



CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS AND THEIR REMOVAL

More than 150 years after the Civil War, there is a new drive to remove Confederate monuments. In April and May 2017, the New Orleans City Council voted to remove four Confederate monuments from their city. This decision came on the heels of other cities such as Austin, TX and Louisville, KY, who also voted to remove their statues; additional cities are also considering removing them. New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu championed the effort to take down the four Confederate monuments, stating, “It is self-evident that these men did not fight for the United States of America; they fought against it. These monuments purposefully celebrate a fictional, sanitized Confederacy; ignoring the death, ignoring the enslavement, and the terror that it actually stood for.”

The latest national push for the removal of Confederate monuments and names began in 2015 after Dylann Roof, who idolized the Confederate flag, killed nine African-American worshippers at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC. Racial justice activists have been working for decades on the removal of Confederate monuments and other related symbols. Taking down these monuments has come with significant opposition including pushback, threats against work crews and in some cases, protest and demonstrations.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn more about Confederate monuments and the push to remove them, through the lens of what took place in New Orleans. It encourages them to reflect on their own points of view about the issue while exploring others’ positions, and to create sketches of monuments to replace the Confederate monuments or to memorialize a significant person or event in history.

See these additional ADL resources: *Current Events Classroom* lessons “[Swastikas and other Hate Symbols](#),” “[Should Washington's NFL Team Change their Name?](#)” and “[Harriet Tubman on the \\$20 Bill: The Power of Symbols](#),” [Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism](#) and [With Hate in their Hearts: The State of White Supremacy in the United States](#).

Grade Level: grades 9–12

Time: 45 minutes

Common Core Anchor Standards: Reading, Speaking and Listening, Language

Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn more about the city of New Orleans’ decision to remove four Confederate monuments.
- Students will reflect on different points of view, including their own, about removing Confederate monuments.

- Students will design their own monuments to take the place of a Confederate monument or to remember something else important in history.

Material:

- “New Orleans mayor: Why I’m taking down my city’s Confederate monuments” (*The Washington Post*, May 11, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/05/11/new-orleans-mayor-why-im-taking-down-my-citys-confederate-monuments/>, one copy for each student)
- [My Monument Worksheet](#) (one copy for each student)
- Art supplies (drawing paper, colored pencils/markers)

Compelling Question: Should we remove Confederate monuments?

Vocabulary:

Review the following vocabulary words and make sure students know their meanings. (See ADL’s “[Glossary of Education Terms](#).”)

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| • affront | • injustice | • melting pot | • reverence |
| • border states | • immoral | • opponents | • valorize |
| • contextualize | • inaccurate | • oppression | • venerate |
| • embody | • institutional | • perpetuate | • white supremacy |
| • glorify | • intertwined | • reconciliation | |

INFORMATION SHARING

1. Ask students: *What is a monument?* Elicit and explain that a **monument** is a structure (building, statue, stone, etc.) that honors a person or event and is intended to keep alive and honor the memory of that person/event. Then ask: *Have you ever seen a monument in your community or in your travels to other places?* You can share examples such as the Lincoln or Washington Monuments which they may have seen in pictures. Explain that many towns and cities have monuments.
2. Ask: *What are Confederate monuments? Do you know why they have been in the news lately?*
Explain that **Confederate monuments** are monuments in memory of those who served and died in service to the Confederate States during the American Civil War. Explain that many Confederate monuments were erected in the former Confederate and border states in the decades following the Civil War, and they have been in the news because the city of New Orleans recently removed four Confederate monuments.
3. Share the following information with students:
 - There are at least 700 and possibly more than 1,000 Confederate monuments in 31 states, located in public parks, courthouse squares and state capitols.

- In April and May 2017, the New Orleans City Council voted to remove four Confederate monuments from their city. Mayor Mitch Landrieu championed the effort to take down the four monuments, which was a two year process, including a City Council vote and several legal challenges that were overcome. The four confederate monuments are:

Battle of Liberty Place Monument: erected in 1891 to commemorate the Reconstruction era "Battle of Liberty Place," an attempt by Democratic White League paramilitary organizations to take control of the government of Louisiana.

Jefferson Davis Monument (Memorial): an outdoor sculpture and memorial to Jefferson Davis, who served as the President of the Confederate States from 1861 to 1865.

General Beauregard Equestrian Statue: an historic monument dedicated to the first prominent general of the Confederate States Army during the American Civil War.

Robert E. Lee Monument and Circle: a historic monument dedicated to Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

- Landrieu’s initial calls for the monuments to be removed came on June 24, 2015, less than a week after white supremacist Dylann Roof, who idolized the Confederate flag, killed nine African-American worshippers at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC. Racial justice activists have been working for decades on the removal of Confederate monuments and other related symbols. The monuments were removed for similar reasons as the removal of Confederate flags—that the government should not honor people who were engaged in fighting a war in defense of slavery. While some still deny that this was the primary motivation for Confederate secession, overwhelming evidence proves otherwise.
 - Additional cities are considering removing their Confederate monuments including Charlottesville, VA, Orlando, FL, Baltimore, MD and St. Louis, MO. These cities are experiencing significant pushback and in some cases, protest.
 - There has been resistance to removing the monuments for a variety of reasons, including family members who want the memory of these men to be kept alive; people who feel the symbols of white supremacy should not be hidden away but should be on display for us to learn from them; historians who believe the monuments preserve and educate about America’s past; and residents of the city who feel the tax payer money needed to remove the monuments would be better spent elsewhere.
 - There has also been resistance from current day white supremacists like Richard B. Spencer who protested in Charlottesville, VA recently saying, “We will not be replaced.”
4. Engage students in a brief discussion by asking the following questions:
- What surprises you about this information?
 - What did you learn that you didn’t know before?
 - Why is this issue controversial?

ANALYZING QUOTES: A CONTINUUM

1. Write the following two quotes on pieces of paper and place on opposite sides of the classroom. (Make the signs in advance but don’t put up until this point in the lesson.) Ask students to read each of them aloud.

These statues are not just stone and metal. They are not just innocent remembrances of a benign history. These monuments purposefully celebrate a fictional, sanitized Confederacy; ignoring the death, ignoring the enslavement, and the terror that it actually stood for. After the Civil War, these statues were a part of that terrorism as much as a burning cross on someone's lawn; they were erected purposefully to send a strong message to all who walked in their shadows about who was still in charge in this city.

—New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu

I understand the impulse to remove Confederate monuments, which embody some of the most repulsive aspects of the American past. But if we hide them away in a museum, it becomes easier to evade their implications. Let the statues to white supremacy stand, alongside monuments to the brave Americans who challenged it. Anything less let's all of us off the hook.

—Jonathan Zimmerman, professor of education and history at University of Pennsylvania (From *The New York Times* Letters to the Editor: [What Should We Do With Confederate Monuments?](#))

5. Explain that these quotes represent two different points of view about whether to take Confederate monuments down or keep them up. Explain that students should pretend there is a line connecting the two questions and they should position themselves based on their initial reaction at either at one quote or the other or somewhere in between, depending on their agreement with each of the quote's positions. In other words, if they agree with the first quote, they should stand near it. If they agree with the other quote they should stand near that quote. They also have the option to stand somewhere in between if they don't fully agree with either position. Acknowledge aloud to students that many of them may be thinking and learning about this for the first time, so they should position themselves based on what they know and feel right now.
6. Give students a few minutes to read the quotes again to themselves and then signal it is time to position themselves along the imaginary line. They can take a few minutes to do this but do so silently.
7. After students are situated in their spots, ask some of them—who are at different points on the continuum—about where they are standing and why. After a few people have shared their points of view, offer the opportunity for students to move based on what they heard.
8. Have everyone come back to their seats and engage them in a discussion using the following questions:
 - Was it easy or difficult to decide where to stand and why?
 - When you heard other students' reasons for standing in their places, did it influence you? How so?
 - Did you feel you had enough information to decide where to stand? Why or why not?
 - What more do you want to know about this issue?

READING ACTIVITY

1. Distribute the article "[New Orleans mayor: Why I'm taking down my city's Confederate monuments](#)" to each student and give 10–15 minutes to read silently.
2. Engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What were your thoughts and feelings while reading the article?
 - What did you learn that you didn't know before?
 - Why were the Confederate monuments in New Orleans removed?

- Is there one sentence or quote that stands out for you? If so, what is it and why?
- In the article, Landrieu states, “After we’re done moving these monuments, we’ll face an even greater task: coming together to decide who we are as a city — and as a nation.” What does he mean by this? What ideas do you have for “coming together?”
- What is the position and perspective of the author of this? How do you know?
- What arguments and evidence does he use to make his case?

ART ACTIVITY: MY MONUMENT

1. As a culmination to the lesson, explain to students that they are going to create their own monuments. They can work alone or in pairs and will start the process by conceptualizing it and drawing it on paper. If the time and opportunity permits, they can use clay and/or other materials to actually construct a model of it. Remind students about what a **monument** is: *a structure (building, statue, stone, etc.) that honors a person or event and is intended to keep alive the memory of that person/event.*
2. As a class, brainstorm a list of ideas of monuments that honor a person, event in history or something else important and meaningful. These ideas can include a monument to be constructed as an alternative to the Confederate monuments you’ve been discussing or another person or event altogether. Allow at least five minutes for the brainstorming so you can generate many ideas from which to choose.
3. Have students then start to work on their monuments (either alone or in pairs) by responding to the following questions using the [My Monument Worksheet](#).
 - What person or event will be honored/remembered by the monument?
 - What will the structure look like?
 - How big will the structure be?
 - What will the monument be made of (clay, stone, other materials)?
 - Where will the monument be located and what is the significance of that place?
 - What other resources and background information are needed?
4. After completing their worksheets, distribute drawing paper and markers/colored pencils and have students begin to draw a model of the monument. Allow ten minutes to begin this process.

CLOSING

Have students share their preliminary sketches of their monuments, either as a whole class or in pairs, sharing with a person sitting near them.

ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- [Baltimore Mayor Considers Removal Of Confederate Monuments](#) (NPR, May 29, 2017)
- [Black Leaders in Ariz. Push for Removal of State’s Confederate Monuments](#) (*The Root*, June 5, 2017)
- [Confederate monuments, more than 700 across USA, aren't budging](#) (*USA Today*, May 27, 2017)
- [How to reckon with a Confederate past](#) (CNN, April 25, 2017)

- [Mitch Landrieu on monuments coming down: Civil War over; Confederacy lost; we're better off](#) (*The New Orleans Advocate*, May 19, 2017)
- [Read New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu's Remarkable Speech About Removing Confederate Monuments](#) (*Esquire*, May 23, 2017)
- [Stories of New Orleans: As Monuments Go Down, Family Histories Emerge](#) (*The New York Times*, May 24, 2017)
- [Tempers Flare Over Removal of Confederate Statues in New Orleans](#) (*The New York Times*, May 7, 2017)
- [The Fight Over Confederate Monuments Is Moving Beyond New Orleans](#) (*TIME*, May 17, 2017)
- [The history behind New Orleans' long fight to remove its Confederate monuments](#) (Think Progress, March 13, 2017)
- [The Meaning of Our Confederate 'Monuments'](#) (*The New York Times*, May 15, 2017)
- [The Myth of the Kindly General Lee](#) (*The Atlantic*, June 4, 2017)
- ['They were not patriots': New Orleans removes monument to Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee](#) (*The Washington Post*, May 19, 2017)
- [Why New Orleans should take down Robert E. Lee's statue: Wynton Marsalis](#) (*The Times-Picayune*, May 17, 2017)
- ["Confederate Monuments Are Coming Down Across the United States. Here's a List."](#) (*The New York Times*, August 17, 2017)

COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS

Content Area/Standard
Reading
Standard 1: 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.
Standard 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
Speaking and Listening
Standard 1: 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.
Standard 5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
Language
Standard 5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

MY MONUMENT WORKSHEET

Name(s): _____

What person or event will be honored/remembered by the monument?
What will the structure look like? (Describe in some detail)
How big will the structure be?
What will the monument be made of (clay, stone, other materials)?
Where will the monument be located and what is the significance of that place?
What other resources and background information are needed?