

African American History 400+ years of Resistance, Resilience, Power, and Pride

Today you will become smarter
about the history of African Americans and the 1619 Project.

Standards/SJ Standards

History Social Science Standards CA

5.4 Students understand the political, religious, social, and economic institutions that evolved in the colonial era.

6. Describe the introduction of slavery into America, the responses of slave families to their condition, the ongoing struggle between proponents and opponents of slavery, and the gradual institutionalization of slavery in the South.

Teaching Hard History Standards

Essential Knowledge 15

In every place and time, enslaved people sought freedom.

15.E Escape was difficult and rare, but some people managed to flee. Enslaved people who escaped were known as “fugitive slaves,” and people chased after them, since there was often a cash reward for returning enslaved people who ran away.

15.F Enslaved people pursued freedom in many ways other than escape, including saving money to buy their freedom and their relatives’ freedom, and turning to the courts to seek freedom.

Social Justice Standards

13. Students will analyze the harmful impact of bias and injustice on the world, historically and today.
14. Students will recognize that power and privilege influence relationships on interpersonal, intergroup and institutional levels and consider how they have been affected by those dynamics.
15. Students will identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.

15.B Some enslaved people tried to rebel, but these actions were difficult and mostly unsuccessful because people in power wanted slavery to continue and had many more resources (including weapons) to put down rebellions.

What is the 1619 Project?



[The New
York
Times
Articles](#)

How did the 1619 Project begin?

**"I SEE MY WORK AS FORCING US
TO CONFRONT OUR HYPOCRISY,
FORCING US TO CONFRONT THE
TRUTH THAT WE WOULD RATHER
IGNORE."**



NIKOLE HANNAH-JONES

Nikole Hannah-Jones is a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter covering racial injustice for The New York Times Magazine and creator of the landmark The 1619 Project, now a Hulu original docuseries.

Originally a special project of The New York Times Magazine, The 1619 Project book debuted at #1 on The New York Times bestseller list. Nikole also co-wrote a children's book, called Born on the Water, which also debuted at #1 on The New York Times bestseller list. The 1619 Project is now a six-part docuseries streaming on Hulu.

Nikole is a believer in Black institutions, and is the co-founder of the [Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting](#) at Morehouse College **and founder of the** [1619 Freedom School](#) in her hometown of Waterloo, Iowa, and the [Center for Journalism & Democracy](#) at Howard University, where she is the Knight Chair in Race and Journalism.

Nikole lectures all over the U.S. and across the globe on the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and its legacy, including giving a speech before the United Nations General Assembly in 2022 during the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

What you think about when you see the American Flag? What does it make you think about in history? What kinds of people or images do you associate with the American Flag?



The United States is a nation founded on both an ideal and a lie. Our Declaration of Independence, approved on July 4, 1776, proclaims that “all men are created equal” and “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.” But the white men who drafted those words did not believe them to be true for the hundreds of thousands of black people in their midst. “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” did not apply to fully one-fifth of the country. Yet despite being violently denied the freedom and justice promised to all, black Americans believed fervently in the American creed. Through centuries of black resistance and protest, we have helped the country live up to its founding ideals. And not only for ourselves — black rights struggles paved the way for every other rights struggle, including women’s and gay rights, immigrant and disability rights.

Without the idealistic, strenuous and patriotic efforts of black Americans, our democracy today would most likely look very different — it might not be a democracy at all.

The very first person to die for this country in the American Revolution was a black man who himself was not free. Crispus Attucks was a fugitive from slavery, yet he gave his life for a new nation in which his own people would not enjoy the liberties laid out in the Declaration for another century. In every war this nation has waged since that first one, black Americans have fought — today we are the most likely of all racial groups to serve in the United States military.

My father, one of those many black Americans who answered the call, knew what it would take me years to understand: that the year 1619 is as important to the American story as 1776. That black Americans, as much as those men cast in alabaster in the nation’s capital, are this nation’s true “founding fathers.” And that no people has a greater claim to that flag than us.



Our democracy's founding ideals were false when they were written. *Black Americans* have fought to make them true.

By **Nikole Hannah-Jones**

AUG. 14, 2019

In August of 1619, a ship appeared on this horizon, near Point Comfort, a coastal port in the English colony of Virginia. It carried more than 20 enslaved Africans, who were sold to the colonists. No aspect of the country that would be formed here has been untouched by the years of slavery that followed. On the 400th anniversary of this fateful moment, it is finally time to tell our story truthfully.

Born on the Water Read Aloud



The graphic features a yellow background with a pattern of colorful confetti. On the left is a circular logo with a rainbow gradient, containing an illustration of a young girl with dark skin and hair reading a red book. The text 'BOOK READINGS' is arched over the top of the circle, and 'With Mrs. Bernard' is arched along the bottom. To the right, the text 'Today's Story:' is written in a large, white, serif font. Below this is the book cover for 'Born on the Water' by The Way Project, showing two children in the ocean. At the bottom, the word 'Authors' is centered above two portrait photos of women, and the word 'Illustrator' is centered above a portrait photo of a man.

BOOK READINGS
With Mrs. Bernard

Today's Story:

The Way Project
Born on the Water
A Novel of Survival, Hope, and Homecoming

Authors

Illustrator

A, E, I, O, U, 1, 2 Use this approach to help read words with multiple syllables.

- 1.
2. Place an X under each A, E, I, O, U
3. Count the letters between the X's
4. Split between:
(X and X) example: jo/vi/al
(X and 1) example: te/na/cious
(1 and 2) example: bal/lad

Do not separate blends or word groupings that need each other.
ous, qu, bi, cl, dr, pr, cial, tion

Ancestor

haughtiness

democracy

wondrously

What Grandma Tells Me

They say our people were born on the water,
but our people had a home, a place, a land
before they were sold.

400 years ago, in 1619, our ancestors were taken
and brought here on a ship called the *White Lion*
a whole year before the *Mayflower* arrived.

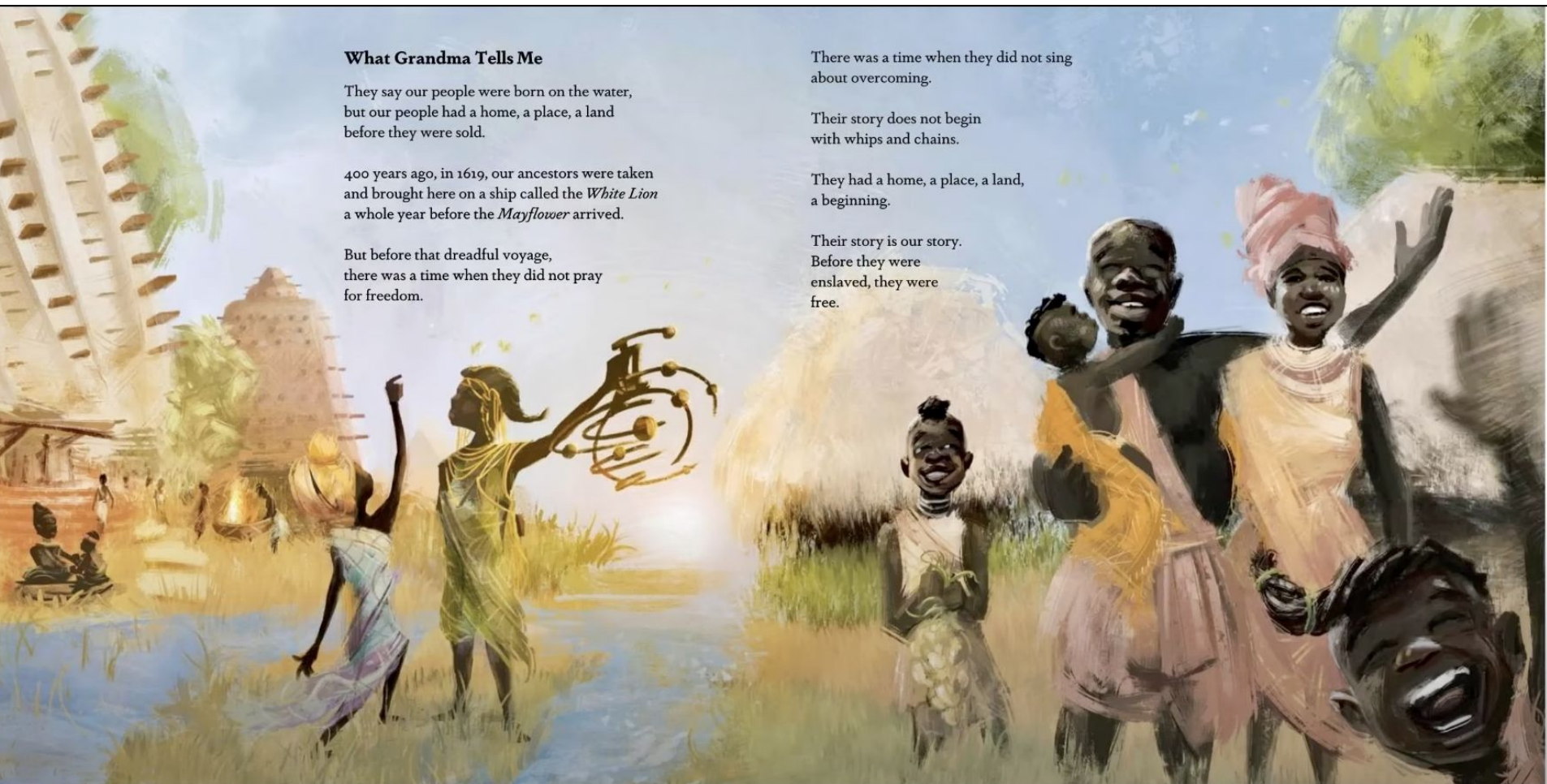
But before that dreadful voyage,
there was a time when they did not pray
for freedom.

There was a time when they did not sing
about overcoming.

Their story does not begin
with whips and chains.

They had a home, a place, a land,
a beginning.

Their story is our story.
Before they were
enslaved, they were
free.



Legacy

And the people who were born on the water survived.
Kept living and living.

It was illegal to teach enslaved people how to read,
but they birthed generations of
teachers and librarians,
scholars and authors.

They were brokenhearted, beaten, and bruised,
but they became healers,
pastors and activists,
doctors and counselors.

No one could steal the people's joy.
They wrote songs,
created jazz and hip-hop,
rhythm and blues.

They became
inventors and athletes,
nurses and cooks,
pilots and architects,
farmers and housekeepers,
singers and artists,
dancers and poets,
mathematicians and scientists.

They passed on their stories
through the stitch of a quilt,
shared secret messages through songs.

The people survived.
The people fought.

And because the people survived
and because the people fought,
they finally got freedom.

And because the people survived
and because the people fought,
America has equality in the law.

And because the people survived
and because the people fought,
America began to live up to its promise of democracy.

It is the people who fight for this democracy still.



Pride

Grandma looks at me and my brother, tells us,
“This is why we say
Black Lives Matter,
why we celebrate Black Girl Magic,
why we believe we are our ancestors’ wildest dreams.

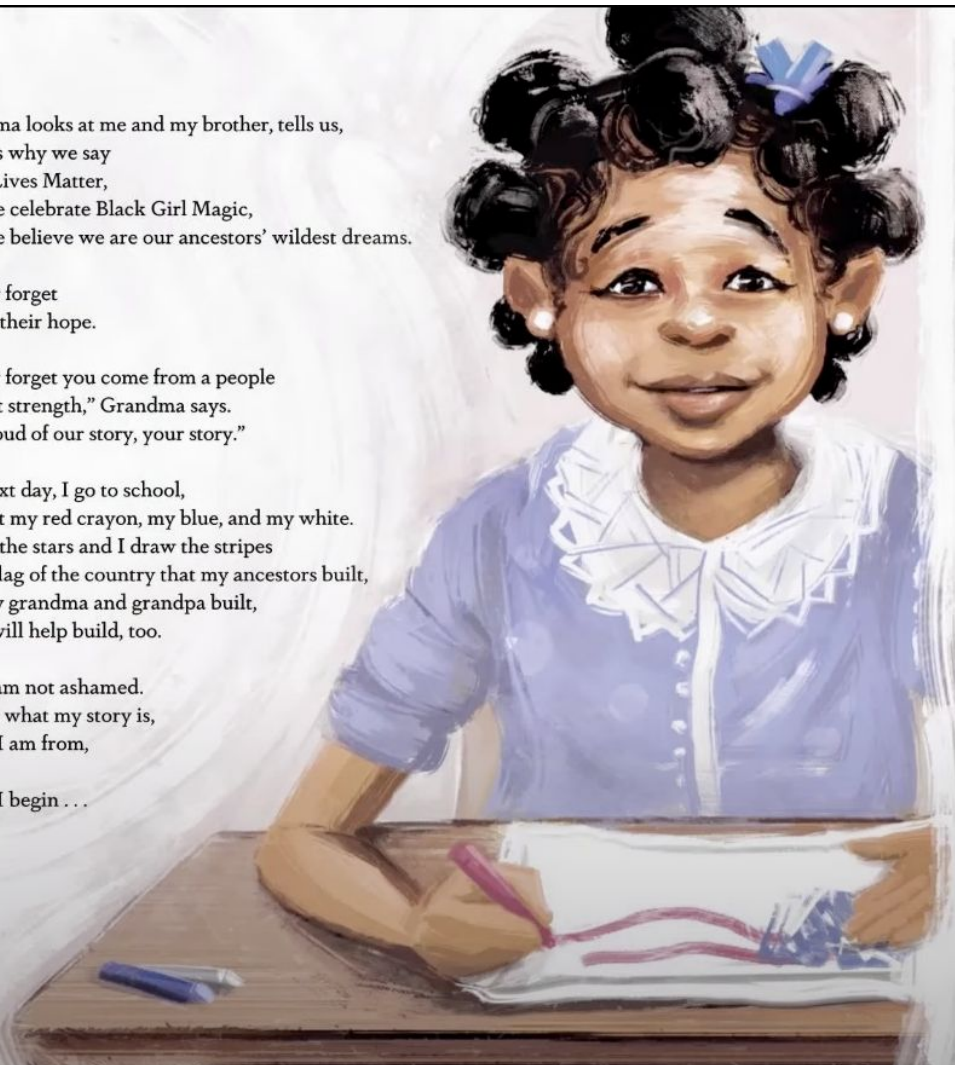
“Never forget
we are their hope.

“Never forget you come from a people
of great strength,” Grandma says.
“Be proud of our story, your story.”

The next day, I go to school,
pull out my red crayon, my blue, and my white.
I draw the stars and I draw the stripes
of the flag of the country that my ancestors built,
that my grandma and grandpa built,
that I will help build, too.

And I am not ashamed.
I know what my story is,
where I am from,

where I begin . . .



Exploring 400 years of the African American Experience

4 minutes, 25 seconds

Developed by a group of NPS staff and interns, this film explores the trauma, resilience, and beauty of the African American experience in our country.

The title, “Twenty & Odd,” is taken from a quote from English colonist John Rolfe describing the number of the first enslaved Africans brought to Virginia in 1619. The creative team chose this title to reclaim power of Rolfe’s phrasing and instead celebrate all that Black and African American communities represent and contribute to our collective heritage, through the lens of national parks.

The narrative for “Twenty & Odd” is Maya Angelou’s remarkable piece, “Still I Rise.” Through its voice and imagery, the film advances messages of African American empowerment, remembrance, education, inspiration, and engagement in iconic places stewarded by the National Park Service.

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/africanamericanheritage/twenty-and-odd.htm>

Still I Rise Maya Angelou 1928 –2014

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.
Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Discussion Questions for *Still I Rise*

What is the title of the poem? What do you think "Still I Rise" might mean?

Who do you think is talking in the poem? What do you imagine this person might be feeling or experiencing?

Why do you think the poem repeats the line "I rise" so many times? How does that make you feel when you hear it?

If you were to draw a picture of what the poem is about, what would it look like?

Reading for Fluency

Their Hands Had a Knowing

Their hands had a knowing,
They knew how to hold a baby close,
how to rock the child to keep her from crying.

Their hands knew how to mix herbs,
how to get the just-right flavor for a meal.

Their hands knew how to beat
and twist and shape iron.
How to make gardening tools, armor, and weapons.

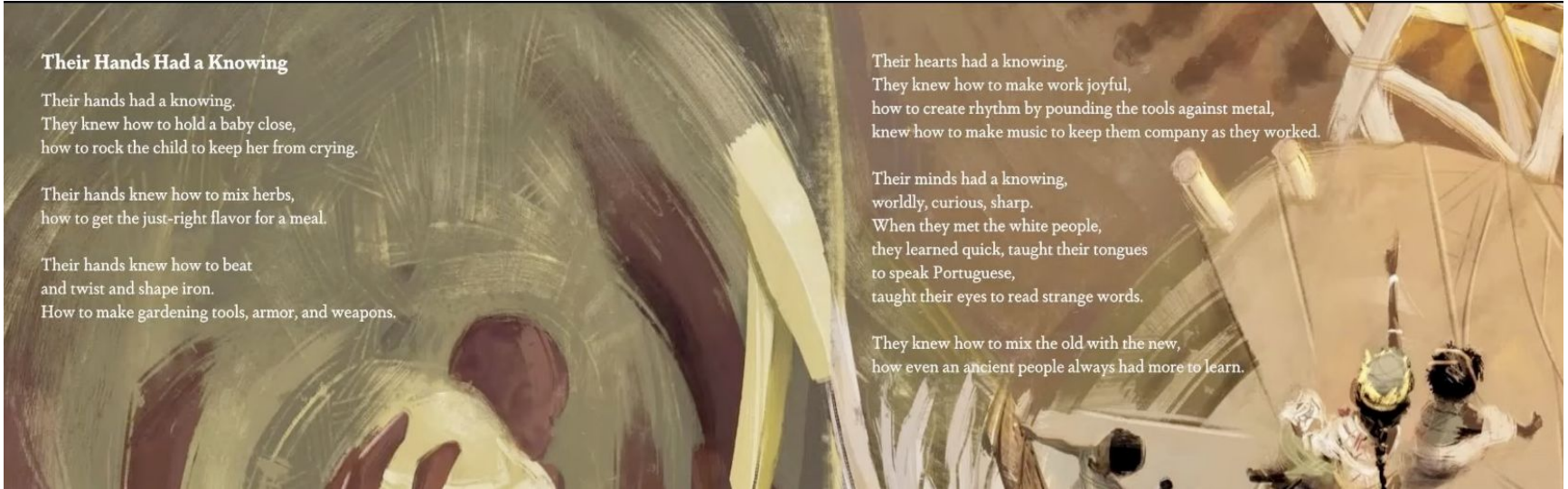
Their hearts had a knowing.

They knew how to make work joyful,
how to create rhythm by pounding the tools against metal,
knew how to make music to keep them company as they worked.

Their minds had a knowing,
worldly, curious, sharp.

When they met the white people,
they learned quick, taught their tongues
to speak Portuguese,
taught their eyes to read strange words.

They knew how to mix the old with the new,
how even an ancient people always had more to learn.



Writing Tips Use the following tips to complete your writing using the texts and the videos. Remember to **include what you learned** about the topic. Also, **share your thinking about what you learned**.

Using the texts and videos

- Write what you learned about (topic) from the examples, the reading and the videos.
- Write what you will do with what you have learned.
- What thoughts or questions do you have after today's lesson?

Sentence starters-

Today I learned about...

One thing I connected with was ...

This helped me understand

An example of resistance was

Visualizing Back Joy

**Three Artists Explain and Visualize
What Black Joy Means to Them**

