

**HOUSING AND THE LAW: LESSON PLAN 8****LESSON 8****GIVEN THE HISTORY OF HOUSING DISCRIMINATION IN THE UNITED STATES, ARE AFRICAN AMERICANS OWED REPARATIONS?  
(90 MIN)**

Page | 1

**Objectives**

- Students will be introduced to the contemporary discussion around reparations to Black Americans through examining news articles, the H.R. 40 bill, opinion pieces, and videos.
- Students will continue to critically examine the ways in which Black Americans have been discriminated against through housing and property ownership in the 20th and 21st centuries.
- Students will discuss the implications of law and policy within historical and present-day context.
- Students will be able to distinguish between primary and secondary sources.

**Standards:**

- **Common Core:** CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9.
- **VA Standards of Learning (SOL):** VUS.1; VUS.9a; GOVT.1; GOVT.3; GOVT.12

**Materials**

- Handout 1: *New York Times* article “At Historic Hearing”
- Handout 2: Reparations and Housing
- Handout 3: H.R. 40 Bill
- Handout 4: Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, Part III
- Lesson 8 Key Terms
- Lesson 8 Discussion Questions and Writing Prompt
- Video: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/19/us/politics/slavery-reparations-hearing.html>
- Video of Mitch McConnell: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQz7kL\\_qrE4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQz7kL_qrE4)

**Standalone Materials:** These excerpts from Ta Nehesi-Coates’ article, “The Case for Reparations,” (*The Atlantic*) can be taught in order or used separately to enhance discussion around reparations. Each handout comes with discussion questions. Some include a writing prompt.

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

- Part I
- Part II
- Part III and H.R. 40 Bill (if this has not been covered previously in the main lesson)
- Part IV-V
- Part VI-VII
- Part VIII
- Part IX-X

**Article and Discussion for Further Exploration**

- New York Times article “Black People’s Land Was Stolen”
- Activity

**Additional Resources**

- <https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/lesson-on-reparations/>

<p><b>Probing for Prior Knowledge</b> (5-10 minutes)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the different exclusionary housing practices that have been discussed thus far and how these have impacted Black Americans and their families over generations. Discuss the various legal cases and laws that have either denied or aided in justice to Black Americans.</li> <li>• Explain to students that this lesson will examine the contemporary discussion around reparations to Black Americans. While people have a hard time agreeing on a definition of <b>reparations</b>, tell students that the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) offers a good definition:   <p style="text-align: center;">Reparations have been defined as: 1.) acknowledging violations committed against a group of people; 2.) identifying the root causes of these violations in order to prevent them from happening again in the future; and 3.) are issued by the government or by the people who committed these violations.<sup>1</sup></p> </li> </ul>

<p><b>REPARATIONS</b> <b>Historical Background</b> (5-10 min)</p>
<p>Explain the following to students (<i>sample language</i>):</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“In this unit, we have learned about how Black Americans have been unfairly discriminated against in the twentieth century when it comes to</p>

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.facinghistory.org/educator-resources/current-events/debate-over-reparations-racial-injustice>.

buying, selling and owning property. This lesson is focused on the discussion of reparations to Black Americans for the lasting harm caused by discrimination. Some people in the discussion believe that reparations address slavery. Others discuss the need to examine the legacy of discrimination through Jim Crow and racist twentieth-century housing practices (like the ones we have learned about in this unit). Some people think that reparations is not a practical solution at all. People also disagree over how these reparations should play out. Should it involve monetary payments, new policies, affirmative action or all of these things?

The discussion and even practice of reparations has a long history. There are records of reparations made to newly freed slaves, but it is also true that most freedmen never received their “40 acres and a mule.” The discussion was revived in 2014 when Ta Nehesi-Coates wrote an article for *The Atlantic*, entitled “The Case for Reparations” that called for the need to re-examine reparations in the twenty-first century. In 2019, Congress introduced H.R. 40, a bill that set up a commission to study and develop reparations proposals for Black Americans.

**Key Terms**

(10-15 minutes)

Review terms and definitions as a class. Clarify any terms students may have had difficulty with. Make sure to reinforce the vocabulary as students read the material.

**Reading Materials**

(20-30 min)

Break students up into groups of 4-5 students. Students can read individually or together in groups/pairs. Students can use the graphic organizer provided while reading to help track their comprehension.

Be sure to explain the difference between primary and secondary sources with students:

*Sample Language:*

- Primary sources are firsthand accounts of what happened during a particular historical time period. They can be letters, diary entries, speeches, newspapers (from that time period), photographs, etc.
- Secondary sources are not complete firsthand accounts, although they can contain primary source information such as quotes from people who lived during that time in history. Secondary sources are accounts recorded outside of (that is, after) the particular historical time period they discuss.

They can be published research articles, books, and other forms of media on a particular historical topic.<sup>2</sup>

Groups should be heterogeneous based on reading levels so that students can collaborate effectively with less assistance from the teacher. Circulate and offer help if needed.

**Discussion**  
(30 minutes)

After reading and reviewing documents, instruct students to begin answering discussion questions. Explain to students that they will be working together to determine the best argument/position for each question. To do this, they will engage in three rounds of dialogue (time permitting) with each question.

- In the first round, students will consider one position and come up with reasons or evidence to support it.
- In the second round, students will consider the opposing position, identifying reasons or evidence to refute the first position.
- In the third round, students will work together to come up with the best answer to the question.

Remind students that they are working together to come up with the most convincing argument.

You can also assign roles within groups, such as question reader, note taker, reporter.

Students will share responses with the whole class after the group discussion.

*Circulate while students discuss; do not necessarily provide answers but ask probing questions to proposed simple solutions.*

**Writing Prompt**

Have students independently answer the writing prompt after whole class discussion

- *The writing prompt can be assigned as homework if time does not permit completion.*

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see <https://umb.libguides.com/PrimarySources/secondary>

## Standards

### Common Core Social Studies Standards

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1**  
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2**  
Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3**  
Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4**  
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9**  
Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1**  
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2**  
Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3**  
Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5**  
Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7**  
Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8**  
Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9.**  
Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

### VA Standards of Learning (SOL)

- **VUS.1:** The student will demonstrate skills for historical thinking, geographical analysis, economic decision making, and responsible citizenship by a) synthesizing evidence from artifacts and primary and secondary sources to obtain information about events in Virginia and United States history; b) using geographic information to determine patterns and trends in Virginia and United States history; c) interpreting charts, graphs, and pictures to determine characteristics of people, places, or events in Virginia and United States history; d) constructing arguments, using evidence from multiple sources; e) comparing and contrasting historical, cultural, economic, and political perspectives in Virginia and United States history; f) explaining how indirect cause-and-effect relationships impact people, places, and events in Virginia and United States history; g) analyzing multiple connections across time and place; h) using a decision-making model to analyze and explain the incentives for and consequences of a specific choice made; i) identifying the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and ethical use of material and intellectual property; and j) investigating and researching to develop products orally and in writing.
- **VUS.9a:** The student will apply social science skills to understand the emerging role of the United States in world affairs during the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by explaining changes in foreign policy of the United States toward Latin America and Asia and the growing influence of the United States, with emphasis on the impact of the Spanish-American War.
- **GOVT.1:** The student will demonstrate skills for historical thinking, geographical analysis, economic decision making, and responsible citizenship by a) planning inquiries by synthesizing information from diverse primary and secondary sources; b) analyzing how political and economic trends influence public policy, using demographic information and other data sources; c) comparing and contrasting historical, cultural, economic, and political perspectives; d) evaluating critically the quality, accuracy, and validity of information to determine misconceptions, fact and opinion, and bias; e) constructing informed, analytic arguments, using evidence from multiple sources to introduce and support substantive and significant claims; f) explaining how cause-and-effect relationships impact political and economic events; g) taking knowledgeable, constructive action, individually and collaboratively, to address school, community, local, state, national, and global issues; h) using a decision-making model to analyze the costs and benefits of a specific choice, considering incentives and possible consequences; i) applying civic virtues and democratic principles to make collaborative decisions; and j) communicating conclusions orally and in writing to a wide range of audiences, using evidence from multiple sources and citing specific sources.

- **GOVT.3:** The student will apply social science skills to understand the concepts of democracy by a) recognizing the fundamental worth and dignity of the individual; b) recognizing the equality of all citizens under the law; c) recognizing what defines a citizen and how noncitizens can become citizens; d) recognizing majority rule and minority rights; e) recognizing the necessity of compromise; and f) recognizing the freedom of the individual.
- **GOVT.12:** The student will apply social science skills to understand the role of the United States in a changing world by a) describing the responsibilities of the national government for foreign policy and national security; b) assessing the role of national interest in shaping foreign policy and promoting world peace; and c) examining the relationship of Virginia and the United States to the global economy, including trends in international trade.