded that it was white resentment of the African American economic successes that played a major role in leading to the violent massacre. The students supported this conclusion with comments about the burning of businesses, a school, and homes as symbols of African American successes. This is best illustrated by Drew's comment, "The whites were so mad they decided to storm into Greenwood and burn all of the things that the black economy had worked so hard for." Drew's comment shows that middle school students can with support articulate the often abstract aspects of racism connected to economics.

In addition to numerous examples of economic thinking, the students explored geographic concepts and thinking, particularly with regard to how economic decisions impact a community's daily life, how places are connected to identity and culture, and how interactions among groups can impact spatial patterns. The students made numerous references to symbols of black wealth. They also discussed the concerted efforts white invaders made in destroying the symbols of both economic successes and community identity, such as a school and businesses. The students also reflected on the direct impact the massacre had on the African Americans' living situation following the massacre. They referenced the murder of an estimated 300 people,

the destruction of personal property, residents fleeing the carnage with what they could carry, and that more than 8,000 residents of a prosperous African American community were now homeless.

Although the disciplines within the social studies are often placed in silos, with historical, civic, economic, and geographic thinking as distinct processes, conceptualized separately from one another (NCSS, 2013), the students' essays consistently demonstrated that they did not think this way. The overwhelming majority of the students discussed civic, economic, geographic, and historical thinking skills in concert with each other. The findings from this study suggest that perhaps social studies education scholars should look at disciplinary thinking, literacy, and argumentation skills in economics, geography, history, and civics differently. If social studies is an integrated discipline, as it has been conceptualized since the 1916 report from the NEA Committee on Social Studies (Evans, 2004; Thornton, 2017), we argue that a reexamination of how we teach social studies disciplinary skills should occur. If the students' essays in this project are an indication, it could be beneficial to construct learning experiences that embrace an integrated approach to social studies disciplinary literacy, thinking, and argumentation skills. If the social studies is truly an integrated discipline, perhaps, it is time to step outside the silos of disciplinary thinking that many social studies education scholars have created and consider the potential benefits of an integrated approach to disciplinary literacy in the social studies.

### **Racial Literacy**

King and his colleagues (2018) describe five elements of racial literacy:

1. understanding the intersection of power and race;
2. being able to locate and analyze racial systems;
3. possessing the grammar and vocabulary terms associated with racial discourse;
4. differentiating among terms that connect the concepts of race and racism;
5. the ability to analyze and take civic action with racial situations and issues.

For the purposes of this discussion, we are going to group racial literacy elements one and two, and racial literacy elements three and four, into two groups. The ways in which the students in Mrs. Parker's classes verbalized their thoughts on race and racism associated with the Tulsa Race Massacre suggest that organizing these four elements into two groups better captures their thoughts than maintaining five separate elements.

Demonstrating aspects of racial literacy elements one and two, the students in Mrs. Parker's classes showed a sophisticated understanding of race and racism, as seen in the events of the 1921 massacre. They acknowledged the resentment held by Tulsa's white population and described examples of the disparity of power between the two races. The students' understanding of this resentment is typified by Spencer's statement, "white people became upset that there was such a thing as 'rich black people.'" Some of the students also described the dissidence the white population felt when their worldview was challenged. Stevie did an excellent job in describing this by stating, "In 1921 not everyone in Tulsa was pleased with the signs of black wealth – undeniable proof that African Americans could achieve just as much, if not more than whites." These students' comments demonstrate that they could articulate how racist beliefs impacted the white mob's thoughts, feelings, and actions. Specifically, the students noted that the white population in Tulsa could not conceive of a world in which African Americans were as successful if not more successful than they were. The Greenwood District challenged the core of the white population's worldview.

In their essays, the majority of students referenced the innocence of Dick Rowland, the 19-year-old African American man accused of assaulting a 17-year-old white girl when he stepped on her foot. The students were outraged by the discrepancy in the way the two individuals were treated within the U.S. legal system. They were particularly incensed at the system's ready acceptance of the guilt of the accused African American man, as well as its blind trust in the veracity of the accounts of the white girl. Two of the students did an excellent job vocalizing this outrage and disparity. In the following statement, the reader is left in no doubt that Casey is incensed over the injustice of accusing an innocent man. "There was a very petty and racist white woman named Sarah. She had a black man put in jail because he SO CALLED ASSAULTED her – lies I tell you, lies." (Emphasis included in the student essay). River highlights the discrepancy in the way black and white citizens were treated by society and the legal system with the following statement. "All it took was one elevator ride when Sarah Page accused Mr. Rowland for something he did not do. But the angry mobs only listened to Sarah because she was a young white girl."

In discussing the mob's actions after the invasion of the Greenwood District, four students focused on the way in which the mob prohibited the firefighters from extinguishing the fires caused by the invaders. In the following statement, Alexis vividly describes how the power

of the mob prevented aid to the African Americans of Greenwood. “Threatening to shoot, the (white) mob blocked firefighters from putting out the blazes.” Such actions resulted in the total destruction of the prosperous community.

Elements three and four with racial literacy articulated by King and colleagues (2018) address the terminology associated with race, racism, and racial discourse. The students in Mrs. Parker’s classes clearly articulated what they saw as racism in the actions of Tulsa’s white population. They used descriptive language to vividly describe racism and the racially motivated acts of violence in 1921 Tulsa. Dakota described a “simmering hatred” that “boiled over.” Finley stated that “white people were upset that Greenwood was thriving. They looted and burned down the Greenwood District.” The students also addressed the ever-present threat of violence faced by accused African Americans. Stevie stated that, “people were scared that he (Dick Rowland) would get lynched.” These sixth-grade students were able to not only identify examples of racism and racist acts in the events of the Tulsa Race Massacre, but they were also able to use descriptive and sophisticated language to do so. Not only did the students reference lynching, but they knew what it meant. They used phrases like “accused of assaulting” and “white people felt threatened” to accurately describe the society and events of the time. Nearly all of the students were able to articulate the discrepancy of power and the impact of race and racism, using appropriately descriptive language, indicating the students’ developing racial literacy skills.

King and colleagues (2018) provide a good approach to discuss issues of race with the five components of racial literacy. The findings from our study show the potential of utilizing the five components of racial literacy that King and colleagues (2018) use to discuss issues of race. Students articulated the nuances and layers of racial discrimination with the Tulsa Race Massacre. From the findings of our study, the components of racial literacy argued for by King and colleagues (2018) have great potential when discussing issues of race in U.S. history.

### **Contextualization**

The context within which the project occurred cannot be ignored. The vast majority (93%) of the sixth-grade students participating in this study are African Americans living in a mid-size city within a conservative-leaning Southern state. Racial discord has been front and center through most of their lives. They have witnessed racist rhetoric coming from Trump’s White House, numerous police shootings of unarmed African Americans, a vitriolic outcry about a football player kneeling in protest of police violence, and the recent efforts to stymie

discussions of race in the classroom. Additionally, the study occurred in the second year of a global pandemic. Not only did the students experience inconsistent in-person instruction, often having to learn remotely, they also had to live within a highly anxious world in which African Americans and other people of color disproportionately died from the COVID-19 virus.

Mrs. Parker's students were highly engaged with both the topic of the Tulsa Race Massacre and the trade book we chose to explore this topic. They crafted well-supported summary essays and demonstrated disciplinary thinking, often integrating the disciplines as they described the events of 1921. The students also displayed a sophisticated level of racial literacy skills as discussed by King and colleagues (2018) for sixth graders. They were able to clearly articulate the discrepancies of power between the white and Black communities in Tulsa during the first part of the twentieth century. They also verbalized concepts like the white population feeling threatened, unequal treatment and white privilege within the justice system, and the constant threat of violence. The students' interest in the content and the connections they made pertaining to the racial violence are understandable within the context of the last several years. The students' call to remember the events of the Tulsa Race Massacre are particularly powerful in light of the continued violence experienced by African Americans, as typified by the racially motivated hate crime that resulted in the death of 10 African American in a Buffalo grocery store on May 14, 2022 (Slater et al., 2022).

It was curious that several students focused on the importance of remembering the Tulsa Race Massacre in their essays. The teacher did not emphasize this aspect of the Tulsa Race Massacre. The trade book only mentions the idea of remembering the Tulsa Race Massacre in one two page spread. The four students that mentioned the importance of remembering the Tulsa Race Massacre did not elaborate on the reasons why this was important, so the researchers asked the teacher to follow up with these four students.

In the follow-up comments, Blake argued "If we don't remember it (The Tulsa Race Massacre), the people who died will not be honored." Stevie built on the fact that memory can be fleeting. "They (African Americans in the Greenwood District) went through a lot and sometimes we forget what people went through." Skyler built on Stevie's statement by arguing that "we need to go back and remember a time where a thriving successful group of black people were looked down on and learn from what happened." The idea "learning from what happened" appeared relevant to all four students to address contemporary issues of racial discrimination.

This is best argued for by Bellamy. “We do not want to repeat a tragic event like that (the Tulsa Race Massacre), and even though events like the Tulsa Race Massacre still happen today, we need to step up and remember what happened and fix it.” Bellamy and the other students connected the importance of remembering historical events like the Tulsa Race Massacre to addressing contemporary racial issues.

Hannibal Johnson makes the following argument for what happens when people do not remember events like the Tulsa Race Massacre. “Untreated, the wounds of history fester like necrotizing fasciitis (a.k.a., flesh-eating diseases), spreading uncontrollably while feeding off our souls. Knowledge is a ready, if not, wholly curative antibiotic. Foreknowledge can be an inoculation against repetition” (Johnson, 2020, p. 5). Students’ comments reflect the arguments made by Johnson while also discussing how current public issues connected to racial discrimination connect to events in the past like the Tulsa Race Massacre. They also make the argument that remembering events of racial discrimination in the past help us address issues in contemporary U.S. society.

The students’ interest in and affective connection to the topic of the Tulsa Race Massacre helps to highlight the need to lean into discussions of racial discord and systemic racism, instead of shying away from them. The need for these discussions is paramount, not only as validation for the African American students living within a continued system of racism and violence in contemporary U.S. society, but also as illumination for the white students who have not experienced it.

In this way, these four students make compelling arguments for the potential of thematically teaching civil rights issues in U.S. history. They argue that issues of racial discrimination connected to the Tulsa Race Massacre are still relevant in contemporary U.S. society. Through our nine one week projects last academic year in Mrs. Parker’s classroom, we tried to help students make thematic connections with issues, events, figures, and groups across U.S. history. The four students’ comments illustrate the potential of thematic teaching and is a first step to open up research on thematically teaching social studies topics across time, such as civil rights issues.

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

There are several limitations associated with this study that must be addressed. This is a qualitative study. As such, the findings are not generalizable and must be considered within their

context. That said, the information from this study is a useful window into how a social studies trade book can be an effective tool to engage students in disciplinary thinking while helping them to develop racial literacy skills.

If we were to repeat this project, we would utilize primary sources in addition to the selected trade book. The time limitations of this project did not allow the students to explore the Tulsa Race Massacre in the depth we would have preferred. Although a historic photograph of Greenwood after the massacre is part of the trade book's endpaper, and there were a handful of images included in the author's note, we would like to include additional primary sources for students to analyze in order to triangulate, or corroborate, the information in the picture book. Social studies teachers wanting to replicate our project could use primary sources from the Tulsa Historical Society and Museum, <https://www.tulsa-history.org/exhibit/1921-tulsa-race-massacre/documents/>, in their project about the Tulsa Race Massacre. That said, our own analysis of the information in the picture book found that the text was factually accurate. The students were not provided false information that could skew their understanding of the event.

It should be noted that 93% of students participating in the study were African Americans. This is the same racial group that faced racial discrimination in the Tulsa Race Massacre. This reality may have caused students in this study to be more curious about the issues of racial discrimination discussed in this trade book about the Tulsa Race Massacre. Social studies teachers need to strategically select trade books that will appeal to the interests of their students and contain issues still relevant to their daily lives.

Finally, we suggest that students complete a two-fold writing activity. Students would still need to complete the OREO summary, as they did in this study, to demonstrate their knowledge of the events of the Tulsa Race Massacre. However, it would be beneficial to have students extend beyond a summary by having them answer a teacher-created compelling question about the events in Tulsa, perhaps focusing on why we should remember events of the past to the modern era. Students apply their analysis for the causes and outcomes of the Tulsa Race Massacre, use those findings to modern racial discourse, and take civic action by either writing for their local newspaper or to individuals within the government empowered to make change. The work the students produced in this study indicates that they are engaging in disciplinary thinking. Asking them to answer a compelling question with supporting information

would take that thinking to the next level, particularly if they are able to make connections between historic events and today's world.

### **Conclusion**

In this article, we discussed a one-week project in a sixth grade U.S. history classroom focusing on the Tulsa Race Massacre. The students did an excellent job in their essays of articulating disciplinary literacy skills for civics, economics, geography, and history. They also conveyed the ways that racial discrimination played a vital part in leading to the Tulsa Race Massacre. The students' essays were on average a solid paragraph in length with evidence to support their arguments. The improvement in students' writing is remarkable, since most of them did not write in complete sentences at the beginning of the academic year. Part of this growth can be attributed to the fact that students according to the classroom teacher were very engaged with the topic of the Tulsa Race Massacre. This demonstrates the potential of using trade books that are culturally responsive in the social studies classroom.

Social studies teachers must shut out the loud political voices that are currently trying to silence the discussion of issues connected to race. It is important to be cognizant how these politicians are attempting to exploit issues of race for their political gain. Social studies teachers need to remember that issues of race are embedded within their curriculums and more importantly still impact some of their students' daily lives. Therefore, students need meaningful opportunities to analyze historical events connected to issues of racial discrimination as well as modern corollaries. These learning experiences prepare students with the racial literacy skills to analyze racist arguments, critique social structures that attempt to perpetuate white hegemony, and take civic action to build a more perfect union that is more equitable to all U.S. citizens (King et al., 2018; Ochoa-Becker, 1996).

## References

- Baker, K. (2011). *Gospel according to the Klan: The KKK's appeal to Protestant America, 1915–1930*. University Press of Kansas.
- Banks, J. (2014). *An introduction to multicultural education* (5th ed.). Pearson.
- Beck, I. L., & McKeown, M.G. (1991). Research directions: Social studies texts are hard to understanding: Mediating some of the difficulties. *Language Arts*, 68(6), 482-490.
- Berkeley, S., King-Sears, M.E., Vilbas, J., & Conklin, S. (2016). Textbook characteristics that support or thwart comprehension: The current state of social studies texts. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 32(3), 247-272.
- Bickford, J.H., & Schuette, L.N. (2016). Trade book's historical representation of the black freedom movement, slavery through civil rights. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 42(1), 20-43.
- Bickford, J. H., Clabough, J., & Taylor, T. (2020). Fourth-graders' (re-)reading, (historical) thinking, and (revised) writing about the Black Freedom Movement. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 44(2), 249-261.
- Blevins, B., LeCompte, K., & Ellis, T. (2018). Students at the heart of civic learning: Best practices in implementing action civics. In J. Clabough & T. Lintner (Eds.), *No reluctant citizens: Civic education in the K-12 classroom* (pp. 83-96). Information Age Publishing.
- Bolgatz, J. (2005a). Revolutionary talk: Elementary teacher and students discuss race in a social studies class. *The Social Studies*, 96(6), 259-264.
- Bolgatz, J. (2005b). Teachers initiating conversations about race and racism in a high school class. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 7(3), 28-35.
- Brophy, A. (2002). *Reconstructing the Dreamland: The Tulsa Riot of 1912: Race, reparations, and reconciliation*. Oxford University Press.
- Brugar, K., & Clabough, J. (2017). Fred Korematsu speaks up: Using nonfiction with the Inquiry Arc of the C3 Framework. *Middle Level Learning*, 60, 2-12.
- Caro, R. (2002). *The master of the Senate: The years of Lyndon Johnson*. Random House.
- Carter, D. (2000). *The politics of rage: George Wallace, the origins of the new conservatism, and the transformation of American politics* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Louisiana State University Press.
- Chick, K.A. (2008). *Teaching women's history through literature: Standards-based lesson plans for grades K-12*. NCSS.

- Clabough, J. (2021). NCSS celebrates excellence with awards and recognition. *Social Education*, 85(6), 348-349.
- Clabough, J., & Wooten, D. (2016). Bias, bigotry, and bungling: Teaching about the Port Chicago 50. *Social Education*, 80(3), 160-165.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. Macmillan.
- Dinkelman, T., & Cuenca, A. (2017). Qualitative inquiry in social studies research. In M. M. Manfra & C. M. Bolick (Eds.), *The Wiley handbook of social studies research* (pp. 95-131). John Wiley and Sons.
- Dovere, E.I. (2021). *Battle for the soul: Inside the Democrats' campaigns to defeat Trump*. Viking.
- Dunn, A.H., Sondel, B., & Baggett, H.C. (2018). "I don't want to come off as pushing an agenda": How contexts shaped teachers' pedagogy in the days after the 2016 U.S. presidential election. *American Educational Research Journal*, 56(2), 444-476.
- Duster, M. (2021). Red Summer. In I. Kendi & K. Blain (Eds.), *Four hundred souls: A community of history of African America, 1619-2019* (pp. 283-286). One World.
- Ellsworth, S. (1982). *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*. Louisiana State University Press.
- Elo, S., & Kyngas, H. (2007). The qualitative content analysis process. *JAN Research Methodology*, 62(1), 107-115.
- Endacott, J., & Brooks, S. (2013). An updated theoretical practical model for promoting historical empathy. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 8(1), 41-58.
- Eulinberg, J.S. (2020). *A lynched Black Wall Street: A womanist perspective on terrorism, religion, and black resilience in the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre*. Cascade Books.
- Evans, R. (2004). *The social studies wars: What should we teach the children?* Teachers College Press.
- Evans, R., Newmann, F., & Saxe, D.W. (1996). Defining issues-centered education. In R. Evans & D.W. Saxe (Eds.), *Handbook on teaching social issues* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.) (pp. 2-5). NCSS.
- Franklin, J.H. (1974). *From slavery to freedom: A history of negro Americans* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Alfred A. Knopf.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

- Gates Jr., H.L. (2019). *Stony the road: Reconstruction, white supremacy, and the rise of Jim Crow*. Penguin Books.
- Gordon, L. (2017). *The second coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American political tradition*. Liveright.
- Gross, M., & Terra, L. (2019). Introduction: What makes difficult history difficult? In M. Gross & L. Terra (Eds.), *Teaching and learning the difficult past: Comparative perspectives* (pp. 1-8). Routledge.
- Halperin, M., & Heilemann, J. (2013). *Double down: Game change 2012*. Penguin Press.
- Hansen, C. (2022, February 7). How much of Trump's border wall was built? *U.S. News*. <https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2022-02-07/how-much-of-president-donald-trumps-border-wall-was-built>
- Harvey, J. (2020, September 6). Trump threatens to yank funding from schools that teach 1619 Project. *Huff Post*. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-1619-project\\_funding\\_n\\_5f556a47c5b62b3add4270fd](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-1619-project_funding_n_5f556a47c5b62b3add4270fd)
- Heilemann, J., & Halperin, M. (2010). *Game change: Obama and the Clintons, McCain and Palin, and the race of a lifetime*. Harper.
- Hess, D., & McAvoy, P. (2015). *The political classroom: Evidence and ethics in democratic education*. Routledge.
- Hirsch, J.S. (2002). *Riot and remembrance: The Tulsa race war and its legacy*. Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Howard, T., & Navarro, O. (2016). Critical Race Theory 20 years later: Where do we go from here? *Urban Education*, 51(3), 253-273.
- Johnson, H.B. (2020). *Black Wall Street 100: An American city grapples with its historical racial trauma*. Eakin Press.
- Journell, W. (2016). Introduction: Teaching social issues in the social studies classroom. In W. Journell (Ed.), *Teaching social studies in an era of divisiveness: The challenges of discussing social issues in a non-partisan way* (pp. 1-12). Rowman and Littlefield.
- King, L., Vickery, A., & Caffrey, G. (2018). A pathway to racial literacy: Using the LETS ACT Framework to teach controversial issues. *Social Education*, 82(6), 316-322.
- Kline, W. (2008). Developing and submitting credible qualitative manuscripts. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 47, 210-217.

- Kohlmeier, J., & Saye, J. (2019). Examining the relationship between teachers' discussion facilitation and their students' reasoning. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 47*(2), 176-204.
- Kornacki, S. (2018). *The red and the blue: The 1990s and the birth of political tribalism*. Harper Collins.
- Krauth, O. (2022, April 14). Jail time for teaching history? Kentucky lawmakers rush to fix "oversight." *Louisville Courier Journal*. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/politics/ky-general-assembly/2022/04/14/kentucky-senate-bill-1-teachers-legal-liability/7318952001/>
- Krippendorff, K. (2013). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (3rd ed.). Sage Publishing.
- Lee, J., & Swan, K. (2013). Is the Common Core good for social studies? Yes, but... *Social Education, 77*(6), 327-330.
- Levinson, M., & Levine, P. (2013). Taking informed action to engage students in civic life. *Social Education, 77*(6), 339-341.
- Lewis, J. (2015). *Walking with the wind: A memoir of the movement*. Simon and Schuster.
- Liang, L.A. (2002). On the shelves of the local library: High-interest, easy reading trade books for struggling middle and high school readers. *Preventing School Failure, 46*(4), 183-188.
- Loewen, J. W. (2018). *Sundown towns: A hidden dimension of American racism*. The New Press.
- Logan, R.W. (1965). *The betrayal of the negro: From Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson*. Da Capo Press.
- Madigan, T. (2001). *The burning: Massacre, destruction, and the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*. Thomas Dunne Books.
- Mann, R. (1996). *The walls of Jericho: Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, and the struggle for civil rights*. Harcourt Brace and Company.
- Maxwell, J. (2010). Using numbers in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(6), 475-482.
- McGowan, T., & Guzzetti, B. (1991). Promoting social studies understanding through literature-based instruction. *The Social Studies, 82*(1), 16.

- Miles, K. (2021, October 15). Alabama Board of Education cements state's ban on critical race theory. *NPR News for the Heart of Alabama*. <https://wbhm.org/2021/alabama-board-of-education-cements-states-ban-on-critical-race-theory/>
- Monte-Sano, C. (2012). What makes a good history essay? Assessing historical aspects of argumentative writing. *Social Education*, 76(6), 294-298.
- Monte-Sano, C., & Harris, K. (2012). Recitation and reasoning in novice history teachers' use of writing. *The Elementary School Journal*, 113(1), 105-130.
- Monte-Sano, C., Paz De La, S., & Felton, M. (2014). *Reading, thinking, and writing about history: Teaching argument writing to diverse learners in the Common Core classroom, grades 6-12*. Teachers College Press.
- NCSS. (2013). *The College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for enhancing the rigor of K-12 civics, economics, geography, and history*. Author.
- NCSS. (2020). *Teaching about slavery using the 1619 Project and other resources*. <https://www.socialstudies.org/current-events-response/teaching-about-slavery-using-1619-project-and-other-resources>
- Nokes, J. (2013). *Building students' historical literacies: Learning to read and reason with historical texts and evidence*. Routledge.
- Nokes, J. (2019). *Teaching, history, learning citizenship: Tools for civic engagement*. Teachers College Press.
- Ochoa-Becker, A. S. (1996). Building a rationale for issues-centered education. In R. W. Evans & D. W. Saxe (Eds.), *Handbook on teaching social issues: NCSS bulletin 93* (pp. 6-13). NCSS.
- Palmer, R.G., & Stewart, R.A. (1997). Nonfiction trade books in content area instruction: Realities and potential. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 40(8), 630-641.
- Perlstein, R. (2001). *Before the storm: Barry Goldwater and the unmaking of the American consensus*. Hill and Wang.
- Perlstein, R. (2008). *Nixonland: The rise of a president and the fracturing of America*. Simon and Schuster.
- Perlstein, R. (2020). *Reaganland: America's right turn 1976-1980*. Simon and Schuster.
- Phillips, A. (2017, June 16), "They're rapists", President Trump's campaign launch speech two

- years later, annotated, *The Washington Post*. [www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/06/16/theyre-rapists-presidents-trump-campaign-launch-speech-two-years-laterannotated/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.6a3a7f07ae02](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/06/16/theyre-rapists-presidents-trump-campaign-launch-speech-two-years-laterannotated/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.6a3a7f07ae02)
- Richgels, D.J., Tomlinson, C.M., & Tunnell, M.O. (1993). Comparisons of elementary students' history textbooks and trade books. *Journal of Education Research*, 86(3), 161-171.
- Saul, E.W., & Dieckman, D. (2005). Choosing and using information trade books. *Theory and Research into Practice*, 40(4), 502-513.
- Schuessler, J. (2021a, November 8). Scholarly groups condemn laws limiting teaching on race. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/16/arts/critical-race-theory-scholars.html>
- Schuessler, J. (2021b, November 9). Bans on Critical Race Theory threaten free speech, advocacy group says. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/08/arts/critical-race-theory-bans.html>
- Serwer, A. (2021, May 21). Why conservatives want to cancel the 1619 Project. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/05/why-conservatives-want-cancel-1619-project/618952/>
- Shanahan, T., & Shanahan, C. (2008). Teaching disciplinary literacy to adolescents: Rethinking content-area literacy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 78(1), 40-59.
- Sheffield, C., & Clabough, J. (2022). Memoirs of oppression: George Takei and the imprisonment of Japanese Americans. *Middle Level Learning*, 73, 9-21.
- Simonson, A., & Chavez, N. (2022, April, 5). South Dakota restricts teaching of critical race theory in schools. *CNN*. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/05/us/south-dakota-governor-critical-race-theory-order/index.html>
- Slater, J., Mathur, M., & Nakhlawi, R. (2022, May 16, 2022). What we know about the victims of the Buffalo grocery store shooting. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/05/15/buffalo-shooting-victims/>.
- Thornton, S. J. (2017). A concise historiography of the social studies. In M. M. Manfra & C. M. Bolick (Eds.), *The Wiley handbook of social studies research* (pp. 9-41). John Wiley and Sons.
- Tracy, J. (2003). Racing through history. *Journal of Education*, 184(2), 63-68.

- Van Hover, S., & Hicks, D. (2017). Social constructivism and student learning in social studies. In M. M. Manfra & C. M. Bolick (Eds.), *The Wiley handbook of social studies research* (pp. 270-318). John Wiley and Sons.
- Weatherford, C.B., & Cooper, F. (2021). *Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre*. Carolrhoda Books.
- Wineburg, S. (2018). *Why learn history (When it's already on your phone)*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Woodward, C.V. (1951). *Origins of the New South 1877-1913*. Louisiana State University Press.
- Zhang, Y., & Wildemuth, B. (2009). Qualitative analysis of content. In B. Wildemuth (Ed.), *Applications of social research methods to questions in Information and Library Science* (pp. 308-319). Libraries Unlimited.
- Zimmerman, J., & Robertson, E. (2017). The controversy over controversial issues. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99(4), 8-14.

### Author Biographies

Dr. Jeremiah Clabough is an Associate Professor of Social Science Education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham in Birmingham, AL. His research interests focus on strengthening students' civic thinking skills. He can be reached at [jclabou2@uab.edu](mailto:jclabou2@uab.edu).

Caroline Sheffield is an Associate Professor of Social Studies Education at the University of Louisville in Louisville, KY. Her research interests include multimodal literacy in the social studies and using trade books in the social studies classroom. She can be reached at [caroline.sheffield@louisville.edu](mailto:caroline.sheffield@louisville.edu).

Appendix A

Oreo Summaries Handout

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



OREO Summaries

Evidence-

How did the author and Artist show separation in the Greenwood community? How do you know this?

EVIDENCE IS HOW!!  
In the box to the right write a piece of evidence that shows the answer to the question above.

Evidence:



Three main parts of my summary

Cookie-

Frosting-

Cookie-

The purpose of a rough draft is to get all of our main ideas and thoughts out. Then we go back, edit and add details to make a final draft! Time to highlight!

Sentences that are about the first cookie are \_\_\_\_\_

Sentences that are about the frosting are \_\_\_\_\_

Sentences that are about the second cookie are \_\_\_\_\_

Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B**

**Adding Details and Evidence Handout**

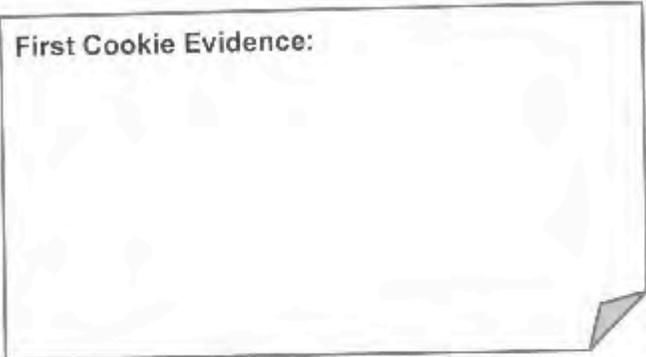
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Adding details and Evidence!**

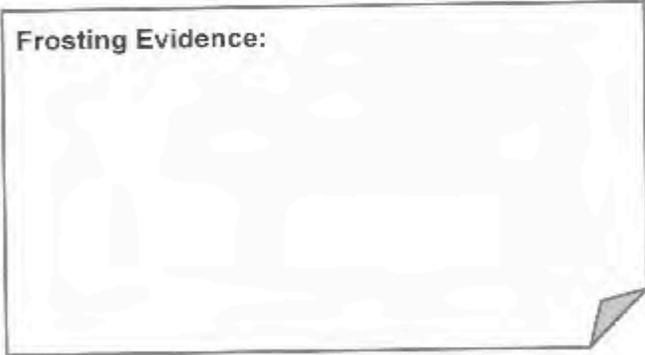
Which part of the OREO do you need to add to your final draft? Circle below

First Cookie                  Frosting                  Second Cookie

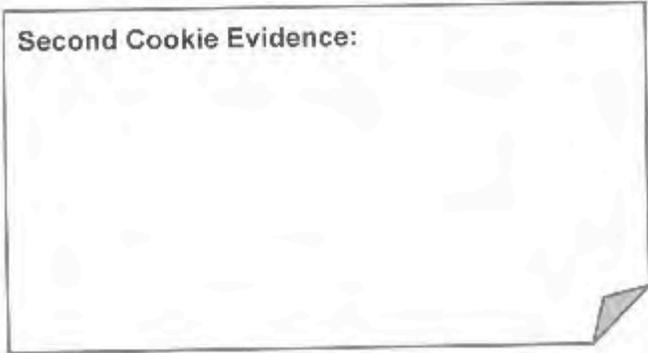
**First Cookie Evidence:**



**Frosting Evidence:**



**Second Cookie Evidence:**



Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**Table 1*****C3 Disciplinary Concepts Employed by Students***

Discipline	C3 Discipline Standard	Description
Civics	D2.Civ.10.6-8	Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.
	D2.Civ.14.6-8	Compare historical and contemporary means of changing society, and promoting the common good.
Economics	D2.Eco.1.6-8	Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, business, and society.
	D2.Eco.7.6-8	Analyze the role of innovation and entrepreneurship in a market economy.
	D2.Eco.13.6-8	Explain why standards of living increase as productivity improves.
Geography	D2.Geo.4.6-8	Explain how cultural patterns and economic decisions influence environments and the daily lives of people in nearby and distant places.
	D2.Geo.6.6-8	Explain how the physical and human characteristics of places and regions are connected to human identities and cultures.
	D2. Geo.8.6-8	Analyze how relationships between humans and environments extend or contract spatial patterns of settlement and movement.

---

History		
	D2.His.1.6-8	Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.
	D2.His.14.6-8	Explain multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past.

---

*Note.* This table includes information taken directly from of the C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013).