

Examination of the 1619 Project

The 1619 Project is an endeavor that seeks to recast the story of American History alongside the issue of race. It is ambitious in its scope. It is profound and it is controversial. In this task, you will examine both realities of the 1619 project.

You will be responsible for three components to this project:

- 1) You will listen to three podcasts from the 1619 project and answer questions on the podcast to which you listened.
- 2) You will examine aspects of the accompanying book for the project.
- 3) You will analyze some of the reactions to the project.

Part I: Podcast Analysis. Pick three podcasts from the 1619 project. [The New York Times website](#) or iTunes can help you here. If you are having trouble, please let me know and we will navigate together.

A. Podcast Episode Title: _____

1. Identify five concepts made about American History in the podcast that challenges what is traditionally thought about it.

Concept that is brought up in the podcast (For example, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, ending of World War II...)	How is it traditionally viewed in the consensus narrative of American History? (How is this concept seen in history textbooks?)	What is the podcast saying about this concept? Explain with analysis or direct evidence from the podcast.

2. Where do we see an example in the podcast episode of “the other?” What role does “the other” play in the podcast?

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3. In the podcast episode, where is a specific example of listening to voices that have been previously silenced? How does this example show an affirmation of the idea that it is better to hear more voices of experience?

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4. Explain if you think that the podcast increases a person's understanding of American History? Why do you feel the way you do?

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5. There are individuals who believe that there is no such thing as the color line. They will say, "I just see people. I don't see color." Think of a moment where this idea is challenged in the podcast episode and explain how it is challenged. Finally, answer where you stand on the idea of "not seeing color."

Think of a moment where the idea of "not seeing color" is challenged in the podcast episode	How so?	What are your thoughts on the idea of "I don't see color." If you answer this now, you don't have to answer it for the analysis of subsequent episodes, unless there is something specific you wish to say about it in that episode.

B. Podcast Episode Title: _____

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Part II: “The 1619 Project” in book form. Click [here](#) for the book. Read the introduction on page 5 of the book. (Look at the bottom of the page and use that and not the page of the file.)

Afterwards, go to pages 6 and 7 to examine the table of contents. You will have to look at them side by side or flip from one page to another to figure out the title and where it is located in the book. The articles run the range from music, art, traffic jams (the one with Lil Nas X and Billy Ray Cyrus is really great- go down to the “Old Town Road” indeed!), and candy. Pick three articles and answer the questions below. If you like, you can also sample some of the smaller articles that are on page 6 under the heading, “400 Years: A Literary Timeline.”

A. Title of Article: _____

1. In the “Editor’s Note” to the book, Jake Silverstein writes, “Out of slavery — and the anti-black racism it required — grew nearly everything that has truly made America exceptional: its economic might, its industrial power, its electoral system, diet and popular music, the inequities of its public health and education, its astonishing penchant for violence, its income inequality, the example it sets for the world as a land of freedom and equality, its slang, its legal system and the endemic racial fears and hatreds that continue to plague it to this day.” How did you see this idea emphasized in the article you chose? Explain how the article substantiates Silverstein’s words with direct evidence and analysis.

How did you see the idea that Silverstein emphasizes in the article you chose? In other words, discuss what your article was about, its thesis?	Explain how the article substantiates Silverstein’s words with direct evidence and analysis.

2. Explain how the article you chose creates the idea of a “more just future.”

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3. To undo prejudicial attitudes, we have to actively call out discrimination when it is seen and offer up something to counter it. How is this idea evident in your article? Make sure you identify your analysis with evidence from the article.

To undo prejudicial attitudes, we have to actively call out discrimination when it is seen and offer up something to counter it. How is this idea evident in your article?	What evidence is in your article to support your findings?

4. E.M. Forster once wrote that good writing has only one job: “To connect.” How do we see connection in your article? Where is there an explicitly intentional connection to the reader in your chosen article?

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5. Thinking back to Professor Gates' videos, what element of your article would connect to Professor Gates' analysis? Explain the connection.

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III. The Aftermath: Reaction to The 1619 Project. Now, we will look at what people thought about the project. We will look at sources that critique it and support it. No one is "right." There is not one "right" answer. It's not "either or" but rather "both and." We are trying to get more voices in and trying to get things "more perfect." That's it. No discipleship here, but scholarship. [This is a starting point](#) in terms of explaining what the project actually is. When you write your feelings, please include detailed analysis behind why you feel what you do and not blippy and reductive answers. No discovery or insight there, friends! :)

1. ["A Dream as Old as the American Dream"](#) by Clarence Page. Click here for the article. Read it thoroughly and answer the questions that follow.

A. What are four criticisms that Page has against the 1619 Project. Identify the objection and explain why he feels the way he does with his thoughts from the article. Use as much of his words and thoughts you can to capture his thesis, his beliefs.

Objection Page has to the 1619 Project	Explain why he feels the way he does

B. Page disagrees with the idea that “founding ideals were false.” He feels that this notion “is misleading and even counterproductive to our understanding of the founding documents as aspirational.” Your thoughts? (Guess what? I want you to explain why you feel the way you do. I mean, you are surprised by that insistence?)

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C. According to Page, define “learned helplessness.” Why does he feel that the 1619 emphasizes this and why does he think this is dangerous?

Define “learned helplessness.”	Why does Page feel that the 1619 emphasizes this and why does he think this is dangerous?

D. Do you think that the 1619 Project emphasizes “learned helplessness?” You must have analysis to your thinking here.

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E. The article concludes with the idea that the 1619 Project does more to divide us than help us come together. What do you think?

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2. [“I Helped Fact Check the 1619 Project. The Times Ignored Me”](#) by Leslie Harris. This is an article written by one of the scholars associated with the project. Go ahead and read away.

A. Identify three challenges to the 1619 Project that Professor Harris makes in her article. Explain how that challenge was concerning to Professor Harris.

Challenge that Professor Harris made against the 1619 Project	Why was this something that was so concerning to her?

B. Professor Harris talks about how there are people who want to paint the 1619 Project in a dangerous light to discredit it. Explain if you think that Professor Harris is one of these people, and explain why you think people would want to discredit the project. You can find the discussion of this point on page 2 of the article, second to last paragraph.

Explain if you think that Professor Harris wants to bring down the 1619 Project.	Why do you think that people are threatened by the 1619 Project?

C. Which criticism- Page or Professor Harris- is more in line with what a historian would argue? Explain why you feel the way you do?

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D. Using evidence from the article, how do you think Professor Harris would respond to the sentence from the “Editor’s Note?” (The sentence in question: “Out of slavery — and the anti-black racism it required — grew nearly everything that has truly made America exceptional: its economic might, its industrial power, its electoral system, diet and popular music, the inequities of its public health and education, its astonishing penchant for violence, its income inequality, the example it sets for the world as a land of freedom and equality, its slang, its legal system and the endemic racial fears and hatreds that continue to plague it to this day.”)

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E. The historian holds power because they know what has been said, what is being said, and what might be said in the future. Given the ending note of the article, explain if you think that Professor Harris would agree or disagree with the statement.

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3. Poynter Institute, [“Nikole Hannah- Jones’ essay from ‘The 1619 Project’ wins commentary Pulitzer.”](#) The Poynter Institute is an organization dedicated to the ethics and practices of media. This article encompasses the drive of the 1619 Project as well as the criticisms against it

A. What is the overall thesis of the article? Identify evidence that would support the thesis.

Thesis of the article:

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Three pieces of evidence used to support the thesis:

Evidence	How does this support the thesis?

B. Read the New York Times' response to the criticism about the 1619 Project (The link can be found on the second page of the article, fourth paragraph from the bottom.) Identify the best sentence in the Times' response and why you felt it was "the best sentence."

Best sentence from the article- Copy and paste here.	Why was this sentence so important to you?

C. In the Poynter article, Adam Serwer is quoted as follows: "U.S. history is often taught and popularly understood through the eyes of its great men, who are seen as either heroic or tragic figures in a global struggle for human freedom. The 1619 Project, named for the date of the first arrival of Africans on American soil, sought to place 'the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative.' Viewed from the perspective of those historically denied the rights enumerated in America's founding documents, the story of the country's great men necessarily looks very different."

1. Describe your feelings about the sentence. What do you think of Serwer's point that he is striving to make? Explain your thoughts.

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2. Explain why you think we hold the story of "the country's great men" so important. Why does this hold appeal to us as a people?

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3. Explain if you think Donald Trump favors the story of “the country’s great men” or “the global struggle for human freedom.”

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4. Given the criticism of the 1619 Project, has your opinion fundamentally changed? Explain why or why not.

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