

The Alt Right and White Supremacy

Compelling Question: What is white supremacy and why is it intensifying?

Grade Level		Time	Common Core Standards
K-2	3-5	45 Minutes	Reading: R1 Writing: W1, W2, W7 Speaking & Listening: SL1 Language: L5, L6
MS	10-12		



Web Related Connections

Lessons

- [Confederate Monuments and their Removal](#)
- [Swastikas and Other Hate Symbols](#)
- [Antisemitic Incidents: Being an Ally, Advocate and Activist](#)

Other Resources

- [Violence and Hate Unite the Right](#)
- [Lessons to Teach and Learn from 'Unite the Right'](#)
- [Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism](#)
- [Defining Extremism: A Glossary of White Supremacist Terms, Movements and Philosophies](#)

Key Words

(See ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#) and [Defining Extremism: A Glossary of White Supremacist Terms, Movements and Philosophies](#).)

adherent
anti-establishment
Confederacy
conservatism
disparage
doctrine
dominance
egalitarian

LESSON OVERVIEW

On August 11 and 12, 2017, 'Unite the Right' convened one of the largest and most violent gatherings in the U.S. in decades that brought together white supremacist groups including the alt right, neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan. The gathering's stated goal was to save the statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, because like other places in the South, there is growing controversy about the symbolism and removal of public monuments celebrating leaders of the Confederacy. Hundreds gathered on Friday evening and Saturday to broadcast their viewpoints and ideologies, including chanting, "blood and soil" and "you will not replace us." They carried torches, homemade shields, weapons and Confederate and Nazi flags. Many brandished Nazi salutes. After continued clashes with their opponents, a car plowed into a crowd of peaceful counter-protesters, killing one person and injuring nineteen. A state of emergency was declared by Virginia's Governor.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to understand what white supremacy is, including the alt right, explore historical and current day examples and reflect on their thoughts and feelings about it through a writing activity.

[NOTE: Since this lesson focuses on white supremacy which targets Jews, African Americans and other groups, it is important to be mindful that seeing and discussing the topic could be upsetting for some or many of your students. Some students may feel comfortable or interested in discussing these issues in class and others may feel nervous, uncomfortable or angry talking about this topic. Prior to teaching the lesson, assess the maturity of your students in being able to handle this challenging content, review your classroom guidelines for [establishing a safe learning environment](#) and provide opportunities for students to share their feelings as the lesson proceeds.]

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand what white supremacy is, its history and how it manifests in modern society.
- Students will learn more about the alt right and how it has grown in recent
- Students will reflect upon white supremacy and the alt right through a writing assignment.

MATERIALS & PREPARATION

- *Post-it® Notes* (3–5 per student)
- [Background Information on White Supremacy and about the Events of August 11 and 12, 2017](#) (for teacher only)
- [Alt Right: A Primer about the New White Supremacy](#) (one copy for each student)

PROCEDURES

Warm-Up

1. Say the words “white supremacy,” “Ku Klux Klan” and alt right aloud and ask students to think about what words, phrases, thoughts and feelings come to mind when hearing those terms. Distribute *Post-it® Notes* (3–5 per student) and have students write down some of their thoughts, one per sheet.
2. Have students bring their post-it notes (one row or group at a time) to the board or a designated wall and stick their notes there. As they are doing so and with time permitting, arrange the notes according to duplicates, themes and/or patterns. Then have students come up and look at all the post-it notes together or simply read aloud all of the words and phrases as students listen from their seats.
3. Ask students: *What do you notice about the Post-it® Notes?* Take a few comments but keep this discussion brief.

Key Words (cont.)

espouse
 extremist
 ideology
 implicit
 infiltrate
 mainstream
 multiculturalism
 pluralism
 propaganda
 radical
 revere
 think tank
 trolling



Information Sharing: What is White Supremacy?

1. Ask students: *What is white supremacy?* Define white supremacy as follows:

White supremacy is a term used to characterize various belief systems central to which are one or more of the following key tenets: 1) whites should have dominance over people of other backgrounds, especially where they may co-exist; 2) whites should live by themselves in a whites-only society; 3) white people have their own “culture” that is superior to other cultures; 4) white people are genetically superior to other people.

Explain that as an ideology, white supremacy is far more encompassing than simple racism or bigotry. Most white supremacists today believe that the white race is in danger of extinction due to a rising “flood” of non-whites, who are controlled and manipulated by Jews, and that imminent action is needed to “save” the white race.

Explain that events such as lynching, hate crimes, racial slurs, swastikas and burning crosses are primarily what people think of as white supremacy. However, many believe that implicit forms of racism like racial profiling, the school-to-prison pipeline, employment discrimination, voter suppression and Confederate monuments create a culture that can give rise to white supremacy.

2. Then ask students: *Do you know what recently happened in Charlottesville, VA?*
3. Share with students some of the [background information on white supremacy and about the events of August 11 and 12, 2017](#).
4. Engage students in a brief discussion by asking:
 - What did you learn that you didn’t know before?
 - What surprises you about what you learned?
 - Why do you think white supremacy has persisted over all these years?
 - Who is hurt by white supremacy?
 - What more do you want to know?



Reading Activity

1. Explain to students that they are going to learn more about the alt right through a reading activity. Distribute a copy of [Alt Right: A Primer about the New White Supremacy](#) to each student. Give students 10–15 minutes to read it silently. You may also want to assign the reading for homework on the previous night.
2. Engage students in a discussion by asking:
 - What did you learn that you didn't know before?
 - Did anything challenge your thinking about the alt right? Please explain.
 - What are some of the main principles that the alt right espouses?
 - Why do you think the alt right is growing?
 - What other questions do you have?
 - What do you think should be done about the alt right and white supremacy?



Writing Activity

1. Ask students: *What should we do about white supremacy and the alt right?* What ideas do you have? Generate a list of ideas and record on the board/smart board. Explain to students that they will have the opportunity to explore their ideas in more depth through a writing activity. First, have them turn and talk with someone sitting next to them about an idea they want to pursue, one minute per person.
2. Have students then consider what writing format they will use to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas about white supremacy and what to do about it. They can use one of the following strategies or another idea of their choosing: persuasive letter to the editor or a congressional representative, speech espousing their beliefs, plan for activism, research project, response to the reading, poem, journal entry, etc.
3. Assign the completion of their writing for homework.

Closing

Have each student either read their essay aloud (if they are completed) or have them share what their ideas are and how they will be expressing them.

ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- [A Guide to the Charlottesville Aftermath](#) (*The New York Times*, August 13, 2017)
- [Charlottesville and the Effort to Downplay Racism in America](#) (*The New Yorker*, August 13, 2017)
- [Charlottesville and the Face of White Supremacy](#) (GQ, August 13, 2017)
- [Ku Klux Klan](#) (History)
- [The 'alt-right' is just another word for white supremacy, study finds](#) (*The Washington Post*, August 16, 2017)
- [In Their Own Words: What Some of the Charlottesville Rally Participants Stand For](#) (*The New York Times*, August 19, 2017)
- [When Does a Fringe Movement Stop Being Fringe?](#) (*The Atlantic*, August 12, 2017)

Common Core Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
Reading
R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
Writing
W1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization and analysis of content.
W7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
Speaking and Listening
SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
Language
L5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
L6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

Background Information on White Supremacy and about the Events of August 11 and 12, 2017

- On August 11 and 12, 'Unite the Right' convened one of the largest and most violent gatherings in decades in the U.S. that brought together white supremacist groups including the alt-right, neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan. The gathering's stated goal was to save the statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, but many of these extremists viewed it as an opportunity for a show of strength. Hundreds gathered on Friday evening and Saturday to broadcast their viewpoints and ideologies, including chanting, "blood and soil" and "you will not replace us." They carried torches, homemade shields, weapons and Confederate and Nazi flags. Many brandished Nazi salutes. After continued clashes with their opponents, a car plowed into a crowd of peaceful counter-protesters, killing one person and injuring nineteen. A state of emergency was declared by Virginia's Governor.
- There are a variety of groups under the umbrella of white supremacy including: the alt-right, the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, racist skinheads, "traditional" white supremacists; Christian Identity adherents; and white supremacist prison gangs. There are also many individuals who are not affiliated with an organized white supremacist group but are still considered to be white supremacists.
- Neo-Nazis are one of the main segments of the white supremacist movement in the U.S. and many other countries. They revere Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany and sometimes try to adopt some Nazi principles to their own times and geographic locations, though many neo-Nazis primarily adopt the trappings, symbols and mythology of the Third Reich.
- The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was founded in 1866 and was present in almost every state in the South by 1870. It became a vehicle for white southern resistance to the Reconstruction-era policies aimed at establishing political and economic equality for African Americans. Though Congress passed legislation designed to curb Klan terrorism, the organization saw its primary goal as the reestablishment of white supremacy fulfilled through Democratic victories in state legislatures across the South in the 1870s. After a period of decline, the Klan was revived in the early 20th century, burning crosses and staging rallies, parades and marches denouncing immigrants, Catholics, Jews, African Americans and organized labor. The civil rights movement of the 1960s also saw a surge of Ku Klux Klan activity, including bombings of African-American schools and churches and violence against black and white activists in the South.
- The alt right (short for "alternative right") is a segment of the white supremacist movement consisting of a loose network of racists and anti-Semites who reject mainstream conservatism in favor of politics that embrace implicit or explicit racism, anti-Semitism and white supremacy. Many seek to re-inject such bigoted ideas into the conservative movement in the U.S. The alt right also includes many racist users of image boards and message forums who enjoy harassing or "trolling" people who disagree with their views.

Alt Right: A Primer about the New White Supremacy

One of the extremist-related “buzz words” that people may encounter currently is “Alt Right.” The term alt right originated with extremists but increasingly has found its way into the mainstream media. Alt Right is short for “alternative right.” This vague term actually encompasses a range of people on the extreme right who reject mainstream conservatism in favor of forms of conservatism that embrace implicit or explicit racism or white supremacy.

People who identify with the Alt Right regard mainstream or traditional conservatives as weak and impotent, largely because they do not sufficiently support racism and anti-Semitism. Alt Righters frequently disparage the conservative movement by using the derogatory term “cuckservative” popularized in 2015. The term “cuckservative,” a combination of “conservative” and “cuckoid,” is used by white supremacists to describe a white Christian conservative who promotes the interests of Jews and non-whites over those of whites.

Though not every person who identifies with the Alt Right is a white supremacist, most are and “white identity” is central to people in this milieu. In fact, Alt Righters reject modern conservatism explicitly because they believe that mainstream conservatives are not advocating for the interests of white people as a group.

How did the term Alt Right originate?

White supremacist Richard Spencer, who runs the National Policy Institute, a tiny white supremacist group, coined the term “Alternative Right” as the name for an online publication that debuted in 2010. The online publication changed hands in 2013 when Spencer shut it down. It was soon re-launched by Colin Liddell and Andy Nowicki, who were former writers for *Alternative Right*. Spencer went on to found another online journal, *Radix*. Both *Alternative Right* and *Radix* act as forums for racists, anti-Semites and others who identify with the Alt Right.

The term alt right is not the only term used to describe this movement. Some of its adherents use other, similar phrases, such as the “New Right” and the “Dissident Right.” They all refer to the same race-infused brand of extreme conservatism.

What is the ideology of the Alt Right?

Alt Right adherents identify with a range of different ideologies that put white identity at their centers. Many claim themselves as Identitarians, a term that originated in France with the founding of the Bloc Identitaire movement and its youth counterpart, Generation Identitaire. Identitarians espouse racism and intolerance under the guise of preserving the ethnic and cultural origins of their respective countries. American Identitarians such as Richard Spencer claim to want to preserve European-American (i.e. white) culture in the U.S. Identitarians reject multiculturalism or pluralism in any form.

Others in the Alt Right identify as so-called radical traditionalists, people who want to preserve what they claim are traditional Christian values but from a uniquely white supremacist perspective. The Traditionalist Youth Network is a group that espouses a white supremacist form of Christianity and promotes “family and folk” and separation of the races.

Others in the Alt Right simply identify as white nationalists, who want to preserve the white majority in the U.S., claiming that whites losing their majority status is equivalent to “white genocide.” They favor propaganda on subjects such as immigration and “black crime” as “evidence” of this ostensible ethnic cleansing of whites.

There are people with other beliefs who fall under the umbrella of the Alt Right but all share a fixation on white identity as central to their ideology. Different segments of the Alt Right may refer to themselves as neo-reactionaries (those who reject liberal democracy and ideas associated with the Enlightenment. Some neo-reactionaries refer to their theories as the “Dark Enlightenment.”) Others may call themselves “race realists” or alternately “HBD” advocates, a reference to human biodiversity (those who believe that one’s race governs traits such as behavior and intelligence—with non-whites being inferior to whites). However they define themselves, Alt Righters reject egalitarianism, democracy, universalism and multiculturalism.

A number of Alt Righters are also blatantly anti-Semitic and blame Jews for allegedly promoting anti-white policies such as immigration and diversity. Alt Righters mock conservative support of Israel as anti-white. The woman behind the Alt Right Twitter handle recently wrote, “I support ALL Jews living in Israel or a defined area.”

Who makes up the Alt Right?

The Alt Right is an extremely loose movement, made up of different strands of people connected to white supremacy. One body of adherents is the ostensibly “intellectual” racists who create many of the doctrines and principles of the white supremacist movement. They seek to attract young educated whites to the movement by highlighting the achievements and alleged intellectual and cultural superiority of whites. They run a number of small white supremacist enterprises that include think tanks, online publications and publishing houses.

Another strand of the Alt Right consists of younger racists savvy with social media and Internet communications. During the election, a number of these Alt Righters have promoted Donald Trump’s presidential bid, seeing the populist candidate as someone tougher than so-called “cuckservatives,” thanks to his controversial stands on issues ranging from immigration to Muslims in America

Alt Righters like to try to use terms such as “culture” as substitutes for more lightning rod terms such as “race,” or promote “Western Civilization” as a code word for white culture or identity. They do not make explicit references to white supremacy like the “14 words” a slogan used by neo-Nazis and other hardcore white supremacists. The “14 words” refers to the expression, “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” Even though Alt Righters share the sentiment behind the “14 words” they’re more inclined to talk about preserving European-American identity.

What is the impact of the Alt Right?

Though the Alt Right is not a movement, per se, the number of people who identify with it is growing. It includes a number of young people who espouse racist and anti-Semitic beliefs. It has a loud presence online. The intellectual racists who identify as part of the Alt Right also run a growing number of publications and publishing houses that promote white supremacist ideas. Their goal is to influence mainstream whites by exposing them to the concept of white identity and racial consciousness.

The term “Alternative Right” is a conscious attempt by these people to stake out part of the conservative spectrum and to claim that they deserve a voice in conservative conversations. The term “Alternative Right” explicitly avoids the use of the word “race” and conjures rebel or anti-establishment figures—often attractive to youth. The alt right is in a sense an attempt by white supremacists to infiltrate conservative conversations that have largely deliberately excluded them in recent decades.

For complete article, visit www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/alt-right-a-primer-about-the-new-white-supremacy.