

Guidebook for Implementing the U.S. History Series

**Support for District
and School Leaders**



Thank you for your purchase of the Choices Program's U.S. History Series! The purpose of this guidebook is to provide you with an overview of the series along with tips, resources, and links for you to use to introduce the series to your team. If you have any questions about the series, please contact us at choices@brown.edu or 401-863-3155.

We encourage you to download and share this guidebook with your staff members.

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Choices Program Goals

The Choices Program seeks to:

- Democratize knowledge and provide accessible educational resources in order to reach diverse classrooms in all corners of the United States and beyond.
- Create curriculum materials that foster the skills for students and teachers to be critical consumers of information and engaged global citizens.
- Take advantage of new research and scholarship that provides new insight into the dynamics that shape the world.
- Challenge traditional narratives and broaden understanding of history and current events.
- Produce narratives that are relevant to all communities, including ones that have been underrepresented in high school social studies curriculum and programming.

The U.S. History Series

The Choices Program strives to create U.S. History curriculum units that are responsible, inclusive, and representative of the experiences of diverse people.

Choices develops each curriculum unit in collaboration with faculty at Brown University and beyond. Each unit is carefully reviewed by scholars and reflects the most current scholarship. As historians have uncovered new sources, they have unveiled a more complex and detailed understanding of U.S. history. The U.S. History Series from the Choices Program reflects the more nuanced and revealing scholarship that has come to light in recent years. The series carefully examines the foundational elements of U.S. history, including the importance of the founding documents and other touchstone events. It also includes narratives and lessons that are relevant to and reflect the experiences of all communities, including those that have been underrepresented in some textbooks.

In addition to its cutting-edge scholarship, the U.S. History Series emphasizes skill development and provides students with the analytical tools that they will carry throughout their academic careers and lives as citizens. With their emphasis on source analysis, the lessons in Choices Program curriculum units aim to provide a process of inquiry for students to develop and answer important questions and to think critically about the world around them. Similarly, our series builds student skills across units.

As understandings of our world and history evolve, the Choices Program constantly develops new curriculum materials and revises its existing content.

All U.S. History Series units are organized similarly—each unit includes student readings with accompanying graphic organizers, study guides, lessons, and videos. If your team members are new to Choices units, we recommend they watch the video [What is the structure of a Choices Program curriculum unit in Digital Editions?](#) As you can see on the [U.S. History Series webpage](#), units are arranged in chronological order.

If you plan to introduce the U.S. History Series to your colleagues, we encourage you to download this [Introduction to the U.S. History Series PowerPoint](#) presentation and adapt it to your needs. If you are using the Digital Editions format of the U.S. History Series, your teachers should also watch the [Digital Editions introductory video](#).

How does the U.S. History Series address diversity, inclusion, and accessibility issues?

The Choices Program seeks to bring under-represented voices into the U.S. History classroom. Why is it important to center marginalized people in the study of American History? Hear what historian Kellie Carter Jackson from Wellesley College has to say in this [video from the Choices Program](#).

Choices carefully analyzes its curriculum units to be sure that they are inclusive of all voices. The rubric below was created by the Choices writing team and is used to develop units as well as self-evaluate and modify existing U.S. History units.

CURRICULUM RUBRIC

Standards for Systematic Review of Diversity and Accessibility for the Choices Program

Score	Criteria	Notes
	Includes non-elite perspectives on historical and current events	
	Balances social, political, and economic perspectives	
	Integrates diverse perspectives consistently throughout	
	Up to date, reflects recent historiography	
	Includes accessible language	
	Includes diverse visual representations that mirror the range of perspectives and people described in the text	
	Uses a variety of visual and textual representations to reach students with varied styles of learning	

Scoring: 2 = excellent; 1 = acceptable; 0 = unacceptable

For a specific example of how one Choices unit, *Racial Slavery in the Americas: Resistance, Freedom, and Legacies*, brings the voices of marginalized peoples into history, please see “Confronting History: A Conversation Between Brown University’s Choices Program and the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice About the New Curriculum - *Racial Slavery and the Making of the Americas: Resistance, Freedom, and Legacies*” (Appendix).

Key Lessons in the U.S. History Series Curriculum Units

Each U.S. History unit includes several lessons aligned with the readings and designed to be completed in one or two class periods. Most units also include one or two synthesizing lessons at the end of the unit, designed to act as a unit assessment. In addition, most U.S. History units include one key or central lesson, either a Role Play Activity or a Perspectives Activity. While both kinds of lessons have students engage with multiple perspectives on an issue, the activities vary in context and approach.

A Role Play is set at a certain turning point in history. Students are assigned to a certain role or viewpoint, called an “option,” that was supported by people at that time. Students work in small groups to understand what the merits and tradeoffs are for their assigned option, and to create a persuasive argument in support of that option. An additional group of students is assigned to ask questions of each group. For example, in *The American Revolution: Experiences of Rebellion* unit, students are assigned to one of three “options” that represent diverse viewpoints on what the future of the British North American colonies should be on the eve of 1776: 1) Restore the ties of loyalty to the British, 2) Pursue a policy of neutrality and avoid a war at all costs, or 3) Fight for independence from the British. A fourth group of students act as townspeople to ask questions of each group. In an historical Role Play, the Role Play takes place in the year of the turning point, so students cannot bring in information from today.

A Perspectives Activity may seem similar, but it differs in some important ways. In a Perspectives Activity, students are also assigned a viewpoint, called a “perspective,” that was held at the time of the turning point. However, they are not *taking on* that perspective as their own, and they do not argue or advocate *for* the perspective. Instead, students act as present day, nonjudgmental historians. They use the provided primary sources to try to understand why some people supported that perspective at the time. Working in small groups, students present a summary of their assigned perspective and quote from the primary sources to provide evidence. Many of the primary sources include racist or violent perspectives that were held by some at the time of the turning point. Therefore, a Perspectives Activity should never be conducted as a Role Play. U.S. History units that include a Perspectives Activity are: *The Civil War and the Meaning of Liberty*, *Westward Expansion: A New History*, and *Freedom Now: The Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi*.

What other types of lessons are included in the U.S. History Series?

One of the benefits of having access to the entire U.S. History Series is that your staff members can pick and choose lessons in a variety of formats from the units. Teachers who wish to expose their students to lessons that use nontraditional types of sources may want to consider the following:

Art as a Primary Source

Portrayals of Plantations and Enslavement, *Racial Slavery in the Americas*

Art History and the American Revolution, *The American Revolution: Experiences of Rebellion*

The Battle of Gettysburg, *The Civil War and the Meaning of Liberty*

“American Progress”: Analyzing a Portrayal of Manifest Destiny, *Imperial America: U.S. Global Expansion*

Photos as a Primary Source

Civil War Photographs as Sources, *The Civil War and the Meaning of Liberty*

Historical Memory at San Juan Hill in Santiago de Cuba, *Imperial America: U.S. Global Expansion*

Song Lyrics as a Primary Source

Singing for Freedom, *Freedom Now: The Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi*

Songs About Nuclear Weapons, *The Challenge of Nuclear Weapons*

Political Cartoons as a Primary Source

Interpreting Political Cartoons, *The Civil War and the Meaning of Liberty*

Cartoon Analysis: Race and Empire in U.S. Political Cartoons, *Imperial America: U.S. Global Expansion*

Interpreting Political Cartoons, *Responding to Terrorism: Challenges for Democracy*

Interpreting Political Cartoons, *The U.S. Role in a Changing World*

Skills Highlighted Across U.S. History Units

Students who are immersed in multiple U.S. History units throughout the year will be able to:

- Understand that history is a contested, complex, and evolving account of the past;
- Think critically about the past and consider how it shapes the present;
- Apply historical knowledge and critical thinking skills to gain understanding of current issues;
- Propose and consider questions about the past;
- Build research skills;
- Develop an understanding of issues, events, and policy choices in the context of a historical time period;
- Understand the roles of individuals, groups, and institutions as well as elite decision makers in history and current events;
- Identify continuity and change across places, events, and time periods;
- Identify “silences” in the historical record and assess what they may mean;
- Analyze a range of primary sources, including written documents, artifacts, works of art, and oral histories;
- Understand the role of secondary sources; consult and evaluate competing and complementary secondary sources;
- Analyze sources to determine their perspective, bias, and reliability:
 - Closely read sources and identify claims and evidence;
 - Develop evidence-based interpretations of sources;
 - Use multiple sources to corroborate information;
- Develop speaking and listening skills when articulating viewpoints about the past.

For More Information

If you or your staff members have questions about the U.S. History Series, please contact us at choices@brown.edu or 401-863-3155. We also invite you to attend a Choices Program professional development offering to learn more about our curriculum offerings and how they can be integrated into your classes. Visit www.choices.edu/professional-development for upcoming events.

Appendix

Confronting History: A Conversation Between Brown University's Choices Program and the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice About the New Curriculum – *Racial Slavery and the Making of the Americas: Resistance, Freedom, and Legacies*.

WHAT IS THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SLAVERY AND JUSTICE (CSSJ)?

The CSSJ is a scholarly research unit with a public humanities mission. Recognizing that racial and chattel slavery were central to the historical formation of the Americas and the modern world, CSSJ creates a space for the interdisciplinary study of the historical forms of slavery while also examining how these legacies shape our contemporary world. CSSJ has various research clusters and public humanities projects. We offer numerous seminars, reading groups, and working groups for faculty and students at Brown. The CSSJ also offers Slavery and Legacies Walking Tours and a Civil Rights Movement Initiative. These initiatives enhance students' understanding of slavery in Rhode Island, the Civil Rights Movement, and their legacies in the present.

ALTHOUGH YOU ARE PART OF BROWN UNIVERSITY, THIS "TEXTBOOK PROJECT" SERVES A DIFFERENT AUDIENCE. WHERE DID THE IDEA FOR THE CSSJ TEXTBOOK PROJECT COME FROM?

Given the commitment of the CSSJ to public history, we always felt that there was the necessity for a different curriculum about the history of racial slavery particularly since it was foundational to the history of the making of the Americas. In 2018 in discussion with CSSJ board member Mary Vascellaro, we agreed to embark on a curriculum project for high school students, the end result being the publication of *Racial Slavery in the Americas: Resistance, Freedom, and Legacies*. **This board member funded the project. For this we express our deepest appreciation.**

CAN YOU SPEAK ABOUT WHAT WENT INTO THE MAKING OF THE CURRICULUM?

For this project in particular, the Center was very much interested in flipping the hierarchy of knowledge production and the ways we conventionally write history. We first consulted with students followed by teachers and scholars to inform this curriculum unit. Our very first workshop in December 2018 convened public high school students from three different school districts in the state of Rhode Island. This project became even more critical and timely following the 2019 report compiled by Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy which deemed Providence Public Schools as "failing." As a center at a university in this same city it was imperative that we produce something that could respond to this moment and create a resource for both students and teachers. Students who participated came with a wealth of knowledge and by creating space for students to engage with young and emerging scholars on Brown's campus, the workshop provided insight into gaps of knowledge and informed the project in meaningful ways.

It was important for the Center to also meet with teachers from a variety of settings to garner their feedback. A small group of teachers met on the campus in summer 2019. They participated in small group discussions and also heard from professors and graduate students, just as the students did. The teachers visited the John Carter Brown Library where they examined items related to the transatlantic slave trade including the account book from the slave ship Sally, which was owned by the Brown brothers. Teachers were also provided with the Center's [Slavery & Legacy Walking Tour](#) to help them think about placemaking and memorialization in the context of Providence, and imagine what that may look like in their cities or towns. Our workshop with teachers really helped both CSSJ

and Choices understand the needs of students as well as the resources teachers required to engage students in very difficult conversations about racial slavery and its legacies.

IT SOUNDS LIKE THE CHOICES PROGRAM WAS A LOGICAL PARTNER. CAN YOU SAY MORE ABOUT THE WORK OF THE CHOICES PROGRAM?

The Choices Program was started over 30 years ago at Brown University by a local teacher who saw the value of bringing academic scholarship on contested issues to a secondary school audience. From that initial idea came the first curriculum unit ever produced by the Choices Program, which was called *U.S.- Soviet Relations*. That unit has been updated several times and is now called *Russia's Transformation*, but at its core it still gives high school students a window into scholarly-based, multiple perspectives on U.S.-Russia relations, and ultimately asks them to formulate and defend their own views on the topic.

Choices offered its first historical unit in 1992 with *Origins of the Cold War*. The Program has grown over the years to nearly 40 curriculum titles that explore a variety of contested U.S. History, World History, and Current Issues topics. In 2018, it became a project of Brown's History Department and will be releasing several new History units in the coming years.

We are lucky to have the Choices Program as part of Brown University, because they have years of experience writing for a secondary school audience. The Choices Program is unique in that it works with scholars—four from Brown were involved in this unit—and translates their research into curricular materials that are accessible to secondary students. Equally as important, the Choices Program has a robust schedule of professional development offerings around the globe and an extensive mailing list and social media presence. All of these play an important role in promoting Choices curricular offerings and their approach to addressing contested historical and contemporary issues.

YOU MENTION THAT THE CHOICES PROGRAM PRODUCES CURRICULUM UNITS, NOT TEXTBOOKS. SO RACIAL SLAVERY ISN'T REALLY A TEXTBOOK?

Correct. Although this is the longest curriculum unit ever produced by the Choices Program, Choices does not produce textbooks. The Choices Program produces supplemental curriculum, which includes student readings, lessons, and videos for 10+ days of instruction. Again, since this unit is more extensive than any other unit, it probably contains enough material for teachers to use it for a few weeks! As is true for all Choices units, teachers can pick and choose to use only the parts that meet their classroom goals.

The *Racial Slavery in the Americas* curriculum includes readings and lessons on the human geography of the transatlantic slave trade and on data, primary source, and art analysis. It also deals with the issues of reparative justice; Juneteenth; public memorials; and more. The unit is supplemented by dozens of short videos with top scholars who address questions such as: Why should we use the term "enslaved people" instead of "slaves"? What are the legacies of racial slavery? What does justice look like for those affected by slavery?

HOW DOES THIS CURRICULUM DIFFER FROM THE 1619 PROJECT AND ACCOMPANYING LESSONS PRODUCED BY THE PULITZER CENTER?

When the Center first made the decision to embark on this curriculum project, we wanted to make sure that we were not recreating something that had already been done and that we were producing something new. We also knew it was incredibly important to have this unit go beyond the narrative of slavery in the United States and to center the voices of those enslaved. It was imperative that resistance was a part of the story we told. *Racial Slavery in the Americas: Resistance, Freedom, and Legacies* does just that. By telling a more global story of racial slavery we are able to weave together

stories from places that sometimes are seen as not connected at all. In this project we told a story about the making of the Americas. This is important. Many students today come from other parts of the Americas where there was racial slavery. In today's world we need to connect the historical dots of what was a global system as one way to understand the world. This curriculum unit is an opportunity for students to see that the legacies of this history bind us beyond borders, whether that student is from Providence, RI, or any other part of the USA, Dominican Republic, Haiti, or Brazil.

ULTIMATELY, WHAT DO YOU HOPE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WILL TAKE FROM THIS CURRICULUM?

The history of racial slavery spans over 400 years. It shaped not only the Atlantic World but the history of many countries in Europe and Africa. That is a lot of ground for one curriculum unit to cover! We hope that the curriculum will provide an introduction to the different ways in which racial slavery shaped the modern world. We hope it provides teachers, and their students, with access to the wide variety of experiences of enslaved peoples in North America, South America, and the Caribbean. It is essential that society examines the legacies of racial slavery as the afterlife of this social system remains with us today shaping the structures of our societies. Finally, we hope it sparks in students ideas and informed discussions about what should be done to address the past and present effects of systemic racism.

Note: The *Racial Slavery in the Americas: Resistance, Freedom, and Legacies* curriculum is available for free from the Choices Program in a Digital Editions format until June 30, 2022, thanks to funding from CSSJ. A print copy of the unit is available for \$43 plus shipping. Bulk pricing is available. Visit www.choices.edu or email Mimi_Stephens@brown.edu to learn more.