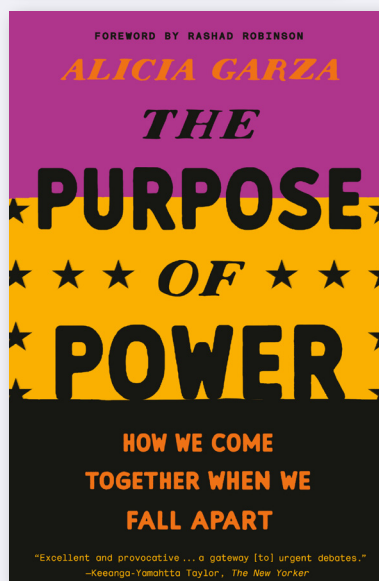
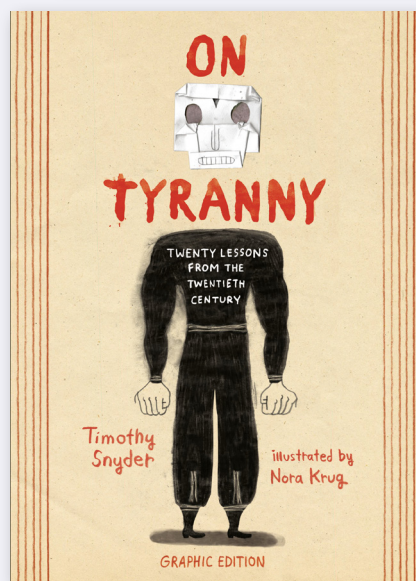
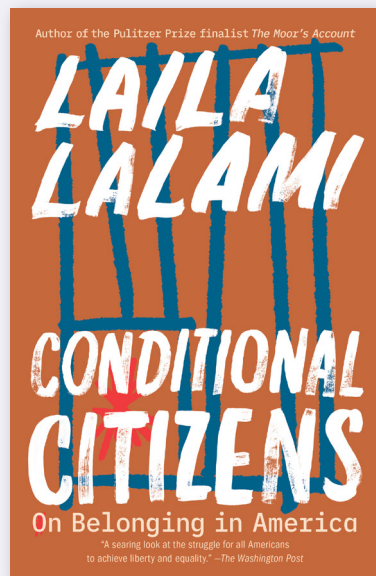


THEMATIC GUIDE

Building Teacher Knowledge  
Around Civic Advocacy



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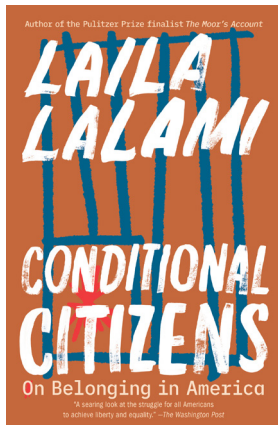
■ INTRODUCTION

On January 6, 2021, an angry mob of political protestors stormed the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. It was an organized and unprecedented attack resulting in the loss of multiple lives, the damage of priceless property, and the fracture of America’s democratic foundations. It was, above all, a wake-up call.

Public policy experts have been warning for decades that political polarization is leading our nation away from its patriotic ideals and toward the very real dangers of autocracy and nationalism. Contributing factors include the fall of traditional newspaper readership and the rise of social media platforms, which have resulted in a distrust of politicians and a disinterest in government. Much of our country’s youth now live in what has become known as “civic deserts,” where there are few or no traditional opportunities for citizens to engage in respectful public discourse. If young adults are to be the safehold of our democracy, they must become engaged citizens who respect our nation’s history while also recognizing its inherent flaws.

The books in this text set focus on the concept of civic advocacy by addressing the following line of inquiry: How do we show pride for our country while avoiding the dangers of authoritarianism or totalitarianism? High school teachers can choose one or any combination of books and strategies from this guide as they shape reflective civic advocates who can recognize America’s complexities, balance divergent viewpoints, and seek necessary reform.

## ■ ABOUT THE TITLES IN THIS COLLECTION



### Conditional Citizens

On Belonging in America

LAILA LALAMI

978-0-525-43604-1

Paperback | Vintage

208 pages | \$16.00

Also available: Audio Download, E-Book

In the essay collection, *Conditional Citizens*, Laila Lalami explores the rights and protections of American citizenship while reflecting on our complex perspectives toward immigrants.



### Free Speech

COREY BRETTSCHEIDER

978-0-14-313515-9

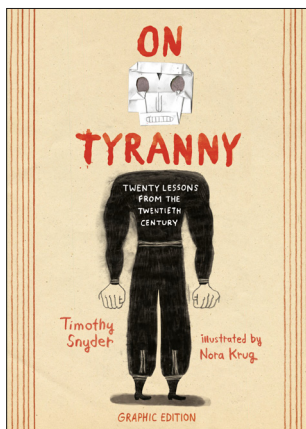
Paperback | Penguin Classics

208 pages | \$15.00

Also available: Audio Download, E-Book

*Free Speech*, edited by Corey Brettschneider, is an anthology of historic documents and political speeches that invites readers to examine the values and practices long inherent in the U.S. Constitution.

From the Penguin Liberty series, <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/series/PEN/penguin-liberty>



### On Tyranny (Graphic Edition)

Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century

TIMOTHY SNYDER, illustrated by NORA KRUG

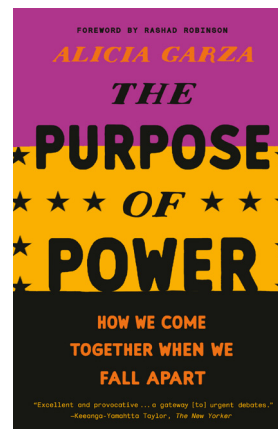
978-1-9848-5915-0

Paperback | Ten Speed Press

128 pages | \$16.99

Also available: E-Book

The graphic edition of Timothy Snyder's *On Tyranny* utilizes “twenty lessons from the twentieth century” as well as visual storytelling to exemplify the ever-present dangers of authoritarianism.



### The Purpose of Power

How We Come Together When We Fall Apart

ALICIA GARZA

978-0-525-50970-7

Paperback | One World

352 pages | \$18.00

Also available: Audio Download, E-Book

Activist Alicia Garza's *The Purpose of Power* recounts hard lessons and promotes next steps around collaboration, organization, and making change in American politics and culture.

## ■ BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

The following lessons strengthen students' advocacy skills by building knowledge around media literacy, civic discourse, and patriotism.

### DIALECTICAL RESPONSE

Introduce students to the complexities of patriotism with a line from Amanda Gorman's inauguration poem, "The Hill We Climb": "Being American is more than a pride we inherit, it's the past we step into and how we repair it." Ask students to fold a piece of paper into four quadrants and section off space in the middle. In the center, direct students to copy the line of poetry. In one of the quadrants, students write a response or interpretation of Gorman's words.

Next, ask students to switch papers, read a classmate's thoughts, and use one of the blank quadrants to respond to one another. Repeat the exchange process two more times, filling all spaces and adding arrows indicating to whom or what students are responding. Then return papers to original owners and ask students to read each quadrant, adding new thoughts on the back side.

As an extension, introduce students to this guiding question from *The Roadmap to Educating for American Democracy* (<https://www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org/the-roadmap/>): "How can we be reflective patriots, seeking reform while still loving America, its complex forms of politics and civic life, and its still-unrealized ideals?" Ask the class: What shared themes do we see in Gorman's words and this guiding question? Explain that the books in this text set address these same ideas.

### SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIT

Challenge students to learn about digital democracy by dissecting their social media identities. Show students the Ted Talk "Beware online 'filter bubbles'" ([https://www.ted.com/talks/eli\\_pariser\\_beware\\_online\\_filter\\_bubbles](https://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles)). In it, digital activist Eli Pariser explains the use of algorithmic filters that produce personalized echo chambers for online reading. Ask students to try Pariser's experiment by entering a search term into their internet browser. Next, students should turn to a partner and compare results. How do the results differ? Now, ask students to search the settings of their social media accounts and look for "ads interests." Then, ask students the following questions: How have these platforms profiled you? Is that characterization accurate? How might your online profile influence the types of news stories you are seeing?

Explain to students that they can make adjustments to their social media settings in order to protect their feed from bias, clickbait, and misinformation. One simple switch is to tell the program to deliver content chronologically instead of using an algorithm. Students can use the audit directions for multiple social media platforms found at Consumer Reports (<https://www.consumerreports.org/social-media/combat-hate-speech-and-misinformation-on-social-media/>). A link to Pariser's book *The Filter Bubble* can be found here: <https://penguinrandomhousesecondaryeducation.com/book/?isbn=9780143121237>.

## BEYOND THE HASHTAG

Prepare students for respectful civic discourse in the classroom and in society by building awareness of political ideologies and their polarizing effects. Choose several current advocacy hashtags and write them on the classroom whiteboard one at a time. Hashtags might include #BlackLivesMatter, #BlueLivesMatter, #AllLivesMatter, #FridaysForFuture, #MeToo, #NeverAgain, and #LoveWins. As hashtags are written on the board, ask students to jot down words or feelings they associate with these ideologies. Afterwards, compose a class list for each movement and discuss the opposing viewpoints that emerge. Explain that this exercise is an example of “affective polarization,” which means that the more polar our political and social views become, the less we trust or respect the opposing viewpoint. Ask students: How can we maintain “civic friendships” in the classroom and beyond? Explain that the texts in this set address this challenge.

## ■ CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### HISTORICAL COMPARISON

Help students consider the historic and contemporary impact of white nationalism. Discuss Winston Churchill’s famous paraphrase of philosopher George Santayana: “Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it.” Next, provide students the *Time*’s article and photo spread on the August 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia (<https://time.com/charlottesville-white-nationalist-rally-clashes/>). Ask students what instigated this planned protest. Which quotations and images in the collection do you find most significant? Is this protest an example of free speech? What symbols can you identify in the pictures?

Next, draw a connection to the graphic edition of *On Tyranny*, where Timothy Snyder writes, “You might one day be offered the opportunity to display symbols of loyalty. Make sure that such symbols include your fellow citizens rather than exclude them... What seems like a symbol of pride can be a source of exclusion” (p. 27). Snyder then describes how German citizens wore “yes” and swastika pins to promote one party government and nationalism in Nazi Germany. Discuss with students how these symbols compare to those in Charlottesville. What beliefs and policies are symbolized by the red hats? Do they purport to “make America great again” through inclusion or exclusion?

### MEDIA ANALYSIS

*Free Speech* and *On Tyranny* discuss the pros and cons of exposure to multiple viewpoints. Explore with students how “free speech” includes media bias, fake news, and online behaviors that can lead to misinformation and civil discord. Pose this question and provide time for partners or small groups to discuss: What is your primary source for the news? Next, ask students to read the *USA Today* article “Influencer, celebrity, journalist? Teens are turning to YouTube for news, survey shows” (<https://tinyurl.com/USATeenNews>). Discuss as a large group: Why does Common Sense Media say “it is cause for concern” that the majority of teens are getting their news

from social media rather than newspapers or news sites? Since teens in the survey see news organizations as more trustworthy, why do they still prefer YouTube, Instagram, or Snapchat?

Next, ask students to select a controversial news story and watch video clips or read articles from three different networks or media sources. Students can use the AllSides media bias chart (<https://tinyurl.com/AllSidesMediaBias>) to select a left, right, and centrist source. Ask students to use the ESCAPE method of information analysis by working individually or in groups to analyze evidence, source, context, audience, purpose, and execution. Afterwards, ask students: What similarities and differences did you notice? What specific examples of objectivity or bias did you see? Which source seems the most credible and why? Why is it a good idea to get our news from a variety of media sources?

### MENTOR TEXTS

Help students see themselves as advocates through writing and speaking. Point out that the authors of *The Purpose of Power* and *Conditional Citizens* found their voices as Black Lives Matter and immigration justice advocates, respectively, by writing persuasive texts. Challenge students to choose an advocacy topic of personal interest, then write and deliver a persuasive speech. Students might first analyze effective strategies used by Leila Lalami, Alicia Garza, or other advocates by selecting one of their speeches or essays and annotating the effectiveness of the words, tone, and techniques the advocate employs. With this process, students identify those strategies they wish to emulate. Next, students write their own advocacy piece, integrating one or more of the rhetorical techniques identified in their mentor text. Finally, ask students to annotate their own speech or essay and analyze their own choices, like they did for the mentor text. Students can deliver speeches in person or film themselves and overlay the delivery with video clips or text explaining their strategies. For more information on using mentor texts to develop writer's voice, visit the *New York Times's* "Annotated by the Author Series" at <https://tinyurl.com/NYTMentorTexts>.

### SOCRATIC SEMINAR

To promote civic discourse, conduct a Socratic seminar based on a close read of a historical document, essay, or post from *The Purpose of Power*, *On Tyranny*, *Free Speech*, or *Conditional Citizens*. Prior to the seminar, discuss with students what an ideal seminar looks and sounds like, including participation, active listening, and respect of multiple viewpoints. Ask students to set a class goal, such as "I will contribute to the discussion at least one time," as well as a personal goal, such as "I will mention a classmate's name and extend on his thinking." Provide students with sentence starters, such as "I respectfully disagree because..." and "Can you please clarify..."

During the discussion, take a facilitator's role. Ask a low-risk opening question to encourage total class participation in a round-robin response, such as "What is the single most important word or phrase in this document?" This question might be provided the night before. Its purpose is to identify the text's "big ideas." Then, move

to a core question for the purpose of analyzing text details, such as “In her first two BLM posts, Alicia Garza argues against a post-racial America. To what extent does she support her claim?” End the discussion with a personal relevance question, such as “How might the big ideas in this text impact you, your family, or our community?”

After the seminar, ask students to evaluate their own and their classmates’ speaking, thinking, and listening. Did they meet their class and personal goals? What should the class do differently in the next seminar discussion? How did the seminar deepen their understanding of the text(s)?

In what ways was the seminar an example of civil discourse?

### MULTIMEDIA PRODUCT

In *On Tyranny*, Timothy Snyder asks us, “What is patriotism?” Ask students to answer this question while using the book’s illustrations and graphic design, by artist Nora Krug, as inspiration. Challenge students to create an in-depth multimedia response, integrating ideas from the texts in this set, outside resources, and students’ own thinking. Student projects can explore our patriotic roots, similar to Corey Brettschneider in *Free Speech* with his emphasis on founding documents and classic texts. They might inform an audience of a specific advocacy movement, like Alicia Garza’s leadership with Black Lives Matter in *The Purpose of Power*. Or, students could elevate a specific issue, such as Laila Lalami’s treatment of immigration in *Conditional Citizens*. Encourage students to balance diverse views while reflecting personal values. Responses might include:

- A podcast using free audio recording and editing software, such as Audacity (<https://tinyurl.com/AudacityTool>).
- A Ted Talk-type video speech complete with scripted narration aided by cue cards. Students can use cell phones or tablets to record their talks.
- A digital story using iMovie or Windows Movie Maker. Digital stories combine narration and still images and are easily created on student laptops.
- An interactive web page that combines multiple digital features to tell a story. With Google Sites or Adobe Spark, students can combine text, social graphics, video, and audio.

### ■ ESSAY AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

The following questions integrate themes found throughout the texts in this set and can be used for journaling, essays, small-group discussions, and large-group seminars.

1. How do we define “patriotism”? How do we show pride for our country while avoiding the dangers of authoritarianism or totalitarianism?
2. What is “civil disagreement”? Why is it important to be aware of and listen to others’ diverse views?
3. What challenges exist in our past and present system of government that contribute to civic discord? What are some avenues for moving forward in a positive, constructive manner?



4. What is the power of collective voice and political protest? What are the limitations and dangers?
5. Why should I stay informed about what is happening in our country? What resources do I use? How do I ensure their reliability?
6. What exactly is “freedom of the press”? What is the role of the press in a democratic society? How has technology and social media changed that role?
7. What beliefs and practices should guide my in-person and online discussions with others?

## ■ RESOURCES

All Sides for Schools: <https://allsidesforschools.org/>

Educating For American Democracy:

[www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org/the-roadmap/7themes/](http://www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org/the-roadmap/7themes/)

Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools:

<https://tinyurl.com/CivicMissionSchools>

Youth.gov:

<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/civic-engagement-and-volunteering/service-learning>

Project Zero:

<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/50th/civic-agency>

## ■ ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE

Laura Reis Mayer is a high school instructional coach and National Board Certified teacher in Asheville, North Carolina. She has taught middle, high school, and college English, speech, drama, and literacy. As a consultant to various national organizations, she develops and facilitates professional learning on high-quality instructional materials and practices, teacher leadership, and National Board Certification. She has authored more than twenty Penguin Random House teacher’s guides.

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