# More Than Stones & Symbols

## Knowledge Set Teaching Guide

*This Knowledge Set is designed to encourage dialogue and critical reflection about how Confederate symbols and monuments continue to influence society today. As students progress through this set, they will learn about the causes of the Civil War and key figures from this historical period. The instruction in this set also guides students to evaluate arguments regarding what Confederate symbols have come to represent to different groups of people and whether they should be removed. As students read the texts in this set, they will explore multiple perspectives and consider how symbols can be used to both divide and unite people.*

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Target Grades & Subject(s): Grades 6-12; English-Language Arts, History

### Learning Objectives

- Students will examine historical evidence regarding the causes for the U.S. Civil War and its social and political impacts. (CCSS RI/RH.1, US.5)
- Students will evaluate arguments regarding the removal of Confederate monuments and understand different perspectives on the issue. (CCSS RI.8)

### Before Teaching this Series

- This Knowledge Set includes content related to the violent rally in Charlottesville, VA in August 2017 and the Charleston church shooting in 2015. It also explores issues of racial intolerance and inequality as it relates to Confederate monuments and symbols. As a result, it is important that students are prepared to have respectful conversations about these issues. For ideas about how to promote safe, meaningful conversations about divisive topics, see the attached sheet.
- Review the causes of the Civil War and introduce the purposes and challenges of the Reconstruction period.

### Texts in this Set (download texts here)

| Text 1: Charlottesville and the Events Leading Up to It (5 pages) | |
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| The first text in this set provides an overview of the events that led to the violent rally in Charlottesville, VA on August 11-12, 2017. Starting with the church shooting in Charleston, SC, the text recounts subsequent decisions in different cities regarding the removal of Confederate monuments and symbols. The instruction in this set guides students to examine the author's point of view and consider any potential bias in the source. | Extension Activity: Have students create graphic organizers that outline the key events that led up to the rally in Charlottesville, VA. Students can make timelines, cause and effect charts, or another visual representation of the key events. Then, ask students to select the event they believe has had the greatest impact on the current debate over Confederate monuments and symbols. |
| **Text 2: Southern states resist calls to remove Confederate memorials (3 pages)** | |
| In this article, students will begin to dive into arguments for and against the removal of Confederate symbols. This text also provides examples of how several cities and political leaders responded following the events in Charlottesville. As students read, they will compare and contrast the views presented. | Discussion Questions:<br>- According to the article, why is it important to understand when many Confederate monuments were built?<br>- Do you agree with this perspective? Explain. |
| **Text 3: Robert E. Lee was not the George Washington of his time. But a lot ties them together (5 pages)** | |
| In this article, students will take a closer look at one of the arguments that have been presented against the removal of Confederate monuments. As students compare and contrast Robert E. Lee and George Washington they will gain further historical context and understand how both of these men were viewed in the past and how they are seen by people today. | Discussion Question:<br>- As the article points out, all historical figures, like Washington and Lee, had their flaws. What criteria do you think city officials should use when determining whether or not to remove historical monuments? |
| **Text 4: Taking Down the Confederate Flag (5 pages)** | |
| As we conclude this set, students will read two articles that describe how different individuals have changed their beliefs regarding Confederate monuments and symbols. This article shares reflections about the Confederate flag and the impact that | Discussion Questions:<br>- What symbols and traditions are important to your family?<br>- How has the meaning of the Confederate flag |

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| it has in present society. As students read, they will continue to evaluate arguments and the evidence provided to support specific claims in the text.dfs | changed for some people today?<br>- What do you think is more important -- preserving heritage or promoting unity? Why? |
| Text 5: Truth: Remarks on the Removal of Confederate Monuments in New Orleans (8 pages) | |
| The final text in this set is a the transcript of a speech given by the mayor of New Orleans, Mitch Landrieu. In his speech he challenges people to view the history of the Confederacy with a critical and accurate lens. As he describes the city's decision to remove Confederate monuments in New Orleans, he also challenges citizens to work toward unity and to build new symbols that reflect the city's diversity and persevering spirit. | Extension Activity: Have students brainstorm the values, history, and unique traits of their community. Working in pairs, students can create a proposal for a new monument in their community. Their proposal should include a sketch or miniature display of their monument as well as a written description explaining how their design captures the spirit of the community. |

Actively Learn

# How to have meaningful, safe conversations about divisive topics

1) **Allow student inquiry to drive discussions** and further learning. This means creating a safe space for students to ask questions and helping them build on their inquiry.

> Example:
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> *Student: "Why should we bother to have immigrants coming to the United States?"*
> *Teacher: "That's an intriguing question. Let's rephrase that question and write it on the board: 'What are the benefits of immigration?' Take a few minutes to jot down some ideas and we'll share them on the board."*

2) Encourage **dialogue, not debate.** Although debates are a great way to develop argumentative skills, the ability to listen to an opposing point of view and engage in a constructive, rather than confrontational, way is another crucial skill for students to develop. Sentence starters could be especially useful here in giving students the necessary language to understand an opposing point of view.

> Examples of sentence starters:
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> *I'm hearing you say that …. Am I understanding you correctly?*
> *Could you explain your view that …? I'd like to understand it better.*
> *What you just said about … reminded me of ….*
> *How does [ideas, event, fact] tie into your belief that …?*
> *I'd like to build on your idea that ….*

3) **Create a safe space**. Have the class come up with a list of rules for discussion. Encourage students to use respectful language and to be open to different views and opinions.

4) Connect hot-button issues of the day to what you're already studying. This will generate more interest in your curriculum and help to **broaden students' thinking about the issue** they're thinking about.

> Examples of connections to content objectives:
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> *"We've been hearing a lot in the news about demonstrations for women's rights. Let's look back at the historical period we've been studying to understand how another era debated the rights of women."*
>
> *"The other day, I overheard some of you debating whether African Americans are unfairly targeted by law enforcement. Today, we're going to study the Civil Rights Movement and the impact of Jim Crow laws in enforcing systems of inequality."*

5) Provide opportunities for students to **reflect** individually and **share in small groups**. Since some students might feel less comfortable sharing in a large group, try breaking students into smaller groups and giving them a list of questions to discuss. Before and after discussions, encourage students to write or draw their reflections on the topic.