

Tear This Down – Classroom Lesson Plan

Includes Virtual Author Interview

Book Synopsis

Tear This Down by Barbara Dee follows twelve-year-old Freya, who begins to question a local Civil War statue in her town after learning about its historical context and connections to racial injustice. As Freya navigates friendship conflicts, school debates, and community resistance, she discovers the complexities of activism, free speech, and historical memory. The novel explores themes of civic engagement, allyship, courage, and the power of young voices in social change.

Banned / Challenged Status

Tear This Down has been challenged in some districts due to its discussions of systemic racism, Confederate monuments, and youth activism. Critics argue that debates about historical memory and race may be politically sensitive. Supporters emphasize the novel's encouragement of critical thinking, civil discourse, and student engagement in democratic processes.

Essential Questions

- Who decides how history is remembered?
- What responsibilities do young people have in civic life?
- How can respectful disagreement strengthen democracy?

Lesson Objective

Students will analyze how contemporary fiction explores civic activism and evaluate how the novel portrays dialogue, conflict, and democratic participation.

Lesson Structure (60 Minutes)

- Warm-Up (5 minutes): How should communities decide which historical figures to honor?
- Direct Instruction (15–20 minutes): Examine themes of activism and historical memory. Define key terms: civic engagement, allyship, historical narrative, protest.

- Guided Practice (15 minutes): In pairs, analyze a scene where Freya faces opposition. Synthesis Question: How does the novel portray activism as both challenging and necessary?
- Independent Practice (15 minutes): Choice-based analytical or reflective response (see below).
- Exit Ticket (5 minutes): Identify one example of respectful civic disagreement in the novel.

Independent Practice Options

- Option A: Analyze how Freya's perspective evolves.
- Option B: Write a persuasive paragraph about historical monuments in your own community.
- Option C: Compare Freya's activism to a real-world youth movement.

Creative Interpretation Option

- Debate preparation chart outlining multiple viewpoints
- Historical memory concept map
- Youth activism awareness poster

All creative responses must include an artist statement citing specific textual evidence.

Reader Impact + Student Voice

- Why might this novel spark strong opinions?
- How does the story portray respectful disagreement?
- What does the novel suggest about youth leadership?
- How can fiction encourage civic engagement?

Intellectual Freedom Connection

Discuss why books addressing historical monuments and systemic racism are sometimes challenged. Writing Prompt: Should students engage with literature that explores contested history? Support your reasoning with textual evidence.

Author Interview

Author interview provided by UNBAN COOLIES.
Visit: <http://www.youtube.com/@unbanCOOLIES>

Lesson materials developed in partnership with UNBAN COOLIES.