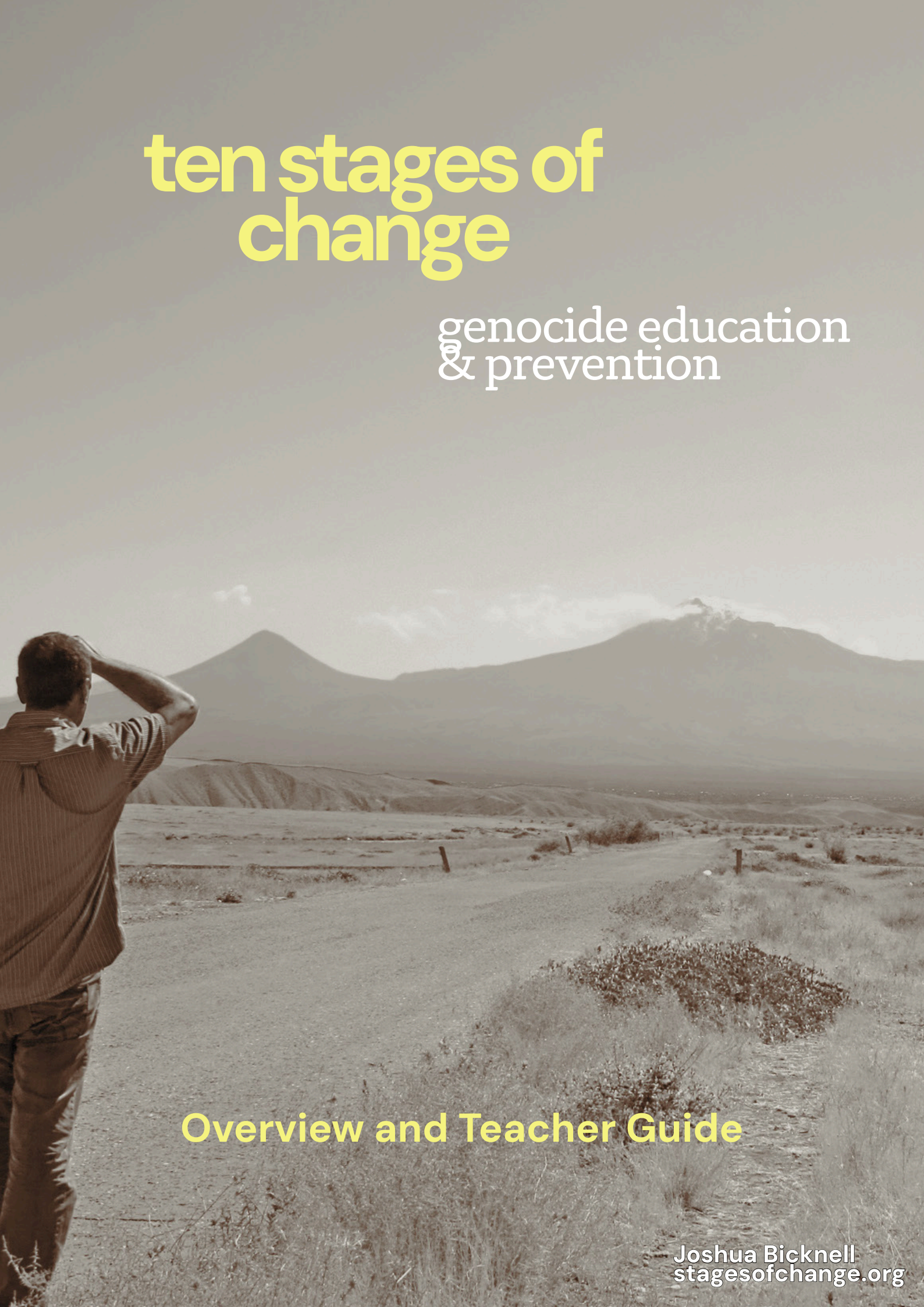
ten stages of change

genocide education & prevention



Overview and Teacher Guide

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Ten Stages of Change
Genocide Education & Prevention

Overview & Teacher Guide

Grades 9-12

English Language Arts
World History - World Geography

Joshua Bicknell

Ten Stages of Change:
Genocide Education & Prevention

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Effective Date: February 10, 2025

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Ten Stages of Change

Full Curriculum Overview (Stages 1-5)

*Unit 1: Stage 1 – Classification in Darfur

(Available Now)

This opening unit introduces students to the first stage of genocide—Classification—using the Darfur conflict as a lens to explore how societies draw identity lines between "us" and "them." Through anchor texts, identity analysis, and media critique, students examine how labels escalate toward division and violence. The unit sets the stage for critical thinking, reflection, and collaborative norm-setting in preparation for deeper study.

Unit 2: Stage 2 – Symbolization in Cambodia

(Available Now)

Focusing on Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, this unit explores how regimes use symbols, clothing, and cultural markers to distinguish and dehumanize groups. Students analyze the meaning and manipulation of symbols while investigating cultural erasure and memory. A creative project invites students to craft visual representations of identity, memory, or resistance, linking history with personal and collective expression.

Unit 3: Stage 3 – Discrimination in Afghanistan

(Available Now)

This unit traces the formalization of discrimination through legal and societal systems, with a focus on gender apartheid and ethnoreligious exclusion under the Taliban. Students examine documents, policies, and personal narratives to understand how legal frameworks create unequal access to rights, education, and safety. The unit culminates in a position paper or critical reflection on how structural discrimination is enacted—and resisted.

Unit 4: Stage 4 – Dehumanization in Rwanda
(Available Now)

Through the Rwandan genocide and its infamous propaganda outlets, students explore how language, media, and metaphor dehumanize entire populations. This unit pushes students to identify rhetorical devices in hate speech and compare them with contemporary examples. The summative task involves creating a counter-narrative or multimedia campaign to disrupt dehumanizing language in their own spheres of influence.

Unit 5: Stage 5 – Organization in Myanmar
(Available Spring 2026)

The final unit analyzes how genocides are made possible not just through hate but through logistics: laws, orders, bureaucracies, and paramilitary coordination. Students examine the Rohingya crisis as a case study in state-sanctioned organization of violence. They then map systems of power and brainstorm civic actions or policy interventions to disrupt organized harm and promote long-term prevention.

Teacher's Guide and Introduction

Overview

Thank you for purchasing and using the *Ten Stages of Change* lesson and/or unit plans. The central focus of these lessons is, on one hand, learning about genocide, empowerment, and how youth can stop the cycle of genocide that continues to plague society. That said, the student outcomes tend to be much broader.

The curriculum focus is on identifying and responding to the early stages of genocide, taught through historical and contemporary case studies which illuminate, inform, and challenge students to engage in high-level, sophisticated thinking and problem-solving skills with relevant and meaningful content. Additionally, students gain a strong sense of agency, responsibility, and practical skills as their learning extends beyond maps and memorization and instead directly in the world around them—a world facing existential challenges that many students feel unprepared to confront. There is no better time than now to stop the cycle of thinking patterns that lead to the unfolding of genocide, inequality, and other serious human rights violations. By investing time into this critical topic that many adults try to avoid, we offer the next generation a chance to think, judge, and act when confronted with choices that our previous generations have often failed to reconcile, thus halting the same cycles of complicity and inaction that have otherwise allowed the continuation of mass violence.

Purpose & Rationale

The core objectives for teaching genocide broadly, and for teaching *Ten Stages of Change* specifically, include:

- **Teaching Genocide, Human Rights, and Human Behavior:** Following the latest state mandates nationwide to teach a set number of hours on the Holocaust and other genocides, a primary objective is to educate students about patterns in society and in human behavior that led to genocide as well as other human rights violations. The curriculum utilizes the "Ten Stages of Genocide" coined by Gregory Stanton as a framework for studying human and social behaviors in most genocidal processes. However, students are also encouraged to critique this framework, generate new ideas, identify gaps in the "Ten Stages" framework, and explore alternative means of analysis.

- **Critical Media Literacy:** The curriculum encourages analysis of how media shapes our understanding of classification, discrimination, and the consequences of dehumanization and propaganda, as well as the importance of counteracting harmful narratives. Students learn to analyze sources for credibility, bias, and perhaps most importantly: how to counteract those narratives with a balanced approach.
- **Interdisciplinary Learning:** For too long, teachers have been limited by their content areas. *Ten Stages of Change* utilizes standards aligned with social studies including geography and world history as well as English, and even suggestions for psychology and statistics integration. Furthermore, technology is encouraged and utilized in a balanced manner throughout each unit, with multiple options for access and alternatives suggested as needed. Thus, while each unit can be taught in any content area with assessment and intervention focused on that content, students simultaneously gain skills in other areas as well, allowing for more holistic teaching, deeper student engagement, and more authentic learning.
- **Promoting Civic Action and Community Engagement:** Ultimately, the curriculum fosters tolerance, empathy, and civic action among students, encouraging them to be agents of change in their communities and n their world. The effects of learning about genocide at the secondary level are profound and moving. Years of studies and research prove that students are more likely to recognize hate speech, resist passivity, speak out against bullying and hate, and act more independently in civil society while gaining exceptional critical thinking and media literacy skills.
- **Authentic Assessment:** Assessments in the form of Checks for Understanding are offered at the conclusion of each lesson and meant to reflect student performance on common learning standards for social studies and language arts. This includes a cumulative or summative assessment, with options to adapt and meet the needs of students. There are also project-based options and several ideas for informal assessment that are differentiated and flexible.

  Assessments are designed strategically to align with the specific learning standards outlined at the beginning of each lesson and monitored throughout the unit with CFUs. These standards are provided with each assessment so that teachers can measure which skills their students have mastered, and which skills might call for further intervention before a summative. Summative assessments use question stems directly from state standardized testing, AP testing, and other common assessments required across states in most core content areas.

Pacing, Scope, and Sequence

Use the following guidance when determining how to implement the curriculum, how much time to dedicate, and how to align it with your content area:

Scope and Sequence

Each unit in *Ten Stages of Change* focuses on one of the early stages of genocide, aligned with a historical or contemporary case study. Units are designed to build on one another, but each can function **independently**. Educators may choose to implement:

- A single stage as a standalone unit
- Selected combinations of stages
- The complete five-stage sequence as a comprehensive program

Each unit includes a common introductory lesson to establish a shared foundation. This ensures that students begin with the same context, even when units are taught non-sequentially or in isolation.

Note: Some states require a specific number of instructional hours on Holocaust and/or genocide education. Please refer to your district or state guidelines to ensure compliance with mandated instruction time.

While many requirements call for only a few instructional days, educators often find student engagement with the content exceeds expectations. Due to the emotional depth and complexity of the material, additional time may be necessary to allow space for reflection, discussion, and support. The curriculum is fully aligned with TEKS and Common Core standards. Teachers are encouraged to review unit-specific standards to select the best fit for their instructional goals in social studies or English language arts.

Unit Structure & Pacing

The full curriculum includes five instructional modules focused on early-stage genocide indicators:

Each unit includes a curated anchor text adapted from the original *Ten Stages of Change* series. Articles have been edited for grade-level appropriateness and sensitivity, particularly regarding graphic content, and serve as the foundation for analysis, writing, and discussion.

Ten Stages of Change: Scope and Sequence Overview

Weeks	Stage	Case Study	Key Themes	Core Skills	Assessment	Time
1–2	Stage 1: Classification	Darfur, Sudan	Identity, Us vs. Them, Media Rhetoric	Textual analysis, identity mapping, media literacy, SEL	Classification spectrum & synthesis writing	~5–7 class periods
3–4	Stage 2: Symbolization	Cambodia (Khmer Rouge)	Cultural symbols, Memory, Reconciliation	Visual symbolism, historical interpretation, personal narrative	Symbol analysis project (e.g. krama or artifact)	~5–7 class periods
5–6	Stage 3: Discrimination	Afghanistan (Taliban)	Gender inequality, Rights, Legal identity	Legal document analysis, social mapping, role-based writing	Case-based analysis & position paper	~5–7 class periods
7–8	Stage 4: Dehumanization	Rwanda	Hate speech, Propaganda, Power structures	Source evaluation, rhetoric comparison, counter-speech creation	Multimedia campaign or PSA	~5–7 class periods
9–10	Stage 5: Organization	Myanmar (Rohingya)	Bureaucracy, Systems of Harm, Resistance	Systems thinking mapping, problem-solving civic planning	Action plan proposal or infographic	~5–7 class periods

Each unit is designed to span approximately two weeks of instructional time. Teachers may select one or more units to meet targeted standards or deliver the full 5-unit sequence over a 10-week period. The lessons emphasize interdisciplinary skills in inquiry, historical analysis, literacy, civic responsibility, and critical thinking.

Units align with secondary-level standards in:

- World Geography
- World History
- English Language Arts (English I–IV)

Broadly speaking, teachers may also choose to focus on central themes within a unit when deciding where to start.

**Standards Note:*
Each unit includes detailed alignments to TEKS and Common Core standards for World History, World Geography, and English I–IV. If your state uses a different framework or you need assistance mapping standards, reach out to learning@stagesofchange.org for support.

The following is a list of various ways teachers may want or need to include one or more units into their semester or yearly course curriculum, including courses outside social studies and English. The examples include specific teacher/team rationale, limits and constraints, and suggested solutions. This is just to give you an idea of the meany ways the lessons and units can seamlessly be incorporated into your curriculum:

Mr. Aguilar, 12TH Grade College & Career Readiness
Scenario: Mr. Aguilar's class consists primarily of preparing students for college, which includes vocabulary development, reading comprehension, but above all, sharpening their resume writing, career exploration skills, and goal setting for the future. CCR is an elective in the state of Texas. It is a one-semester course, but his seniors in the second semester have already sent in college applications and find the course to be unfulfilling and mindless.

Solution: Many electives have much more flexible standards, scope, and sequence requirements than core content areas. Mr. Aguilar's school has a diverse student body and while high achieving, they lack global awareness. Mr. Aguilar decides to teach Units 3 and 4 since classification is more familiar to seniors and he believes that to truly succeed in any career, students should be aware of discrimination, which seeps into every aspect of social and career living, whether intended or not. Many of his students aspire to work in government but are unaware of the complexity and challenges faced by U.S. government and military such as in cases of Afghanistan, which he wants to highlight so that his students are prepared for what's ahead and have tools to de-legitimize discrimination. Media literacy and propaganda are

extremely important, he decides, and the RTLM hate speech radio from Rwanda with its real recordings would both engage and enlighten students into how easily language can persuade others, as well as make them aware of various forms of dehumanization in the workplace, their future studies, and beyond. He teaches stage 3 for two weeks, gives his kids a break to write college reflections for a week, and then spends two more weeks for stage 4 before winding down the course.

Ms. Broughton, 10th Grade English EOC Interventionist/Credit Recovery

Scenario: For most of the school year in Mrs. Broughton's class, students are in very small classes with her, drilling the state exam that they've failed multiple times and thus have been targeted for intervention in a full course that also functions as credit recovery. Students are generally apathetic, but they have grown to build a rapport throughout the year. Once testing is over, and with two more months of school, Mrs. Broughton decides to challenge her students with the *Ten Stages of Change* curriculum. She relies heavily on the differentiation strategies, especially for English language learners and struggling students, but finds that she can focus, for once, on the standards that reflect real-world application, which her students need desperately. She doesn't decide on a set number of units but begins with Stage 1. Her students are involved and engaged without them realizing it, and although the first unit takes an extra week due to some disruptions and inappropriate behaviors/redirects, the students are enthusiastic and decide to hold a vote for which stage/country they will study next, and so on until the year ends. She notices her students "catching themselves" every time they use a dehumanizing insult or a strict categorization of "cliques" that are separated by race.

Considerations and Concerns

Be mindful of…

- **Sensitivity:** Acknowledge the sensitive nature of the topics discussed and emphasize the need for respectful discussions and support among students.
- **Depth of Thought:** Encourage students to push themselves and explore beyond obvious examples. Have them clarify and support their ideas and avoid superficial or shallow explanations.
- **Over-Reliance on the "Ten Stages" Framework:** This likely seems counterintuitive since the framework is the foundation of the unit. However, remind students it is just that: a

framework. It can be flawed, complex, with gaps and contradictions. Encourage students to engage critically with the content, asking questions, proposing new solutions, etc.

- **Current Events:** The curriculum includes information on Darfur from as recent as December 2023, for example, so encourage students to learn more on how the conflict has escalated in the various stages/case studies.

General Best Practices for Execution

The following is a summary of best practices for teaching genocide, but a much more detailed guide is provided in the pages that follow, including how to address challenging questions, problematic behaviors and responses, what to avoid, etc.

- ✓ **Review** all materials thoroughly.
- ✓ **Communicate** with parents, administrators, and other teachers before, during, and after the unit. Write a letter explaining the rationale, list counselor resources, and your expectations and consequences if those expectations are not followed. Offer alternative assignments that are not "busy work" or "punishment."
- ✓ **Identify** potential triggers in your student population and put a plan into place for how you will respond should any issues arise. (Will you have alternate assignments prepared? Do you have a mentor teacher you can consult with if a lesson doesn't go as planned?)
- ✓ **Prepare** for difficult, frustrating, or even challenging questions from students, some of which you may feel unqualified to answer. See the guide in the pages that follow for more specific examples and suggestions for how to appropriately respond to students when they have unexpected questions or responses.
- ✓ **Gather** support resources (know your students' counselors, have them on call, know their administrators, write letters home, individual check-ins, calming centers, mindfulness, exercise breaks, etc.)
- ✓ **Consider** taking, if you have 3 days or more of instruction per week, at least 1 day off and doing something different in terms of content to balance the heaviness of the topic. 5 days in a row of learning about genocide – no matter how engaging – can be taxing on both students and educators.
- ✓ **Establish** clear discussion guidelines and class norms. Consistently and immediately respond to any deviations from these norms. It is crucial for students to feel supported and safe in these units. Student discomfort is to be expected, and can take many forms, but you must establish a list of non-negotiable behaviors. ***If you do not respond, you are sending a message that trivializing genocide, discrimination, and hate is permissible***.

Final Notes

This curriculum represents a delicate balance between academic rigor and emotional awareness. While the content is challenging, the structured approach provides students with tools to engage meaningfully with difficult historical and contemporary events through storytelling, research, and personal reflection.

Remember that you know your students best. Adapt pacing, modify activities, and adjust content depth to meet your classroom's specific needs.

Thank you,

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Guidelines for Teaching Genocide

The following guidelines follow best practices established by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Facing History & Ourselves, and Echoes & Reflections for teaching genocide, atrocity, and other tough histories. Along with each guideline is an example of what you can say to students to reinforce the idea. As always, adapt to your own teaching style, personality, and student-classroom dynamic.

Guidance for thoughtful facilitation emotional safety and classroom integrity

1. Establish Grounded Purpose from the Start
Make it clear that this is not a curriculum about despair, violence, or shock. It's about *understanding how societies change, and how people make choices within them*. Return to this anchoring purpose often to give students a sense of direction, agency, and clarity.

Script: "We aren't studying horror for its own sake. We're studying patterns—how change happens, how people justify harm, and how others resist it. That's where we start, and that's what we keep coming back to."

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2. Build a Class Contract (and Keep It Alive)
Create a shared agreement with students about how you'll engage in discussion. Use student-generated norms but guide them with non-negotiables like respecting lived experience, avoiding comparisons that minimize harm, and understanding that identity shapes perception.

Tip: Revisit the contract before particularly sensitive lessons, if not all.
Ask: *"Do these norms still seem relevant? Is there anything we should consider adding?"*

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3. Don't Dodge the "Why Didn't They Just…?" Questions
Questions like "Why didn't they fight back?" or "Why didn't they just leave?" are opportunities—not problems. Validate the curiosity, then redirect to structural realities (power, fear, propaganda, bureaucracy, loss of rights) that shape what people can or cannot do.

Script: "That question comes up a lot, and it's an important one. Let's explore what made that kind of resistance difficult or even impossible—and what kinds of resistance *did* happen despite that."

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4. Responding to Inappropriate or Dehumanizing Comments

Not every off-mark comment is malicious—some come from ignorance, shock, or students trying to test boundaries. Pause. Take a breath. Use it as a moment to restore, not punish.

Script:
*For harm reduction: "Okay, let's take a pause. That comment doesn't reflect the seriousness of what we're discussing."
*For exploration: "Tell me more—what makes you say that? Let's unpack it."
*For direct correction: "That's a harmful stereotype, and we don't repeat those here. Let's look at the facts."

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5. Recognize and Manage Emotional Activation
These topics can bring up fear, helplessness, guilt, or even anger. Normalize emotional reactions. Create optional reflective activities and allow for movement, journaling, or quiet processing time. Don't overexpose students to trauma imagery or graphic detail.

Tip: Provide "pause pages" where students can process a lesson emotionally before moving on. Invite—but don't require—students to share.

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6. Handle Personal or Politicized Reactions with Curiosity, Not Control
If a student makes a political comparison ("This reminds me of what's happening now"), let the class reflect on it without centering your opinion. Ask guiding questions. Keep the focus on pattern recognition, not political allegiance.

Script: "Interesting connection. What do you see that's similar? What's different? What context do we need to understand both situations more fully?"

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7. Teach the Gray Areas Without Creating False Equivalence
Many students want moral clarity—but human behavior during genocide often resists black-and-white definitions. Guide them to explore complicity, silence, survival, and the blurred line between victim, perpetrator, and bystander—*without* excusing harm.

Tip: Use identity role-mapping or micro historical case studies to explore complexity.

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8. Prioritize Student Voice, Not Just Content Delivery
Let students lead inquiry, express discomfort, ask difficult questions, and connect personally with the material. But also hold boundaries: the classroom is not a debate stage for denying harm or questioning humanity.

A significant element of this curriculum involves critical thinking and inquiry, critiquing and questioning societal norms, identifying contradictions and inconsistencies, etc. Encourage this. The “Ten Stages of Genocide” framework ***is imperfect***. It does not always work, no matter how you spin it. Similarly, definitions of genocide are inherently imperfect. Allow students to identify these inconsistencies, and use it as a teachable moment, allowing students to brainstorm improvements, clarifications, etc. ***Let them be actively involved and critical, so long as their comments are not harmful or denying historical facts.***

Script: “There’s room for different interpretations of history, but not for denying that this harm occurred or debating someone’s right to exist.”

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9. Create Space for Hope and Responsibility

Counter despair with stories of resistance, rescue, and solidarity. But don’t frame them as easy solutions or as ways to "feel better." Instead, use them to emphasize that even in systems designed for harm, people made meaningful choices.

Closure Practice: End units with reflective prompts like, “What patterns do we need to notice today?” or “Where do we go from here?”

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10. You Don’t Have to Have the Perfect Answer

You will be asked things you don’t know. It’s okay to say, “Let me sit with that and get back to you.” What matters most is modeling intellectual humility, emotional regulation, and commitment to truth over comfort.