

# A Culturally Responsive Teaching Guide

## Current Issues Series



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## How To Use This Guide

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Welcome to the Culturally Responsive Teaching Guide! This guide will feature Choices Program curriculum through the lens of culturally responsive teaching, focusing on one of the curriculum series the Choices Program offers: the [Current Issues Series](#).

We've highlighted examples of culturally responsive teaching themes that are embedded in Choices Program lessons, videos, and resource guides that you can bring into your classroom.

This guide is just the tip of the iceberg! You can find more culturally responsive teaching embedded throughout the Current Issues Series and the entire Choices curriculum catalog.

To use this guide, first check out **page 2** to learn more about culturally responsive teaching. Then browse through Choices Program materials using the Resource Key on **page 3**. You can also find a culturally responsive teaching reading list on **page 8**.

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## What is the Current Issues Series?

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The [Current Issues Series](#) takes students to the center of debates on contested international issues. Students consider multiple perspectives and various policy decisions as they gain content and conceptual knowledge; understand causality, connections, and significance; and build source analysis skills.

This series provides students with an understanding of the civic processes of governmental decision-making and an opportunity to explore civic engagement from multiple viewpoints. Careful attention is given to providing historical background to current issues and illuminating the social, political, economic, and intellectual forces leading up to the present moment.

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# What is Culturally Responsive Teaching?

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Culturally responsive teaching centers diverse students, their cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and communication styles in the classroom.

In the past 30 years, educators have used culturally responsive teaching (also called culturally relevant teaching or culturally sustaining pedagogy) as a pedagogical tool to support all students, and to especially address the achievement gap for underachieving students from marginalized backgrounds.

Culturally responsive teaching is a multi-faceted pedagogical approach supported by many practitioners and scholars. This guide cannot unpack three decades of culturally responsive teaching scholarship. Instead, we've included one way to condense culturally responsive teaching into the "core themes" box outlined to the right. You can also [click here](#) to watch an introductory video on culturally responsive teaching.

Please keep in mind that culturally responsive teaching is not Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory is a legal framework discussed in some classrooms at the collegiate level, focusing on systems of inequality in the law and legal institutions. Comparatively, culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogical framework for all learners, especially in K-12 classrooms, that supports students based on their own experiences.

## Culturally Responsive Teaching Core Themes<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Content Integration

The inclusion of content from many cultures, the fostering of positive teacher-student relationships, and holding high expectations for all students

### 2. Facilitating Knowledge Construction

The teacher's ability to build on what the students know while assisting them in learning to be critical, independent thinkers who are open to other ways of knowing

### 3. Prejudice Reduction

The teacher's ability to use an individual, societal, and systemic approach to build a positive, safe classroom environment in which all students are free to learn regardless of their race/ethnicity, social class, or language

### 4. Social Justice

Teachers' willingness "to act as agents of change," while encouraging their students to question and/or challenge the status quo in order to aid them in "the development of sociopolitical or critical consciousness"

### 5. Academic Development

The teacher's ability to "create opportunities in the classroom" that aid all students in developing as learners to achieve academic success, and the use of research-based instructional strategies that reflect the needs of a diversity of backgrounds and learning styles

# Content Integration

## Building Cultural Competence and Including Diverse Perspectives

Help students appreciate and celebrate their own cultures while gaining knowledge of and fluency in other cultures.

### Resource Guides

These two *Teaching with the News* resource guides—[Disability History and Studies](#) and [Transgender Identity and Rights](#)—provide educators with an array of resources, classroom activities, and ways to support students.



### “Never Again is Now:” Incarceration Histories and Solidarity

This [lesson](#) from the [Immigration and the U.S. Policy Debate](#) unit asks students to compare and contrast Japanese American incarceration in WWII with contemporary migrant detention, and explore how knowledge of history can inspire activism and build solidarity.



### Resource Key



Teaching with the News



Resource Guide



Lesson



Video



Paid



Free

### Why is it important to center marginalized people in the study of American history?

This [video](#) from Choices scholar [Dr. Kellie Carter Jackson](#) asks students to “name five” individuals from different cultural groups as a way to center and include diverse perspectives often omitted in American history.



# Facilitating Knowledge Construction

## Expressing Perspectives Collaboratively

Provide students with the opportunity to express their own perspectives through knowledge construction, working in small groups to build community.



### Historical Memory: Constructing a Memorial to Genocide

This hands-on and uplifting lesson from the [Confronting Genocide](#) unit challenges students to use diverse forms of expression to memorialize a genocide.



### Taking Action on Climate Change

[Climate Change and Questions of Justice](#)

### Taking Action on Human Rights

[Competing Visions of Human Rights](#)

In these two lessons, students work in groups to design an organization and create a visual publicity tool for their organization. These lessons ask students to articulate their opinions based on personal values, evidence, and political understanding.



# Social Justice

## Developing Sociopolitical Consciousness

Highlight the values and ethics of democracy, and take learning beyond the confines of the classroom to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems.

### Values and Public Policy

This *Teaching with the News* [lesson](#) asks students to identify and prioritize values they hold, explore differences openly and engage in constructive civic dialogue, and analyze how values inform perspectives on public policy.



### Expressing Your Views

This lesson from [The U.S. Role in a Changing World](#) unit asks students to write a letter to elected officials and articulate their own opinions on U.S. foreign policy based on newly acquired knowledge, personally held values, and historical understanding.



### Options Role Play

A key lesson found in nearly all Current Issues units, the Options Role Play provides students with an understanding of multiple viewpoints (called "options") on the public policy issue in question. Consider role plays in [Responding to Terrorism](#), [Climate Change and Questions of Justice](#), [Competing Visions of Human Rights](#), [Russia and the United States](#), and other Choices curriculum units.



# Academic Development

## Incorporating Visual Representation and Oral Traditions

Visuals, like comic books, political cartoons, and art, are powerful tools for students to process information and build communication skills. Include oral traditions, like songs, poetry, and storytelling, as a communal way to share knowledge.

### Cultural Responses to Dictatorship

This lesson from the [Nigeria](#) unit asks students to understand social and political factors that contributed to resistance to military dictatorships, analyzing artistic and cultural sources, including poetry, excerpts from novels and memoirs, song lyrics, and political cartoons.



### Interpreting Political Cartoons

This lesson from [The U.S. Role in a Changing World](#) unit asks students to explore a range of opinions on U.S. foreign policy by interpreting political cartoons from around the world.



### Expressing Political Views through Art

This lesson from [Mexico at the Crossroads](#) asks students to examine the styles and techniques of Mexican street artists and then draw sketches of their own murals.



### The Special Period: Cultural Expressions

This lesson from the [New Directions for Cuba](#) unit asks students to analyze the relationship between politics and popular culture using numerous sources from the 1990s, including literature, hip-hop lyrics, jokes, and art.



You can find additional **Academic Development** materials available on **page 7**.

# Academic Development

## Incorporating Visual Representation and Oral Traditions

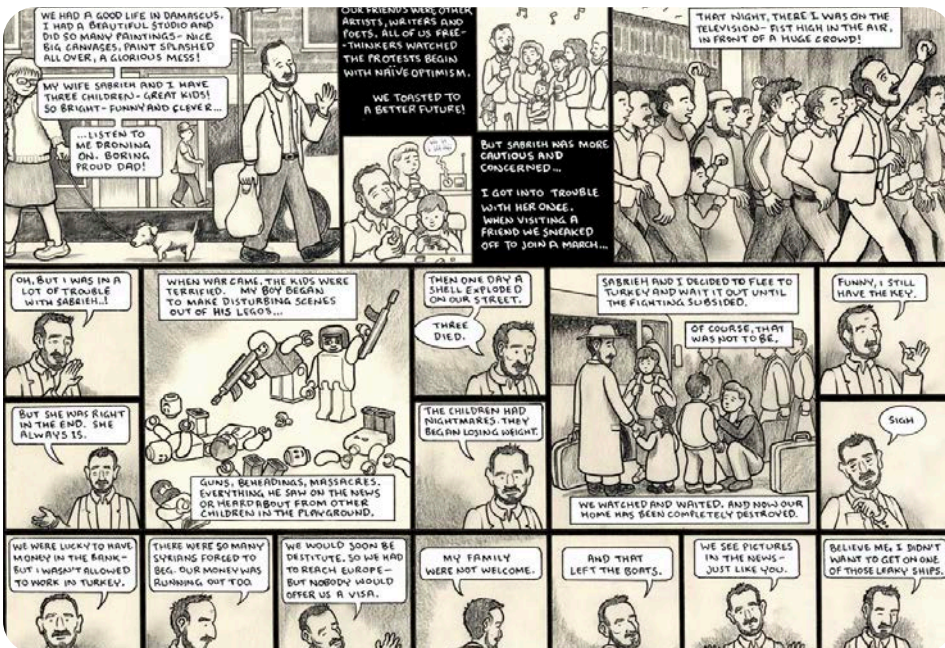
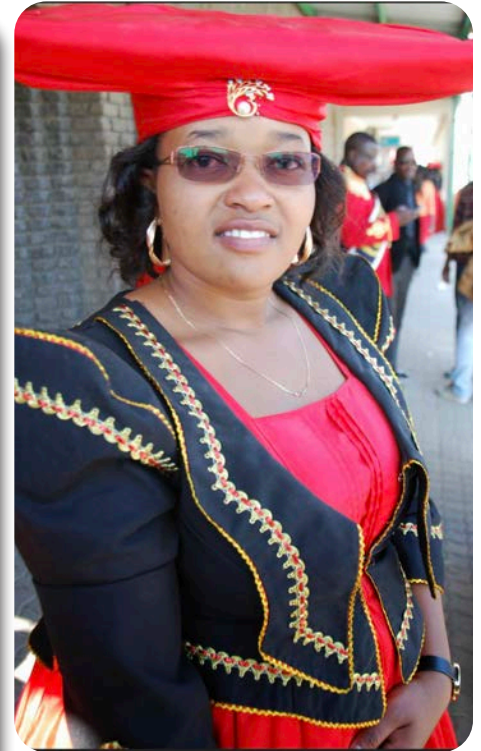
### Syrian Refugees: Understanding Stories with Comics

This [online lesson](#) from [The Syrian Civil War](#) and [The Middle East](#) units asks students to read and analyze comics that illustrate stories of Syrian refugees to learn more about the civil war and the broader refugee crisis.



### Fashion as Cultural Heritage and Historical Memory

This [online lesson](#) from the [Confronting Genocide](#) unit asks students to analyze a fashion piece as a historical object, view a slideshow of past and present OvaHerero fashion styles, and sketch their own fashion piece using symbolism.



### Refugee Stories: Mapping a Crisis

This [online lesson](#) from the [Immigration and the U.S. Policy Debate](#) unit asks students to map refugee data and read oral histories of refugees, migrants, and internationally displaced persons (IDPs).





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## Suggested Reading List

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Gay, Geneva. *Educating for Equity and Excellence: Enacting Culturally Responsive Teaching*. New York, New York: Teachers College Press, 2023.

Hammond, Zaretta. *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin, a SAGE Company, 2015.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria. "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0: A.k.a. the Remix." *Harvard Educational Review* 84.1 (2014): 74–84.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria. "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy." *American Educational Research Journal* 32.3 (1995): 465–491.

Paris, Django. "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice." *Educational Researcher* 41.3 (2012): 93–97.

Paris, Django. "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies and Our Futures." *The Educational Forum*, 85.4 (2021): 364–376.

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## About the Choices Program

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The Choices Program is a self-funded, non-profit organization affiliated with the Department of History at Brown University.

We write supplementary secondary social studies curriculum highlighting U.S. history, world history, current events, and geography courses. We collaborate with leading scholars to develop curriculum that reflects up-to-date historiography and equips students to develop the analytical skills necessary to become thoughtful global citizens.

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## Acknowledgments

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<sup>1</sup> These core themes are from Celia M Hernandez et. al., "The Development of a Model of Culturally Responsive Science and Mathematics Teaching," *Cultural Studies of Science Education* 8.4 (2013): 809–10.

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