



*Wake: The Hidden History of Women-Led Slave Revolts*  
Retrieving Our Resistance: Graphic Novel Project Steps 1 & 2



Lesson Title:

Retrieving Our Resistance: Graphic Novel Project Steps 1 & 2

Inquiry Questions:

- How do we identify silences in historical texts?
- How do we recover voices lost in the historical record?

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Overview of lesson:

“When we go back and retrieve our past, our legacy of resistance through impossible odds, our way out of no way, we redress the void of origins that would erase us. We empower and bring joy to our present. This is ancestry in progress, and it is our superpower. “



## Retrieving Our Resistance: Graphic Novel Project Steps 1 & 2

-Dr. Rebecca Hall

Working in collaboration with Dr. Rebecca Hall, the Ida B. Wells Education Project secondary education team has created this dynamic project-based learning activity, in which students step into the role of historians themselves and attempt to “retrieve” inspiring stories of resistance in their local community.

In this project, students will examine local primary sources, looking for hidden stories of resistance. Students will engage in guided analysis of primary source documents, identifying historical silences and evidence of agency and personhood in historical records. Students will then conduct research into local history and use this research as the basis of a “critically fabulated” narrative version of events, one that centers the agency and humanity of oppressed people. In project steps 3 and 4, students will create their own graphic novel of this narrative.

This project was inspired by the graphic novel *Wake: The Hidden History of Women-Led Slave Revolts* by Dr. Rebecca Hall, illustrated by Hugo Martinez

See also: [Retrieving Our Resistance: Graphic Novel Project Steps 3 & 4](#)

### Standards Alignment:

*Note: Project-based learning can offer many opportunities to meaningfully engage students in developing crucial Social Science and ELA skills, incorporating Social Science and ELA Common Core standards for many grade-levels. Steps 1 and 2 of this project place particular emphasis on standards relating to critically analyzing informational texts, researching and synthesizing information from multiple sources. Standards alignment for grades 11-12 are listed on this document, but this project can easily be adapted to different grade-levels.*

### Common Core English Language Arts Standards » History/Social Studies » Grade 11-12

#### 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.





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### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6**

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

### **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.

## **Common Core English Language Arts Standards » Writing » Grade 11-12**

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.7**

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.8**

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.9**

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

## **Sample California Secondary Social Studies Standards Alignment:**

- 11.1 Students analyze the significant events in the founding of the nation and its attempts to realize the philosophy of government described in the Declaration of Independence.
- 11.10 Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights.
- 11.11 Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.





## Ethnic Studies Guiding Values and Principles Alignment

Principles featured in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum adopted by the State Board of Education in California, 2021:

- cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native People/s and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC);
- celebrate and honor Native People/s of the land and communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color by providing a space to share their stories of success, community collaboration, and solidarity, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth;
- center and place high value on the pre-colonial, ancestral knowledge, narratives, and communal experiences of Native People/s and people of color and groups that are typically marginalized in society;
- critique empire-building in history and its relationship to white supremacy, racism and other forms of power and oppression;
- challenge racist, bigoted, discriminatory, imperialist/colonial beliefs and practices on multiple levels; and
- connect ourselves to past and contemporary social movements that struggle for social justice and an equitable and democratic society; and conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for a post-racist, post-systemic racism.

### Materials:

- [Identifying Silences in Historical Text Graphic Organizer](#)
- [Retrieving our Resistance Research Guide](#)

### Primary Source Documents (Optional):

- [L.A. Sailors Launch Campaign Against Zoot-suit Pachucos. \(1943, June 7\). Ventura County Star.](#)
- [Tavern Charges Police Brutality. \(1967, January 19\). County Courier: The Voice of Los Angeles.](#)

**Prerequisite:** It is not required that students engage in guided reading of *Wake: The Hidden History of Women-led Slave Revolts* prior to engaging in this project, but it is strongly encouraged.

### Procedures:

[View Project Slides Presentation Here](#)





## Retrieving Our Resistance: Graphic Novel Project Steps 1 & 2

**Slide 2: Hook:** Students respond to the **quick-write** prompt:

*"We all know that lying involves saying something that's not true. But instead of lying, have you ever just left out part of a story? Do you consider that a kind of lying? Why or why not? Why might a person choose NOT to include certain information in a story?"*

Recommended: Use Think-pair-share strategy with this question.

This provocation introduces the concept of "omission" in a way that might be relatable to young people. The end point of this opening discussion is to make students think critically about the way history is recorded, understanding that there are no perfect records and sometimes information is omitted. Students should think critically about why and how information can be omitted from a story and what the consequences might be.

**Slide 3:** Introduce important vocabulary, Omit, Lie of Omission and Bias. Students discuss question about experience with these concepts in history classes and history texts.

Optional Extension Reading: NY Times article critically examining bias in history textbooks around the United States in 2020.

**Slide 4:** Read the quote from Dr. Rebecca Hall and encourage think-pair-share discussion of the question: *What is the relationship between bias in historical narratives and the present day-according to this author?*

If time allows, you could give students with a handout featuring the quote and ask them to annotate it, thinking carefully about the words chosen. Ask probing questions like: *Who are the "victors"? What is "resistance"? What is it to "live in the wake"? What have we "lost"?*

**Slide 5-6:** Project intro and overview.

**Slide 7:** This slide is an introduction to the concept of "critical fabulation", featuring optional written and audio interviews with Dr. Saidiya Hartman, explaining the concept. Investigate with students if time allows.

**Slide 8:** Project steps overview:

- **Step 1:** Students analyze primary source historical texts, identifying key missing information and biases in the text.
- **Step 2:** Students thoroughly research a local historic event of their choosing. Students identify key information about the historical agents in this event, acknowledging where key information cannot be located.





## Retrieving Our Resistance: Graphic Novel Project Steps 1 & 2

- **Step 3:** Student “critically fabulates” a semi-nonfictional narrative version of events, based on available historical information.
- **Step 4:** Students collaborate to create a graphic novel narrative of their selected event. Students reflect on their research process.

**Slide 9:** Introduce Step 1 Essential Question: *How do we identify silences in historical texts?*

**Slide 10:** Discuss definitions of personhood and agency with students and how to identify evidence of personhood and agency in historical texts.

**Slide 11: Reading about Two Historical Incidents:** This project was designed by an secondary educator in Los Angeles, so two historical events that took place in Los Angeles were selected for this project. It is highly recommended that you model this activity using events from your own community. When selecting events, look for a site of local resistance. Try to find primary source accounts of the event to analyze with students.

Use a photo from local event to assess students prior knowledge and activate curiosity about the event. Display photo without identifying information and ask students to analyze photo using “say mean matter” strategy. This is an accessible way to introduce the event.

**Slide 12-13:** Background on local historical event with crucial information that students need prior to analyzing primary source documents. Be critical about terminology used, see example of politicization of the term “pachuco” which is used frequently in accounts of the Zoot Suit Riots.

**Slide 15-16:** Steps repeated with another example event.

**Slide 17:** Quote from Malcolm X for reflection and exit ticket discussion. When students begin to recognize silences in the historical texts that disempower people of color, they often develop strong feelings. It’s important to create space to reflect and process these feelings, this quote is meant to encourage that discussion. This can also be used for a quick-write on day 2 instead.

### Day 2:

**Slide 18:** Introduce Step 2 Essential Question: *How do we recover voices lost in the historical record? What information can we find about our humanity, agency and resistance?* Step 2 emphasizes: research, interviews and evaluating sources.

**Slide 19-20:** Check in on work from yesterday. Allow students to discuss feelings about historical narratives so far. Outline goals for step 2 of project: *Our task is to identify: What kind of information do we need to find? Where are we likely to find that information?*





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**Slides 21-22:** Offer students a sample counter-narrative reading. The primary sources from Day 1 generally disregard the agency and humanity of oppressed people. Provide students with a source that documents the event that does include information about the agency and personhood of oppressed people involved. Examples on these slides include an article from the *Los Angeles Times* revisiting the Zoot Suit Riots and an article from an early edition of *The Advocate* about the Black Cat Tavern Riots.

Students can use the [Retrieving Our Resistance Research Guide](#) to begin analyzing this source. Allow students to read and analyze in pairs, then convene whole class discussion. Compare this account with the account from yesterday. What is different? Why are these differences important?

**Slides 21-22:** Instruct students to begin researching the event independently, their goal is to find as much information about the agency and personhood of oppressed people, as possible. You may wish to provide them with an annotated bibliography graphic organizer to use as they research. You may also wish to provide them with reflection opportunities throughout the research process.

This research will form the factual basis for the student's original, "critically fabulated" graphic novel.

**Slides 23:** If students wish to go farther in collecting and analyzing historical information, offer extension activities. Recommended: enlist them in interviewing local residents about the historical event, looking for additional information about the personhood and agency of those involved.

### Secondary Sources:

Los Angeles Times. (2018, June 4). *Zoot suit riots: After 75 years, L.A. looks back on a violent summer*. Los Angeles Times. Retrieved June 16, 2022, from [https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-zoot-suit-riots-anniversary-20180604-story.htm](https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-zoot-suit-riots-anniversary-20180604-story.html)  
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### Extension Reading:

Goldstein, D. (2020, January 12). *Two states. Eight textbooks. Two American stories. The New York Times*. Retrieved June 16, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/01/12/us/texas-vs-california-history-textbooks.html>

The Museum of Modern Art. (2022). *Saidiya Hartman. gallery 214: Critical fabulations. 2021: MoMA*. The Museum of Modern Art. Retrieved June 16, 2022, from <https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/298/4088>

Licón, G. (2022, March 29). *Pachucos: Not just Mexican-american males or juvenile delinquents*. KCET. Retrieved June 16, 2022, from <https://www.kcet.org/shows/artbound/pachucos-not-just-mexican-american-males-or-juvenile-delinquents>

