

## **Rhetorical Case Study: How should US History be taught in schools?**

This week, we will begin to examine the rhetoric on both sides of a divisive and controversial issue: the question of how US History should be taught in schools and the controversy surrounding “Critical Race Theory” and related ideas. We will be consuming media for the next few days and culminating in a seminar on Friday on the topic.

### **KEY QUESTIONS:**

- What is critical race theory?
- Is it being taught in schools?
- Should it be?
- What are the motives and values on both sides of this issue?
- How should America's history be taught to young people?
- To what degree should we be taking a critical lens to issues of racism and systemic oppression (in the past and the present)?
- How is ***rhetoric*** shaping this issue?

### **IN OUR LOCAL NEWS!**

[Montezuma-Cortez School Board passes resolution opposing critical race theory](#) (*The Journal*, September 23, 2021)

**1. CRT Controversy Pre-write** (One solid paragraph): Before beginning to research the rhetoric of the case, where do you think you find yourself on this issue? What do you think about the School Board decision in Montezuma-Cortez? Where do you think your opinions and values on this topic come from? What experiences or exposure to rhetoric have formed your opinions?

## **2. WHAT IS HAPPENING? What is the Controversy?**

[Donald Trump announces Patriotic Education Commission](#) (September 2020)

[Why Americans are so divided over teaching critical race theory](#) (*PBS Newshour* June 24, 2021)

[What is Critical Race Theory and Why is it Under Attack?](#) (*Education Week*, May 18, 2021)

### **Answer the following questions:**

1. To the best of your ability, explain “critical race theory” and the controversy surrounding the perception that it is being taught in schools.
2. What questions do you have at this point?

### 3. GOOGLE IMAGE SEARCH FOR POLITICAL CARTOONS ON CRT

- a. Look through the cartoons and choose two that seem to have opposing biases.
- b. Cut and paste your two choices into this document
- c. For each one, answer the following below the cut-and-pasted cartoon
  1. What is the message?
  2. What beliefs and values does the cartoonist seem to be appealing to?
  3. Do you agree with the perspective of the cartoon? Why or why not?

PASTE CARTOONS AND NOTES BELOW:

### 4. RESEARCH THE DEBATE (see linked resources below)

\*\*\*Annotate texts for seminar Monday!!!

1. [Indigenous history, culture cut from South Dakota standards](#) (AP News: Aug 10, 2021)
2. [History should be taught, not forgotten](#) (*Indian Country Today*: Aug 13, 2021)
3. [Combatting Critical Race Theory in your Community: An A to Z Guide](#) (*Citizens for Renewing America*, 2021) Read at least through page 9
4. [CRT in a thread: Twitter, Michael Harriot](#)
  - a. [Why White People Hate Critical Race Theory, Explained](#)
5. Podcast (or transcript): [What are states really banning when they ban CRT?](#) (*New York Times*, Aug 18, 2021)
6. (OPTIONAL) [The Conservative Case Against Banning Critical Race Theory](#)
7. (OPTIONAL) [To understand the history wars, follow the paper trail](#) (*The Hill*, July 2021)
8. (OPTIONAL) Historical Context (this debate is not new!): “[The Great Textbook War](#)” (American Radioworks) NOTE: This could make for a great Honors project!
9. Additional research: Google the issue to continue to explore the two sides. Document your additional sources here with links!

5. What are some *arguments and appeals* that emerge in this issue?  
(Identify at least 5 arguments and 5 appeals on each side.)

Arguments for <b>banning CRT and teaching US history/civics in a way that de-emphasizes race and oppression</b>	Appeals (to values, emotions, convictions, etc)

What do people on this side of the issue care about? What might they believe about America?	

Arguments for <b>studying history through a critical examination of the role that race and oppression have played in our past</b>	Appeals <b>(to values, emotions, convictions, etc)</b>
What do people on this side of the issue care about? What might they believe about America?	

<b>Which arguments do you personally find more convincing? Why do you think those arguments resonate more with you?</b>

**Which appeals are most effective for you as an audience member? Why do you think so? What might this say about your personal ideology as an American?**

## **FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT**

- a. Write a TEA paragraph in support of banning CRT or of teaching a more patriotic version of history in general.
- b. Write a TEA paragraph in support of studying history through a critical examination of the role that race and oppression have played in our past.
- c. Evaluate the difference in the quality of argumentation of your two paragraphs. Do you notice yourself stacking the deck or skewing the argument that you disagree with? How do you see your own ideology manifest in the different paragraphs?

**6. SOCRATIC SEMINAR DISCUSSION:** Be prepared to discuss the issue with your classmates next Monday! Keep your minds open and be willing to be disturbed. (The activities in this document serve as seminar prep!)