SECTION 2

Section 2 Key Concepts

- There are three types of people discussed by the author; segregationists, assimilationists and abolitionists.
- Segregationists are blatantly racist.
- Assimilationists want BIPOC to blend in by fitting white standards and encourage BIPOC to accept the “adoption of white ideals.”
- Abolitionists are actively anti-racist, and believe that all people are equal and do not need to fit a certain ideal to deserve the same rights as others.
- Britain ended Slavery before the United States, which continued to justify enslavement.
- The North didn’t want to consider slaves people because this would give greater power to the South in the House of Representatives. The South wanted to count them in order to have a higher population and greater political influence. This resulted in the Great Compromise.
- Despite knowing slavery was morally wrong, the economic benefit prevented Jefferson from doing anything about it.
- Even people who were against slavery still couldn’t conceptualize true equality. They wanted Black people to change everything about themselves to fit a white standard.
- Phillis Wheatley was a Black poet who was ‘tested’ by White men in 1772, on the basis of European standards of knowledge.

Reading Guide Questions

- Page 46: In the chapter “Proof in Poetry” Reynolds tells the story of Phillis Wheatley whose knowledge of European education was designed to demonstrate Wheatley was human in the same way as Europeans. Yet Reynolds notes that
enslaved people “found ways to be human in their own way” (p. 47) and that a person’s humanity and intelligence cannot be measured purely by European knowledge.

○ How do you see assimilationist ideas like this playing out in your everyday life?

● Page 49: Reynolds lists seven racist ideas. What are some examples of these seven ideas in your own lives?

○ EXAMPLE: There is a divide between Africans and African Americans. Some African Americans believe that there are physical differences between themselves and Africans. People in the US believe that African countries are defined by poverty, and many African Americans believe this too. This fuels nationalistic beliefs and ignorance around other countries in the US, perpetuating structures of hierarchy and supremacy. This shows the continued impact of the fourth racist idea that Reynolds lists.

● The U.S.’s founding fathers are extensively and publicly celebrated: their names and likenesses appear on currency, statues, holidays, and buildings. Like Jefferson, many founding fathers personally owned slaves. What actions or beliefs from the Founding Fathers were swept under the rug or ignored?

● Jefferson’s racist thought and action didn’t come from hate, but from material benefit. How does racism materially benefit people?

● The Haitian revolution was different from abolition in the US in the sense that many U.S. abolitionists wanted Black people to assimilate and conform themselves to the European standards once they were free. Many U.S. abolitionist movements were greatly supported by a White “savior.” On the other hand, in Haiti slaves were doing this for themselves and not trying to conform. This is an example of an anti-racist rather than assimilationist approach to liberation.

○ What does the anti-racist counterpoint to assimilation look like? What are the differences between anti-racism and assimilation?

Self Reflection Questions

● Reflect on what you read about Phillis Wheatley. Why do you think people are intimidated by Black people/minorities being educated?
Read the following passage and then respond to the question below:
“Make yourself small, make yourself unthreatening, make yourself the same, make yourself safe, make yourself quiet, to make White people comfortable with your existence.”

How would you feel if you were forced to be someone you’re not? How does reading the passage above make you feel?

General Resources for Readers


Alaska Resources for Readers

- Aunt Phil’s Trunk Volume 4. 1945: Discrimination Torpedoed
  - With an effort to mock the rest of the U.S., young Alaska had white policemen overseeing the separation of whites and natives in public spaces. Alberta Schenck stood up against these injustices and stirred a rebellion in Nome, Alaska where Alaska Natives filled up the theatre in which Alberta was accused of seating herself in the ‘Whites Only’ area. This, along with the help of other Native figures, helped Alaska move into a more anti-segregation future.


This reading guide was created by Youth4Change, a BIPOC youth group facilitated by Story Works Alaska. You can find reading guides for other sections at bit.ly/AnchorageReads2021
https://jlc-web.uaa.alaska.edu/client/en_US/apl/search/detailnonmodal/ent:$002f$002fSD_ILS$002f0$002fSD_ILS:1515542/ada?qu=Slaves+of+the+Harvest&d=ent%3A%2F%2FSD_ILS%2F0%2FSD_ILS%3A1515542%7EILS%7E0&h=8

* This guide can also be used while reading *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* by Ibram X. Kendi, but please note the page numbers will not correspond.

This reading guide was created by Youth4Change, a BIPOC youth group facilitated by Story Works Alaska
You can find reading guides for other sections at bit.ly/AnchorageReads2021