

Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You: A Remix of the National Book Award-winning Stamped from the Beginning

Format for YWomen Read Book Club and Readers' Guide

1. April - Read Introduction (Dear Reader) and Section 1: 1415 -1728
2. May - Read Section 2: 1743-1826 **AND** Section 3: 1826 -1879
3. June - Read Section 4: 1868-1963 **AND** Section 5:1963 -Today. Followed by intro of the next book.

Readers' Questions

Intro and Section 1:

- Why study the history of racism?
- Did you learn the same “folktale” as Kendi – that ignorance and hate led to racist ideas which led to racist policies?
- What’s your reaction to Kendi’s discovery that the cause/effect is the other way around – racist policies led to racist ideas to justify the policies?
- In the Introduction Kendi shares his own experience with racist thinking. Why does his candor and honesty matter to readers? To you?
- The first chapter defined segregationists, assimilationists, and antiracists. In the Introduction, Kendi says that both segregationists and assimilationists are racist positions. How so?
- How was Christianity used to support racist ideas?
- There were some odd theories “back then” like climate theory (Black people would turn white if they lived in a cooler climate), curse theory (Noah’s son Ham) and polygenesis (Africans aren’t human). How can we differentiate a good idea from a bad one?
- How did you feel after reading section 1?

Section 2 and Section 3:

- How are your observations of or experiences with racism tied to the list of racist ideas in Chapter 6?
- The authors introduce the concept of “uplift suasion,” the idea that white people would become less racist if they saw Black people lifting themselves up – going

to church, speaking “proper” English, and living like white people. How did this assimilationist strategy perpetuate racist ideas? How does this strategy persist today?

- How does the book’s portrayal of the American founding and Thomas Jefferson compare to what you learned? How does this history complicate the mythology?
- The Enlightenment was a new intellectual era associated with light and white. Light (and white) equaled reason and dark was ignorance. These ideas were used to justify a racial hierarchy. Where do we see these ideas in our culture today?
- One of Kendi’s key arguments is that racist policies that serve the interests of the powerful have driven the development of racist ideas and not the other way around.
- How does this cause-effect show up in section 2?
- Section 3 includes Harriett Beecher Stowe and her best-selling novel Uncle Tom’s Cabin. In what ways is the book racist? How did it draw northerners to the abolitionist movement?
- In Stamped, we read that Garrison “transformed abolitionism from a messy political stance (like Jefferson’s) to a simple moral stance. Slavery was evil...and it was the moral duty of the United States to eliminate the evil of slavery.” In Stamped From the Beginning, Kendi includes this quote by Garrison, “We must give up the spirit of complexional caste” or “give up Christianity.” In other words, it isn’t only slavery that’s evil. We can’t have a social hierarchy based on race and be Christian. What are the implications of Garrison’s words back then? Today?
- The authors suggest that Lincoln emancipated slaves for political reasons rather than the moral argument that Black people were equal. How does this square with your impression of Lincoln?
- Early on, Garrison believed that freedom for Blacks should be incremental but later he believed that freedom should be immediate – right now. He changed his mind. What can we learn from this?

Section 4 and Section 5:

- W.E.B. Du Bois was one of the most influential African American leaders in the early 20th century. In his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois introduced double consciousness – “A self that is Black and a self that is American.” He called his double conscious group the “Talented Tenth” – the top 10% of Black America. How does double consciousness and the “talented tenth” play out in our culture today?
- Why did Du Bois move from being an assimilationist to an antiracist?

- Books and movies like *Tarzan* and *Birth of a Nation* have had a big role in forming and reinforcing racist ideas. What current movies/TV shows promote racist ideas?
- A eugenics movement began to emerge with IQ tests and standardized tests to prove that Black people were inferior. Where do you see eugenics today? What can be done about it?
- Reynolds calls the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments examples of a “big deal” that is far from being a “done deal.” Why are these constitutional amendments not “done deals?”
- In section 5 how are Angela Davis’ ideas on racism different from other anti-racists such as Du Bois, Martin Luther King, William Lloyd Garrison, and others?
- When describing Black political movements Reynolds writes, “The shift went from fighting for civil rights to fighting for freedom. The difference between the two is simple. One implies a fight for fairness. The other, a right to live.” What is the difference between fairness and a right to live? Was Martin Luther King fighting for civil rights or for freedom?
- Why have the different approaches of assimilationism and uplift suasion thinking not been helpful in dispelling racism?
- How has racism changed, improved, or worsened throughout American history? Do you think the problems of racism today are worse than 30 years ago.
- Reynolds notes how Richard Nixon would reference Black people in his speeches without ever saying “Black and “white” by using words like “urban” and “ghetto”. What are other words in our culture that invoke race without mentioning race?
- At the beginning of *Stamped* and in chapter 13, Reynolds asserts, “Life rarely fits neatly into a box. People are complicated and selfish and contradictory.” Who are some of the complicated political figures with respect to their ideas about race, past and present? What makes them complex?