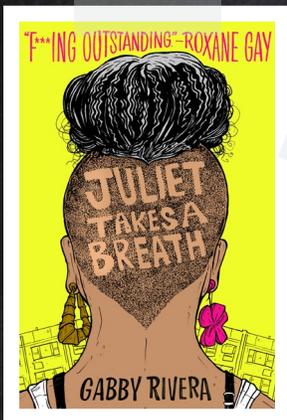
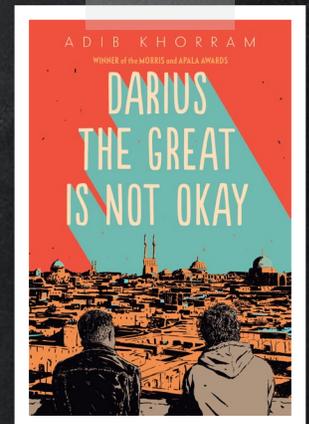
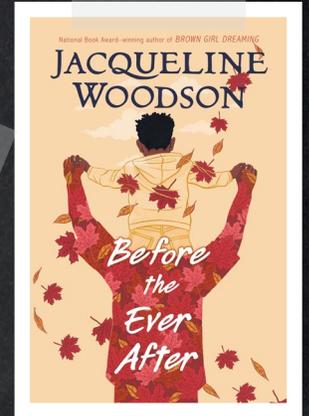


#DISRUPTTEXTS

# IN YOUR CLASSROOM WITH THESE 8 TEXTS!



In partnership with #DisruptTexts, learning guides for eight individual texts and how they align to the #DisruptTexts pillars!



**DEAR EDUCATOR,**

We are honored to partner up with #DisruptTexts to bring you this resource to help you bring equity to your classroom or library! These are, by no means, the only eight texts to use; but we hope they provide a scaffolding to bring change and choice for your students.

**SINCERELY,**

*Penguin Young Readers School + Library Marketing*



## WHAT IS #DISRUPTTEXTS?

Disrupt Texts is a crowdsourced, grass roots effort by teachers for teachers to challenge the traditional canon in order to create a more inclusive, representative, and equitable language arts curriculum that our students deserve. Co-founded by Tricia Ebarvia, Lorena Germán, Dr. Kimberly N. Parker, and Julia Torres, #DisruptTexts's mission to aid and develop teachers committed to antiracist/anti-bias teaching pedagogy and practices.

There are four core principles to #DisruptTexts:

1. **Continuously interrogate our own biases and how they inform our thinking.**

As teachers, we have been socialized in certain values, attitudes, and beliefs that inform the way we read, interpret, and teach texts, and the way we interact with our students. Ask: How are my own biases affecting the way I'm teaching this text and engaging with my students?

2. **Center Black, Indigenous, and voices of color in literature.**

Literature study in U.S. classrooms has largely focused on the experiences of white- (and male-) dominated society, as perpetuated through a traditional, Euro-centric canon. Ask: What voices—authors or characters—are marginalized or missing in our study? How are these perspectives authentic to the lived experiences of communities of color?

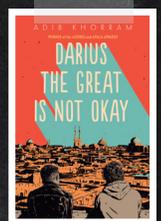
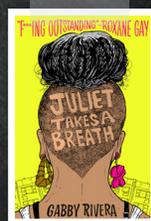
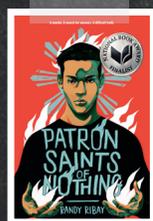
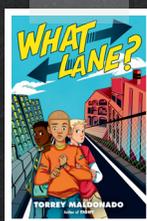
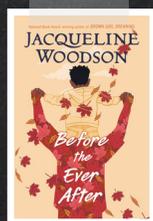
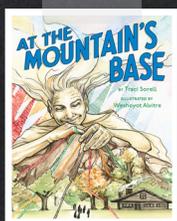
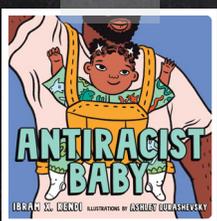
### 3. Apply a critical literacy lens to our teaching practices.

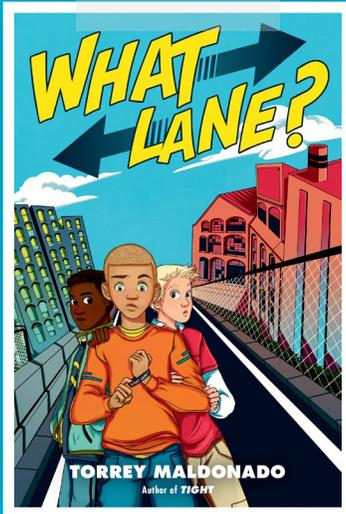
While text-dependent analysis and close reading are important skills for students to develop, teachers should also support students in asking questions about the way that such texts are constructed. Ask: How does this text support or challenge issues of representation, fairness, or justice? How does this text perpetuate or subvert dominant power dynamics and ideologies? And how can we ask students to wrestle with these tensions?

### 4. Work in community with other antiracist educators, especially Black, Indigenous, and other educators of color.

To disrupt and transform curriculum and instruction requires working with other educators who can challenge and work with us as antiracist educators. Ask: How can we collaborate to identify, revise, or create instructional resources (like this guide) that can center and do justice to the experiences of historically marginalized communities?

Each principle stands for actions that are culturally sustaining and antiracist. Through each principle, teachers aim to offer a curriculum that is restorative, inclusive, and therefore works toward healing identities and communities. As you read this guide, you'll see how each of these principles informs the approach recommended to teach *What Lane?*





# WHAT LANE?

by Torrey Maldonado

## ABOUT THE BOOK

“*STAY IN YOUR LANE.*” Stephen doesn’t want to hear that—he wants to have no lane.

Anything his friends can do, Stephen should be able to do too, right? So when they dare each other to sneak into an abandoned building, he doesn’t think it’s his lane, but he goes. Here’s the thing, though: *Can he do everything* his

friends can? Lately, he’s not so sure. As a mixed kid, he feels like he’s living in two worlds with different rules—and he’s been noticing that strangers treat him differently than his white friends . . . So what’ll he do? Hold on tight as Stephen swerves in and out of lanes to find out which are his—and who should be with him. Torrey Maldonado, author of the highly acclaimed *Tight*, does a masterful job showing a young boy coming of age in a racially split world, trying to blaze a way to be his best self.

## Considerations for Teachers and Students

*What Lane?* tells a story of racial identity, and what it means to have society dictate rules for social interaction within different identities. Reading this book with students will open up the opportunity to discuss social movements like Black Lives Matter, the Civil Rights Movement, and de facto segregation. Furthermore, this book will make space for readers and educators working with them to consider the intersections between racial identity and the role individuals have in dismantling systemic, interpersonal, and intercultural racism. As you read, consider the importance of interrogating your own bias, centering BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color) and the roles they play in the narrative as well as what perspectives may be left out. *What Lane?* addresses the often spoken statement that we each do better when we “stay in our own lane.” The book’s title and narrative problematize that idea through unpacking the idea of whether there should be any lanes at all, and the many ways the existence of lanes can be constructive and oppressive. As this book gains an audience in schools, there will be those who don’t think discussions about oppression or racism belong in schools. It will be up to readers and educators engaging with this book to address the inevitable pushback that happens when folks are given the opportunity to leave their comfort zones. In the end, returning again and again to Stephen’s question about whether there should be lanes at all will be crucial for understanding and unpacking the text before, during, and after reading.

## Considerations for Teachers and Students (cont.)

### CONSIDERATIONS AROUND RACIAL IDENTITY

Early on in the book, Stephen thinks, “Miles Morales could be me. He’s half African American too, and even though his other side is Puerto Rican and mine is white, most people say we Black.” (3) DisruptTexts Pillar 1 is about interrogating your own bias. Before beginning to read *What Lane?* educators will need to interrogate their own bias and determine preexisting ideas about individual, interpersonal, and community connections with biracial people. Do you know any biracial people personally? Do you have any students identifying as biracial? If so, what steps will you take to safeguard their emotional safety during class conversations about race that can be divisive?

In the United States, there is a long history of marginalization and erasure of people of color. Additionally, there is a long history of governmental and municipal organizations (including the police) deciding who gets to be white adjacent—more proximal to power according to their ability to approximate whiteness in appearance, speech, behavior, etc. Furthermore, each person undergoes a process of racial identity formation that is dependent upon social constructions and one’s experience with privilege and oppression based on one’s identity. Identity formation includes what Allan Johnson refers to as “The Big 8”: race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, religion/spirituality, nationality, and socioeconomic status. (Johnson, 2006)

During the later stages of racial consciousness development, there is a place for investigating critical race theory—understanding the ways systemic oppression is informed and kept in place by inter, and intrapersonal racism. Understanding and examining the intersections of race, law, and power will be key to understanding how to discuss the topics in this book and decreasing the potential for psychological harm. As educators and readers study, *What Lane?* it will be crucial to build classroom structures that allow for meaningful discussion about the formation of racial identity as well as the ways society keeps oppressive structures in place.

#### Additional Resources:

Hawley, W. D., & Nieto, S. (2010). “Another inconvenient truth: Race and ethnicity.” *Educational Leadership*, 68 (3), pp. 66–71.

Johnson, A. G. (2006). “Privilege, oppression, and difference.” In *Power, privilege and difference*, 2nd Edition (pp. 12–40). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

### CONSIDERATIONS AROUND OPPRESSION, RACISM, AND ANTIRACISM

Some of the main ideas the book centers on are: oppression, racism, and antiracism, though they are not always named as such, given the fact that this book is for middle-grade students. Some important groundwork needs to happen to set a foundation for students reading and engaging in conversations about the book, whether there are students present identifying as BIPOC or not.

## Key Concepts and Terms

**Oppression:** prolonged, cruel, or unjust treatment or control.

**Racism:** prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized.

**Antiracism:** the policy or practice of opposing racism and promoting racial tolerance.

**Bias:** a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment.

**Prejudice:** an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics.

It is important to create structures in educational environments where students are accustomed to using these words and learning how they interact with one another because the ideas themselves (if not always the explicit vocabulary) do appear in the text. Other words, concepts, and ideas will occur throughout the text as well. Consider building a word wall of familiar and unfamiliar terms, such as “guilt” and “innocence” (8), and adding to them to co-create definitions as you read.

## Additional Resources

[All Students Need Anti-racism Education](#)

[Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism Not Light, But Fire](#)

## Themes and Essential Questions:

*Identity:* How do our environments shape our identities? What is unique about Stephen’s environment? How is this similar to, or different from your environment?

*Coming of Age:* What experiences move us from innocence to experience? When does Stephen realize his social position, or “lane”?

*Courage:* What types of encounters demand a display of courage? When does Stephen show courage?

*Racial Justice:* What social systems create racial injustice? How does Stephen confront them?

*Equality:* When do we first begin to recognize that things are unequal in society? Is the time we recognize this different for each of us? When does Stephen realize this? What does he think should be done to change it?

*Friendship:* How do our friendships affect the way we interact with the world? What are some of Stephen’s reflections on friendship?

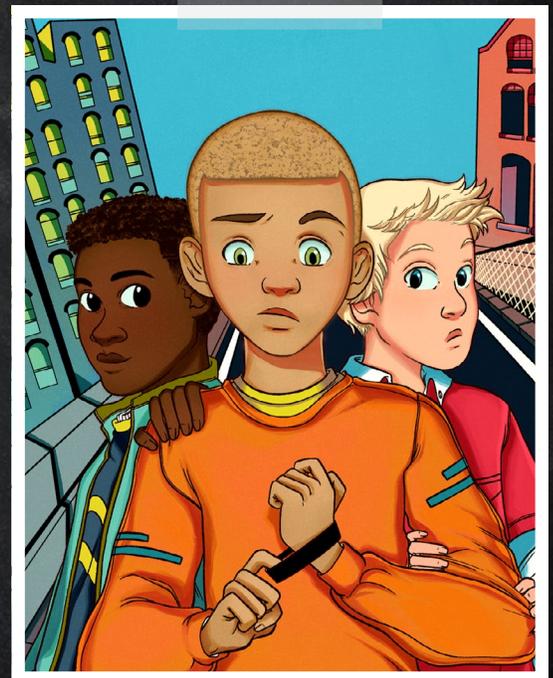
# Discussion Questions

## PRE-READING:

- What do you know about the history of how the Black Lives Matter movement began?
- What books have you read (or heard about) about race relations in America?
- What events have you witnessed or experienced that have made you unpack your own bias? Ex. [racial profiling](#)

## DURING READING:

- Why might it be hard for people (who are not the majority in any group) to speak up if they feel injustice? (12)
- Have you seen people from minoritized groups use comedy to lighten the mood around the subject of racism? (19) If so, when? What was your reaction?
- Have you ever seen examples in real life or on video of Black people experiencing [racial profiling](#) in stores? If so, what did you do? If not, how does knowing this happens make you feel?
- What does Stephen's dad mean when he says, "A lot of white people see boys with your age and height and they don't see your age. They see what they imagine or what the media teaches them to think about Black men"? (29–30)
- How does Stephen's pledge to himself help him counter the silencing effects of racism? (33) What kind of promises have you made to yourself after experiencing injustice or mistreatment?
- What do you know about [white privilege](#)? What is the difference between how each of Stephen's parents thinks about race, racism, and privilege? (34–35)
- What do you know about [de facto segregation](#)? (41) How do personal thoughts and actions, as well as social structures, keep it going? Think about the neighborhoods in your community. Are there certain parts of town that have historically belonged to certain racial or ethnic groups? What happens to people who choose to cross those lines?



## Discussion Questions (cont.)

- How do older generations perpetuate, or continue, harmful patterns of thought and behavior? (46)
- When Stephen says, “Life should be the same for me as it is for my white friends,” what do you think he means, specifically? (49) From your perspective, why isn’t it the same for white people and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color)?
- Explain why Stephen feels so afraid on page 60. How might the police have different consequences for him than they do for his friends?
- Consider the two posters from page 65. What “lane” does each poster represent? Why might Stephen feel divided when seeing posters from each “lane”? After thinking about this, consider the importance of his bracelet.
- Consider the two different Americas mentioned on pages 66 and 67. According to the book, what are the different perspectives and opinions each side holds? What are some of the actions they take?
- Why would Stephen “End up messed up in Chad’s lane”? (75)
- What are the white students’ reactions to hearing about victims of police brutality? (91) How is this different from their reactions of a few pages before?
- Why don’t you think some people want to believe racism is real? (93)
- What happens when Stephen finds the language to speak his truth to Wes and Dan about the violence he experiences? (120–121)

### POST-READING:

- Where do you think Stephen’s story will take him next?
- Do you have friends in your social circle from different ethnic, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds?
- What is one thing Stephen did that you found brave or admirable?
- Why do you suppose he sees Miles Morales as an icon?



## Journal Prompts

Students will find many entry points throughout the story to connect with. Writing in response to critical moments of tension in the text can help students reflect and process their own emotions and questions as they read.

- Before reading the book, what do you think about when you hear the phrase “Black Lives Matter”? What experiences or conversations have shaped your thinking?
- Before reading the book, how do you identify, racially and/or ethnically? How does your identity affect your daily interactions with people?
- Before reading the book, write about the first time you recognized you were different from others around you. How did you feel about this realization?

Ask students to revisit the following passages from the novel. What stands out? What connections can you make to your own experiences or the experiences of others?

- What ideas does Stephen have about racists and how they might act or look? Throughout the course of the book, several events happen to change his ideas. What are some of them? (77)
- Stephen’s father says he is “young enough to get shot by a bigot cop, [so] he’s young enough to know what’s happening.” (84) What stories have you heard about police brutality? How did it make you feel to hear about these stories?
- What do you think when people bring up the phrase “Black Lives Matter”? What responses have you seen people give when the subject gets brought up? What are your thoughts about statements like “All Lives Matter” and “Blue Lives Matter”? (88–89)
- What do you think it might take for folks who are racist to change their thinking and behavior? (95–96) Consider page 104 as well and how some people have to be taught to “see” racism.
- What have you learned about cycles of violence in society? In your view, does violence ever stop more violence from happening? (120)

After reading the book, ask students to consider their ability to choose “lanes.” Discuss power, privilege, and positionality and which groups in society might hold more power than others, or freedom to choose “lanes,” according to Stephen’s observations in the book.

## Lesson Ideas

Consider using Gholdy Muhammad's *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy* (Scholastic, 2020) when undertaking the following activities. The main components of the framework are "The Pursuit of Identity, Skills, Intellect and Criticality." How will you apply these approaches to this text? How can you support students using DisruptText pillar 1, "Interrogating Bias," while reading this text?

1. Research and explore historical and present-day examples (both real and imagined) of Black heroism and empowerment. (20) Direct students to collaborate on presentations to educate peers about these figures. How do the examples they find add to or change their ideas of heroism?
2. Watch the film *Black Panther* (or clips from it), then read the following article: [The Revolutionary Power of Black Panther](#) Respond to the following questions in writing or with video responses: Why was *Black Panther* so important to people identifying as Black, Indigenous, or other People of Color? What other stories of non-white heroes are considered mainstream (if any)? Why is it important for BIPOC people to be depicted as heroes?
3. Who are some of the young Black people Black people who have been murdered by the police? (88) What were their names and ages? Where did they live? Introduce students to the #BLM and #SayHerName hashtags and have them discuss reactions in their community to conversations around the Black Lives Matter movement. Who are local leaders in the movement? Research and discuss counter-movements and why they exist after reading chapter 16. Read [Why Teaching Black Lives Matter Matters | Part I](#) and [Bringing Black Lives Matter Into the Classroom | Part II](#) before entering into conversations with readers.
4. Ask students to create two or three questions for the school community about racial prejudice or discrimination. Then, create a [Flipgrid](#) and invite community members to contribute videos answering the students' questions. Discuss the video reactions as a class. Hold a discussion or do independent writing around the question: Do you believe our responses to questions about race change when we know others are listening/watching? If so, why? If not, why not?



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## Lesson Ideas (cont.)

1. Much of what Stephen deals with is due to living at a crossroads between worlds. He half-Black and half-white, but the world reacts to him as though he is a Black person. Research some of the beginnings of race as a social construct by visiting the website [The Race Project](#) While reviewing the website, have students complete the following organizer with what they already knew, what they learned, or what surprised them, and what questions they still have remaining.

CONFIRMS WHAT I KNEW (.)	SURPRISED ME (!)	QUESTIONS I STILL HAVE (?)

2. Teach about implicit bias, microaggressions, systemic oppression, and the changing demographics of many American cities by having students look at implicit bias as a personal thought pattern, microaggressions as interpersonal actions directed by these biases and systemic oppression as a consequence of when laws are enforced as a result of these actions. Have students create a multimodal presentation about microaggressions, implicit bias, or systemic oppression as they appear in the book and/or in real life.
3. The book is written by and centers a protagonist identifying as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color). What do you know about the author? Hear about him in his own words [This is the Author: Torrey Maldonado and M. Evan Wolkenstein](#). Considered the central themes of *Identity* and *Friendship* he mentions through the podcast as you read the novel. Use the following notecatcher to capture your ideas.

QUOTES FROM THE PODCAST	MY THOUGHTS AND REACTIONS...

## Extension Activities

For educators preparing to read *What Lane?* with students: interrogate bias and consider the ways bias shapes the experience of reading the story, its events and characters. Consider what (if any) experience(s) you have with others who do not share your worldview, and then what aspects of your everyday life confirm or challenge your perspectives about those who may be racially, culturally, ethnically, linguistically, or in other ways different from you. Read [Teaching to Transgress](#) by bell hooks for an example of how one teacher shifted the way she thought about her students and her role as their educator. Journal to apply sections from the book to your practice.

1. What do you know about the populations of different races in America? What does the [Census](#) tell us?

Visit the following websites:

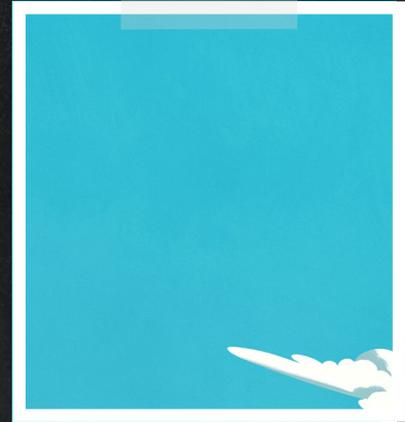
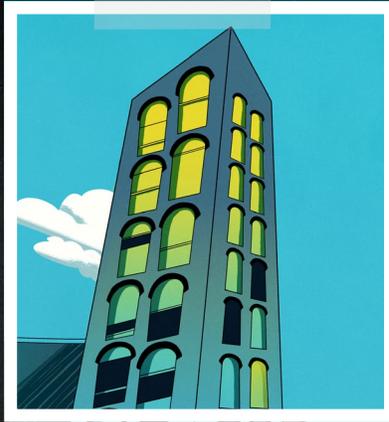
[The Changing Face of America](#)

[The Race Project](#)

Prepare an infographic to share your findings. Consider the following questions: How are demographics shifting over time? What are some of the largest racial groupings in the United States? What can you infer about power and privilege after reviewing the Census data? Which groups might hold more power or privilege? Which groups might hold less?

2. Read this article: [#SayHerName Campaign](#) and research each of the women mentioned. How are reactions to police brutality against Black women different from those against Black men? Why do you think they are different?
3. Visit the website [Intro to The Media Bias Chart](#) and research the terms “Police Brutality” and “Black Lives Matter” on websites for news outlets representing three different areas. How does the news coverage differ? How is it the same? What trends do you notice for reporting about these topics? *Ex. “The Most Extreme Right tends to report about Black Lives Matter as being ... whereas the Most Extreme Left reports it as ...”*





## Extension Activities (cont.)

4. Read the following article: [What Is A Microaggression? And What To Do If You Experience One. : Life Kit](#) and watch the YouTube video: [“Because I’m Latino, I can’t have money?” Kids on Race](#) then discuss microaggressions, what they are, and how they affect individuals. Then, work with administrators in your educational environment to create signage and/or policies that instruct students about what to do if they witness a microaggression. If you have the resources, make a PSA (public service announcement) for your school news channel or announcements informing community members about what microaggressions are, how to identify them, and what to do if they see one.
5. Use the [School Reform Initiative framework for Constructivist Listening Dyads](#) to talk about implicit bias after reading the articles:  
[Implicit Bias Explained](#)  
[America’s Long Overdue Awakening on Systemic Racism | Time](#)  
Then, discuss what implicit bias looks like between individuals and in your school, neighborhood, and city *ex. City laws biased against housing insecure populations*. Brainstorm ways to inform people and counteract it.
6. Identify a space in your school community that is public. Research the stages of racial identity development. Read this article about [white antiracism](#). Make a visual display to educate those in your community about the stages to becoming antiracist. Ex. A visual timeline with quotes from [This Book is Anti-Racist](#) by Tiffany Jewell

7. What can you and your students do to lessen systemic and interpersonal racism? Having conversations with those you love can be one of the most powerful ways to impact change. Many people engage in [Courageous Conversations](#) about race, listen to podcasts, and read books. Stephen wears his “What Lane?” bracelet to remind him of his commitment to living outside of the boundaries society places upon him. Challenge your students to come up with a way to communicate to the outside world the feelings they have inside after reading this book.

This could look like:

- Designing a T-shirt
  - Making a YouTube video
  - Writing a letter to a local newspaper
  - Writing a blog post and sharing it with the community
  - Creating a set of questions for family members or close friends
  - Creating a book trailer or library display for their favorite book(s) about Black joy.
8. Define the following terms: hate crime, lynching, police brutality. What connections can you make between the “lanes” described in *What Lane?*, hate crimes, lynching, and police brutality? Discuss the general reluctance to use this language. What are people’s reactions when these words come up? How are the reactions to this language affected by social position, and racial or ethnic group?
  9. Visit the [Southern Poverty Law Center’s website](#) mapping incidences of hate-crimes. Watch [this video about Trayvon Martin’s case](#) from his mother, Sybrina Fulton. Create a timeline of events in the Trayvon Martin case (or any other case involving police brutality) from videos you watch or news stories you listen to. What events led up to Trayvon’s killing? What has happened since? Did the perpetrators get convicted of crimes? If so, what was their punishment?
  10. With your students, look at the website: [Mapping Inequality](#). Check out the areas where redlining occurs in your city. What do you notice? What patterns do you see? Go back in time to check out the history of segregation. Compare and contrast it with your present-day conditions. What patterns of segregation do you see in school systems, housing, or commercial business districts? Students can research these questions in pairs or small groups and compare findings. Prepare a presentation for your community revealing what you have found. Make inferences about how patterns of redlining impact interpersonal relationships, keeping people in separate lanes.

*Further Reading:* [Interactive Redlining Map Zooms In On America’s History Of Discrimination](#)

#DisruptTexts is not simply about replacing older texts for new ones; rather, it is a more nuanced and holistic approach aimed at offering a restorative and antiracist curriculum. #DisruptTexts requires that we as educators interrogate our own biases, center the voices of BIPOC in literature, help students develop a critical lens, and work in community with other antiracist and BIPOC educators. Together we will bring about change in society.

**JULIA E. TORRES** is a veteran language arts teacher librarian in Denver, Colorado. Julia facilitates teacher development workshops rooted in the areas of antiracist education, equity and access in literacy and librarianship, and education as a practice of liberation. Julia works with students and teachers locally and around the country with the goal of empowering them to use literacy to fuel resistance and positive social transformation. Julia also serves on several local and national boards and committees promoting educational equity and progressivism. She is the current NCTE Secondary Representative-at-large, a Book Love Foundation board member and Educator Collaborative Book Ambassador.

**LORENA GERMÁN** is a Dominican American educator based in Austin, Texas. A two-time nationally awarded educator, she works with middle and high school students, using an anti bias and antiracist approach to teaching. She's Co-Founder of [Multicultural Classroom](#), through which she supports teachers and schools, and is Chair of NCTE's Committee Against Racism & Bias in the Teaching of English, in addition to being a writer (Heinemann 2021), speaker, and professional development provider.

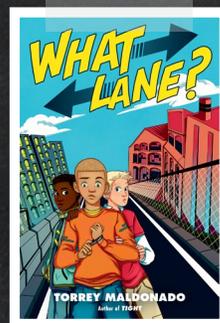
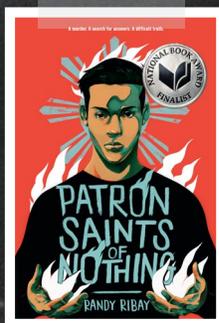
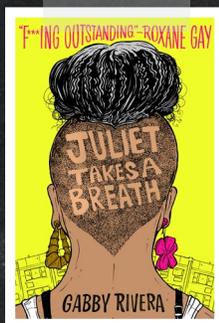
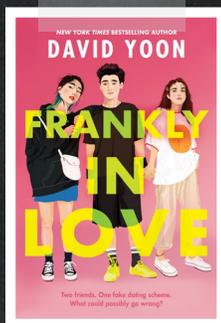
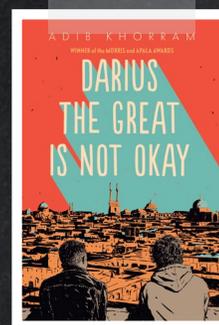
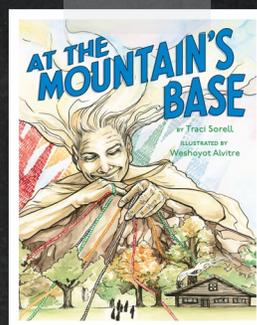
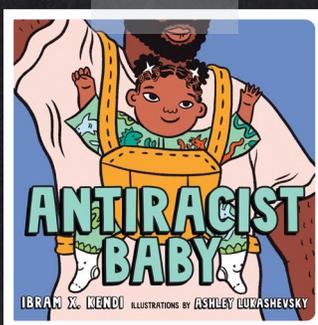
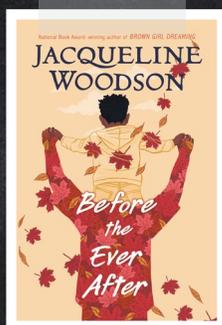
#DisruptTexts is not simply about replacing older texts for new ones; rather, it is a more nuanced and holistic approach aimed at offering a restorative and antiracist curriculum. #DisruptTexts requires that we as educators interrogate our own biases, center the voices of BIPOC in literature, help students develop a critical lens, and work in community with other antiracist and BIPOC educators. Together we will bring about change in society.

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**TRICIA EBARVIA** is a high school English teacher with almost twenty years of experience, a co-Director at the PA Writing & Literature Project, a Heinemann Fellow, and co-Founder of #DisruptTexts and #31DaysIBPOC. In order for students to become responsible, engaged participants in their communities, Tricia believes that educators must teach from an anti-bias, critical literacy stance and is the author of a forthcoming book on anti-bias literacy practices. Tricia can be found on social media [@triciaebarvia](https://twitter.com/triciaebarvia) and at [triciaebarvia.org](https://triciaebarvia.org).

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