
Viewing Guide for *The 1619 Project* Docuseries Episode 1: “Democracy”

The 1619 Project is a Hulu documentary series expanding on The 1619 Project initiative created by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones for The New York Times Magazine. The six-part series seeks to reframe the country’s history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans at the center of our national narrative. You can view the documentary series at [hulu.com/series/the-1619-project](https://www.hulu.com/series/the-1619-project).

About this Guide

Each episode of the series calls on historians, journalists, and community leaders to share their insight and expertise on the enduring legacy of slavery and its impact on our current society. Each episode contains information that could be useful for a variety of classroom contexts and weaves together multiple related themes and plotlines. It is possible for students to engage with these key themes without viewing the hour-length episodes in full, particularly if they are utilizing other 1619 Project materials as supplemental texts.

As such, we’ve created a guide that allows for both thematic and linear viewing of each episode:

- In the [About the Episode](#) section of this guide, you will find a summary of the key themes, the relevant time stamps for those themes, and some supplemental texts from *The 1619 Project* to help deepen student understanding.
- In the following [Linear Viewing Guide](#) section, you will find a table that splits the episode into sections from start to finish with time stamps and discussion questions.
- At the end of the guide, you will find a [Topic Index](#) for the episode listing the key people, events, concepts, terms, and more to assist with lesson planning and standards alignment.

Some parts of this episode include footage of modern political moments and events like the January 6th Insurrection. We’ve marked sections with this footage with an asterisk so that teachers with restrictions on teaching current events in the classroom may review.

Some of the history and personal stories told in this episode are hard to listen to because they describe violence and painful events. We suggest having a classroom social-emotional learning protocol for engaging with hard histories and inviting students to think through how they can care for themselves when things are both important to know and difficult to listen to.

About Episode 1: Democracy

“Democracy” explores the many ways in which Black Americans have fought to help the U.S. move toward the ideal of democracy it was founded on and the resistance they have routinely experienced in this work.

Themes in this episode include:

- America’s Founding Mythology
- Black Patriotism and Advancement of Democracy
- Voter Disenfranchisement and Threats to Democracy

Theme: America’s Founding Mythology

Summary of Theme	This theme serves as a foundation for <i>The 1619 Project</i> . It explores the way we teach the history of America’s founding and the historical details that tend to be excluded.
Relevant Time Stamps	00:00-02:15 (Introduction and Project Thesis) 14:25-21:48 (Centering Black People in Revolutionary History) 21:48-23:18 (Interlude: The Way History is Taught) 24:30-29:50 (Anti-Blackness during the Civil War and Reconstruction) 29:50-31:12 (Interlude: The Black Fight for Democracy)
Supplemental Reading	From <i>The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story</i> Chapter 1: “Democracy” by Nikole Hannah-Jones Chapter 8: “Citizenship” by Martha Jones “Like to the Rushing of a Mighty Wind” by Tracy K. Smith “A Ghazalled Sentence After ‘My People Hold On’ by Eddie Kendricks and the Negro Act of 1740” by Terrance Hayes

Theme: Black Patriotism and Advancement of Democracy

Summary of Theme	This theme also frames the project as a whole. It explores the ways Black Americans have long claimed America as their homeland despite being denied full inclusion in American society. The docuseries argues that Black Americans have challenged the nation to realize the fullness of its professed democratic ideals.
Relevant Time Stamps	00:00-02:15 (Introduction and Project Thesis) 02:15-06:18 (Understanding Black Patriotism) 06:18-08:08 (Interlude: Black People’s Contributions to America)

	<p>21:48-24:30 (Interludes: How History is Taught & 1619 Pushback)*</p> <p>29:50-31:12 (Interlude: The Black Fight for Democracy)</p> <p>31:12-40:11 (The Civil Rights Era and the SNCC)</p> <p>40:11-41:35 (Interlude: The Voting Rights Act)</p> <p>49:14-50:27 (Interlude: Black Freedom Struggles as Foundational)</p> <p>58:15-59:36 (Close)</p>
Supplemental Reading	<p><i>Born on the Water</i> by Nikole Hannah-Jones and Renée Watson. Illustrated by Nikkolos Smith</p> <p><u><i>From The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story</i></u> Chapter 1: “Democracy” by Nikole Hannah-Jones Chapter 17: “Progress” by Ibram X. Kendi “First to Rise” by Yusef Komunyakaa</p>

Theme: Voter Disenfranchisement and Threats to Democracy

Summary of Theme	<p>American citizens participate in democracy through their votes. This theme explores the efforts to restrict the voting power of Black Americans from the late 19th century to modern day. It also explores the ways Black Americans have continuously challenged these efforts and contended for the right to vote.</p>
Relevant Time Stamps	<p>00:00-02:15 (Introduction and Project Thesis)</p> <p>08:08-14:25 (Voting and Disenfranchisement)*</p> <p>14:25-15:20 (Interlude: Perfection of Democracy)</p> <p>31:12-40:11 (The Civil Rights Era and the SNCC)</p> <p>40:11-41:35 (Interlude: The Voting Rights Act)</p> <p>40:35-49:14 (Modern Restrictive Voting Laws)*</p> <p>49:14-50:27 (Interlude: Black Freedom Struggles as Foundational)</p> <p>50:27-56:24 (Threats to Democracy in Modern Politics)*</p> <p>56:24-58:15 (Hopes for the Future of Democracy)</p>
Supplemental Reading	<p><u><i>From The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story</i></u> Chapter 1: “Democracy” by Nikole Hannah-Jones</p>

These materials were created by Pulitzer Center Education staff to support utilizing *The 1619 Project* as an instructional tool. You can find our full *1619 Project* Education Materials Collection at <https://1619education.org/>.

	Chapter 7: "Politics" by Jamelle Bouie "Quotidian" by Natasha Trethewey "An Absolute Massacre" by ZZ Packer
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Linear Viewing Guide: Democracy

Some questions to consider before viewing:

1. What is democracy? How have you heard it defined? What is the relationship between democracy and freedom?
2. What do you already know about *The 1619 Project*? Where does this information come from? What do you expect to see or learn in this docuseries episode?
3. Some of the history and personal stories told in this episode are hard to listen to because they describe painful events. What can we do to take care of ourselves when something is both important to hear and difficult to listen to?

Time Stamp	Main Topic	Questions to consider
00:00-02:15	Intro/Project Thesis	What does it mean to have a claim to something? What are some identities and communities you claim for yourself? What argument does Nikole Hannah-Jones make about Black Americans and the American flag in this introduction? Why might someone agree or disagree with her statement?
02:15-06:18	The patriotism of Nikole's father	What is patriotism? How have you heard it defined? What opinions have you heard about who should or should not be patriotic?
06:18-08:08	Interlude: Contributions of Black Americans	Can you name any Black American historical figures who have contributed to advancing democracy? Are you familiar with any Black Americans working to advance democracy today?
08:08-14:25	Voting and Disenfranchisement*	What do you know about the voting laws and restrictions in your state? Where could you find out more information about them?
14:25-15:20	Interlude: Perfection of Democracy	What is mythology? What do you think Nikole Hannah-Jones is referring to when she speaks of a "national mythology?" How do you think we can work to distinguish mythology from history?

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15:20-21:48	Revolutionary History/Dunmore's Proclamation (The phrase "Get the hell out of here" is used)	Did you know the history of Lord Dunmore and Dunmore's Proclamation before? How does our understanding of the Revolutionary War change when this history is included? Woody Holton says, "If slaves had been as passive as I was taught they were, the revolution might not have come to the south." What have you been taught about enslaved people's resistance and agency?
21: 48-23:18	Interlude: The Way History is Taught	<i>Before the Mayflower</i> , the book Nikole Hannah-Jones credits with sparking her journey to learn more about Black American history, has been banned in several schools and libraries. What impact do you think banning this and similar books can have on student learning?
23:18-24:30	Interlude: Pushback to <i>The 1619 Project</i> *	Nikole Hannah-Jones compares the fight for the inclusion of enslavement in American history education to the ways that Black Americans have struggled for inclusion in American society. What parallels do you see between the two struggles?
24:30-29:50	Civil War and Reconstruction	What did Abraham Lincoln hope freed Black people would do after the Civil War? Why was this proposal a racist one? According to W.E.B. Du Bois, Abraham Lincoln had to call in Black Americans to save the union, abolish slavery, and establish democracy. Du Bois seems to suggest that democracy did not exist before emancipation. In what ways do enslavement and democracy contradict each other? How did the "race neutral" voter suppression laws passed after Reconstruction specifically target Black men? What other demographics of people do you think could have also been impacted by these laws?
29: 50-31: 12	Interlude: Black Fight for Democracy	What is the relationship between democracy and enfranchisement (gaining the right to vote)?
31:12-40:11	Civil Rights/The SNCC Fight for Voting Rights (Descriptions of The Terror r and Brutalization Black Activists Faced)	What kinds of pushback did activists during the Civil Rights era face in their pursuit of voting rights for Black Americans? Why do you believe that there was such great resistance to granting Black Americans the right to vote? Why does MacArthur Cotton believe some of that resistance still exists today?

40:11-41:35	Interlude: Voting Rights Act	<p>What events led to the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965?</p> <p>How did the Voting Rights Act of 1965 help to expand the legal rights of all Americans?</p>
41:35-49:14	Modern Restrictive Voting Laws*	<p>What can we learn from the work of the Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda with the residents of Cosby Spear Tower?</p> <p>How has the 2013 <i>Shelby v. Holder</i> Supreme Court decision impacted voting rights across the nation? Do you agree that it demonstrates a community in crisis?</p>
49:14-50:27	Interlude: Black Freedom Struggles as Foundational	<p>How have Black American freedom struggles been foundational to other struggles?</p> <p>What other freedom struggles are you interested in learning more about?</p>
50:27-56:24	Threats to Democracy in Modern Politics*	<p>How does the footage of recent political protests, rallies, and conflicts mirror or differ from the archival footage we see of other historical periods in the episode? What questions and emotions does the footage bring up for you?</p> <p>What do Stephan Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt identify as the warning signs of a threat to democracy? Why are these signs concerning?</p>
56:24-58:15	Hopes for the Future of Democracy	<p>What does Mary-Pat Hector believe about legacy? Who are some individuals from your community you believe have important legacies to remember?</p>
58:15-59:36	Close/Black people as Solution	<p>Nikole Hannah-Jones states her thesis from the beginning of the episode in a new way here. How has your understanding of her argument changed in your viewing?</p>

Some questions to consider after viewing:

1. How has viewing this episode changed your understanding of the rights and liberties you have today? How has it changed your understanding of American democracy?
2. How are imagery and audio used to help with storytelling in this episode? How is the experience of viewing the docuseries similar or different to reading the text?
3. What additional research do you want to do about U.S. history after learning about the ways in which research can expand your understanding of a topic?

Topic Index

Amendments, Legislation, Supreme Court Cases

- [Dunmore's Proclamation \(1775\)](#)
- [Election Integrity Act of 2021 \(Georgia\)](#)
- [Fifteenth Amendment](#)
- [Fourteenth Amendment](#)
- [Shelby County v. Holder](#)
- [Thirteenth Amendment](#)
- [The Voting Rights Act of 1965](#)

Concepts and Terms

- Affirmative action
- Democracy
- Erasure
- Disenfranchisement
- Freedom
- Grandfather Clauses
- Identity
- Jim Crow
- Literacy test
- Lynching
- Multiracialism
- National mythology
- Poll tax
- Race massacre
- Racial apartheid
- Segregation
- Self-emancipation
- Sharecropping
- Underground Railroad
- Voter suppression

Events

- 2020 Georgia Senate Election
- The American Revolution
- Battle of Kemp's Landing
- Bloody Sunday
- The Civil rights movement
- The Civil War
- The Compromise of 1877
- [Department of Justice Sues Georgia](#)
- The Great Migration
- [Greenwood Voter Registration Project](#)
- The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom
- The Nadir of Race Relations/The Redemption
- Reconstruction
- Segregation
- Selma to Montgomery March
- Wilmington Massacre (1898)

Subject Matter Experts

- [Daniel Ziblatt](#), Professor of Government at Harvard University
- Helen Butler, Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda
- [Kidada E. Williams](#), Professor of History at Wayne State University
- [MacArthur Cotton](#), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
- [Mary-Pat Hector](#), Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda
- [Stephen Levitsky](#), Professor of Government at Harvard University
- [Woody Holton](#), Professor of History at University of South Carolina

Organizations

- Black Youth Vote
- [Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda](#)
- The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)
 - [SNCC Digital Archive](#)

Historical and Political Figures Mentioned

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|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| ● Abraham Lincoln | ● Justice John Roberts | ● Robert Purvis |
| ● Barack Obama | ● Lord Dunmore (John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore) | ● Rutherford B. Hayes |
| ● Charles "Chuck" McDew | ● MacArthur Cotton | ● Senator Chuck Schumer |
| ● Coretta Scott King | ● Ray Dial | ● Thomas Jefferson |
| ● Donald Trump | ● Robert "Bob" Moses | ● W.E.B. Du Bois |
| ● Frederick Douglass | | |
| ● George W. Bush | | |
| ● James Madison | | |

Locations Visited

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| ● Atlanta, Georgia <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Paschal's Restaurant & Bar○ Cosby Spear Towers | ○ LeFlore County Courthouse, Greenwood, Mississippi |
| ● Brooklyn, New York <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Plymouth Church | ● Kosciusko, Mississippi |
| ● Cambridge, Massachusetts | ● Waterloo, Iowa |
| ● Greenwood, Mississippi - The Cotton Capital of the World | ● Williamsburg, Virginia <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Governor's Palace |