

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR **WHITE LIES** HOW THE SOUTH LOST THE CIVIL WAR, THEN REWROTE THE HISTORY

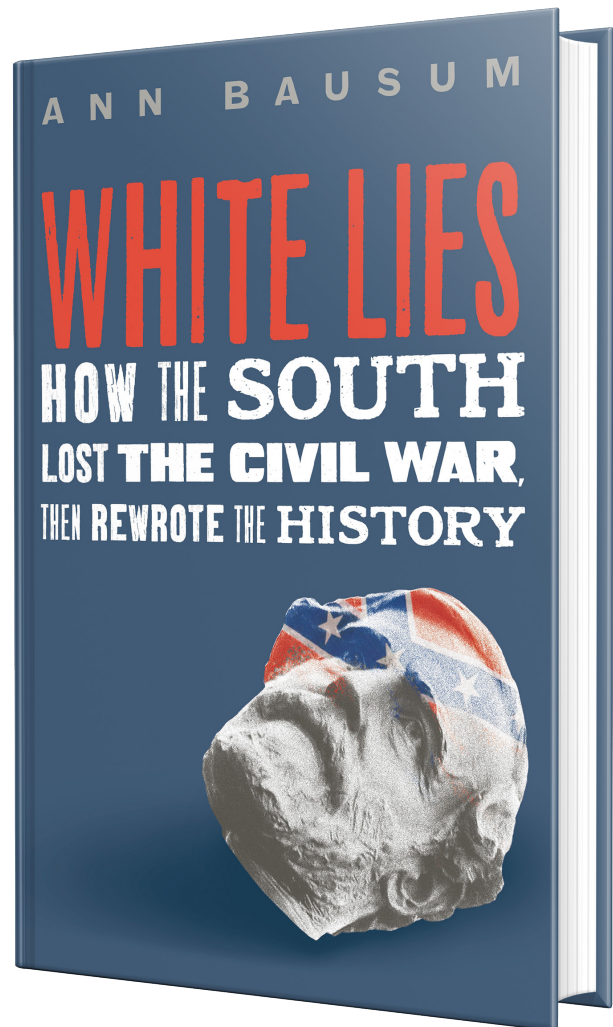


ABOUT THE BOOK

Warning: This is not your average U.S. history book.

After the Civil War, the Confederates may have laid down their arms, but they were far from accepting defeat. By warping the narrative around what really happened during and after the Civil War, they created an alternate history now known as the Lost Cause. These lies still manifest today through criticism of critical race theory, book banning, unequal funding for education, and more.

This book sets the record straight and explains the true history of the Civil War, and its complex and far-reaching aftermath. Written by the historian and award-winning author Ann Bausum, *White Lies* is an impeccably researched chronicle filled with photos, robust back matter, additional resources, and more that fans of Howard Zinn's *A Young People's History of the United States* will enjoy.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ann Bausum writes history for readers of all ages. Her books for young people help upper-elementary, middle-school, and high-school students discover the drama and significance of stories from the past that may barely be presented in textbooks. In 2015 her adopted home state named her the year's Notable Wisconsin Children's Author. Two years later, her body of work received national recognition with the Nonfiction Award of the Children's Book Guild of Washington, D.C.

★ "Meticulously researched, this is a must-have in the history classroom and beyond."

—BCCB



PREPARING YOURSELF AS AN EDUCATOR

In these politically and culturally divided times, teaching American history is not for the faint of heart. But teaching history as it actually unfolded, and correcting false narratives, is more important than ever. *White Lies: How the South Lost the Civil War, Then Rewrote the History* is not your average U.S. history book. Through extensive research and unflinching presentation of facts, Ann Bausum reveals how the defeated Confederates and White southern society warped the narrative about the causes and consequences of the Civil War and created an alternate history known as the Lost Cause. Far from a blip in post–Civil War history, the lies of the Lost Cause are still alive and well, influencing textbooks, popular culture, and even public policy. It is not easy to correct misconceptions, but *White Lies* will help you and your students construct a fact-based understanding of American history from 1865 to the present day.

VOCABULARY

(Sources: Merriam-Webster.com and Oxford Languages)

ABOLISH/ABOLISHING: to end the observance or effect of (something, such as a law): to completely do away with (something): to end the observance or effect of (something, such as a law): to completely do away with (something)

AGENCY: the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power

BENIGN: having no significant effect, harmless

BLACKFACE: dark makeup typically worn by White people to mimic the appearance of a Black person and especially to mock or ridicule Black people

CENSORSHIP: to examine in order to suppress or delete anything considered objectionable; to suppress or delete as objectionable

CHIVALRY: gallant or distinguished gentlemen, echoing the noble code of conduct for knights from the Middle Ages

COMMEMORATION: to serve as a memorial of

CONTEXTUALIZE: to place (something, such as a word or activity) in a context

CULTURE WARS: a conflict between groups, especially liberal and conservative groups, that have different cultural ideals, beliefs, or philosophies

DEHUMANIZE: to address or portray (someone) in a way that obscures or demeans that person's humanity or individuality

DOG WHISTLE: an expression or statement that has a secondary meaning intended to be understood only by a particular group of people

ERADICATE: to do away with as completely as if by pulling up by the roots

ERASURE: the removal of all traces of something

FALSE EQUIVALENCY: a logical fallacy in which one assumes or asserts that two things are the same or equal when, while alike in some ways, they are not sufficiently similar to be considered equivalent

FABRICATION: a product of fabrication; lie, falsehood

FEARMONGERING: the action of deliberately arousing public fear or alarm about a particular issue

GLORIFICATION: the action of describing or representing something as admirable, especially unjustifiably

JUSTIFICATION: the action, whether legitimate or not, of presenting something to be right or reasonable



LEGITIMACY: ability to be defended with logic or justification, validity

THE LOST CAUSE: a set of specific beliefs and inaccurate narratives surrounding slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and White supremacy, primarily promoted by White southerners after the war

LYNCHING: (of a mob) to kill (someone) especially by hanging, for an alleged offense with or without a legal trial

MARGINALIZATION: to relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group

NEO-CONFEDERATE: groups and individuals who portray the Confederate States of America and its actions during the Civil War in a positive light, often in support of White supremacy and White nationalism

POPULIST: a member of a political party claiming to represent ordinary people against the Establishment, or the ruling powers of a society or government

PROPAGANDA: the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person; ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause

RIGHTEOUSNESS: acting in accord with divine or moral law; free from guilt or sin; morally right or justifiable

SUBLIMINAL: existing or functioning below the threshold of consciousness

SYSTEMIC RACISM: the oppression of a racial group to the advantage of another as perpetuated by inequity within interconnected systems (such as political, economic, and social systems)

VENERATION: respect or awe inspired by the dignity, wisdom, dedication, or talent of a person

VIGILANTE: a member of a volunteer committee organized to suppress and punish crime summarily (as when the processes of law are viewed as inadequate); a self-appointed doer of justice

WHITE NATIONALISM: a political and ideological movement advocating for the promotion of White political and cultural dominance within historically White nations at the expense of immigrants and non-Whites

WHITE SUPREMACY: the belief that the White race is inherently superior to other races and that White people should have control over people of other races

RESOURCES FOR HISTORICAL CONTEXT

BLACK CODES

<https://jimcrowmuseum.ferris.edu/links/mislink/blackcode.htm>

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1866

<https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/historic-document-library/detail/civil-rights-act-of-1866-april-9-1866-an-act-to-protect-all-persons-in-the-united-states-in-their-civil-rights-and-furnish-the-means-of-their-vindication>

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/curriculum/lesson-plans-frederick-douglass>

EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

<https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/emancipation-proclamation-freedoms-first-steps>

ENFORCEMENT ACTS

<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/the-enforcement-acts/>



EQUAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

<https://eji.org/>

EUGENICS

<https://www.genome.gov/about-genomics/fact-sheets/Eugenics-and-Scientific-Racism>

HUMAN GENOME PROJECT

<https://wellcome.org/news/human-genome-project-new-era-scientific-progress>

JIM CROW

<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/bf10.socst.us.indust.lplvngcrow/living-with-jim-crow/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/jim-crow-segregation/>

KU KLUX KLAN

<https://www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/ku-klux-klan/>

<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/ku-klux-klan-in-the-twentieth-century/>

LYNCHING MEMORIAL

<https://legacysites.eji.org/>

NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People)

<https://naacp.org/>

RECONSTRUCTION

https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/reconstruction-era-and-fragility-democracy-0?hsa_tgt=kwd-115051242&hsa_grp=63212501410&hsa_src=g&hsa_net=adwords&hsa_mt=b&hsa_ver=3&hsa_ad=372997104636&hsa_acc=4949854077&hsa_kw=reconstruction%20era&hsa_cam=1661698525&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=1661698525&gbraid=0AAAAADm8moY7WS61N3C-QgyJo0juz3zdco&gclid=Cj0KCQjwu7TCBhCYARIsAM_S3NjRwqD9TdDa3E95sLcyBNFTsfcXt_AtWcae1xrL5tMfte3avDcOHgaAt-k7EALw_wcB&utm_term=reconstruction%20era&utm_campaign=Search-27&utm_source=adwords&utm_medium=ppc

SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

<https://www.splcenter.org/>

THIRTEENTH, FOURTEENTH, AND FIFTEENTH AMENDMENTS

<https://www.pbs.org/video/reconstruction-amendments-cp0x7s/>

PRE-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to “rewrite history”? What might be some of the unintended consequences of replacing the historical record with lies and misinformation?
2. What is the difference between misinformation (false or inaccurate information—getting the facts wrong) and disinformation (false information that is deliberately intended to mislead, especially propaganda issued by a government organization to a rival power or the media)? Discuss examples in today’s world of both types of falsification.
3. Determine students’ prior knowledge of the Civil War by asking: What was the main cause of the Civil War? Who are its heroes? What other facts have you learned about the war? Informally assessing what students know or think they know about the Civil War will inform your teaching as students embark on reading *White Lies*.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PART I: A Foundation for Lies

1. What does the phrase “mutually beneficial” mean? Describe how White southerners before and after the Civil War created and promoted the lie that the relationship between enslaver and enslaved was mutually beneficial.
2. Discuss the economic aspects of the slave trade, and how the pursuit of profit helped White enslavers justify the institution of slavery.
3. How was the concept of chivalry a “helpful illusion” that allowed White southerners to “mask the brutality, exploitation, and heartaches of slavery” (page 15)?
4. Lie #3 (page 23) states: “The Civil War wasn’t fought over slavery; it was all about states’ rights.” Why was the notion of states’ rights so important to the former Confederacy? How did the claim that they had fought to protect the Constitution provide a veneer of honor for states that had chosen to rebel against their country?
5. Discuss Robert E. Lee’s decision to side with the Confederacy. Do you think it was an act of treason? Discuss the following statement by the contemporary historian Ty Seidule from his book *Robert E. Lee and Me*: “The military doesn’t practice democracy; the military enforces democracy.” How did Lee contradict this statement through his role as leader of the Confederate army?
6. Discuss how White southerners manipulated and changed language after the end of the Civil War to make themselves appear less guilty. For example, instead of using the term “rebels,” they switched to describing themselves as “patriots.” How can a seemingly simple shift in language begin to distort the truth?
7. How did President Andrew Johnson’s blanket amnesty for Confederate soldiers (page 58) contribute to the false narrative that they were not rebels?

PART II: Building the Lost Cause

1. Describe what the author and activist Lillian Smith meant when she wrote: “So the South walked backward into its future” (page 71). How can a retelling of history through lies and disinformation be a form of going backward?
2. Every structure designed to stand the test of time and the forces of nature must be built on a strong foundation. Why did the lies of the Lost Cause provide a solid foundation “upon which the South’s postwar White society would rise” (page 73)?
3. A caricature is a picture, description, or imitation of a person in which certain striking characteristics are exaggerated in order to create a comic or grotesque effect (source: Oxford Languages). On page 74, readers learn that recent historians have called the Lost Cause a caricature of history. Do you think this is an accurate description? Why or why not?
4. The author describes how the early tenets of the Lost Cause took hold through an “alchemy of repetition” (page 78). Why do you think that the act of repeating a lie, reading a lie, and hearing a lie can begin to convince people that the lie is actually true? How did having an isolated worldview contribute to the acceptance of lies as facts?
5. Discuss the following questions posed on pages 83–84:
 - a. What would it take to dispel the notion that one person’s gain had to mean another’s loss?
 - b. What would it take to convince people that equality would be good for everyone, that a rising tide lifts all boats?How does the persistence of racism and racist beliefs conflict with solutions that might answer these questions?
6. Between the end of Reconstruction and the entrenchment of Jim Crow, life for Blacks was exceedingly difficult. Discuss the following statement on page 95: “Blacks weren’t enslaved anymore, but increasingly, they weren’t free either.”
7. Discuss aspects of the lie that Whites are naturally superior to Blacks. Even in the face of “repeated scientific evidence to the contrary . . . a segment of the White population in the United States and beyond continues to make claims of Black inferiority as a way to justify its own belief of racial superiority” (page 99). What do you think accounts for the strength and longevity of this belief?
8. How is the “amateur history” (page 121) of many Lost Cause writers similar to the mis- and disinformation flooding social media and some cable news outlets in the present day?



PART III: The Triumph of Lies

1. Chapter 11 (pages 144–57) goes into detail about the monument craze that swept both Europe and the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. Discuss why proponents of the Lost Cause fervently worked to create monuments to celebrate and honor major Civil War figures. Discuss the subliminal messages conveyed by these statues. Consider the thoughts and feelings of Black Americans who had to interact with these monuments in their communities, and describe how they might be interpreted. Long after the end of the Civil War, why do you think the sponsors of many of these statues oriented them to face North?
2. Discuss the connection between the spoken and written lies of the Lost Cause and the “sheer repetition in town after town” (page 151) of Confederate monuments. What is White supremacy, and how are the monuments symbols of this racist belief?
3. Propaganda is information, especially of a biased or misleading nature to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view (source: Oxford Languages). How do Confederate monuments fit the definition of propaganda?
4. On June 4, 1914, President Woodrow Wilson spoke at the dedication of a monument honoring Confederate soldiers. By speaking at the dedication, Wilson “willingly authenticated” (page 170) the monument. How can the words of a president serve to validate and promote the teachings and beliefs of the Lost Cause?
5. Why was it so important for Lost Cause proponents to educate southern children in its tenets? What does the author mean by “weaponizing the children of the Confederacy” (page 189)? How did having control over the curriculum and textbook content, even more than monuments, ensure the continuation of Lost Cause beliefs?
6. Discuss the irony of this statement: “The branding of U.S. military bases became yet another way to glorify the Confederacy” (page 208).

PART IV: Reckoning with the Lost Cause

1. White southern writer Lillian Smith observed, “Negro-hating has come now to be such a habit (like the taking of drugs) that many would rather stay poor than give it up” (page 212). Discuss the statement and compare it to anti-Blackness, a specific form of racism that targets individuals and devalues Black culture. Why would people hold on to their hatred, even if to do so is detrimental?
2. The film *Gone with the Wind* was so popular that in today’s parlance it would be described as “viral.” Why is it so dangerous to disseminate disinformation on a mass scale? How was the choice to rerelease *Gone with the Wind* in 1971 like stoking a flame with very large and powerful bellows?
3. Reread “State Control of State History” and “The Assigned Reading of Lies” on pages 233–38. Discuss the comparison of state control of textbook content with the battles being waged in many states to this very day. How is the statement made by a Virginia textbook commission in the 1940s an example of coded language: They would create books that would “instill in hearts and minds a greater love for Virginia and a perpetuation for her ideals.” To what ideals do you think they were referring?
4. Discuss what Lillian Smith meant in her statement: “I began to understand . . . that the warped, distorted frame we have put around every Negro child is around every white child also. Each is on a different side of the frame, but each is pinioned there . . . what cruelly shapes and cripples the personality of one is cruelly shaping and crippling the personality of the other” (page 246). Do you agree or disagree with Smith?
5. Former New Orleans mayor Mitch Landrieu said in regard to the removal of Confederate statues: “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” (page 254). Why is it important for a White southern politician to make such a statement? How would you describe Confederate statues if you were the mayor of a southern city or town?
6. Some people who oppose the removal of Confederate monuments claim that the act is an erasure of history. Do you agree? Reread the quote on page 262 by the historian Karen L. Cox: “Confederate monuments are not innocuous symbols . . . What they ‘teach’ is not history. They are weapons in the larger arsenal of white supremacy, artifacts of Jim Crow not unlike the ‘whites only’ signs that declared black southerners to be second-class citizens. Removing a monument from the public square is no more an act of erasing history than removing these signs from public accommodations.” Do you agree? Is history being erased each time a Confederate monument is removed or destroyed?



POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss examples from the text to support W. E. B. Du Bois's observation of Lost Cause "historical" writings: "I stand at the end of this writing, literally aghast at what American historians have done to this field. With a determination unparalleled in science, the mass of American writers have started out so to distort the facts of the greatest critical period of American history as to prove right wrong and wrong right" (page 217).
2. On page 272, the author notes: "It is true that the nation won't eliminate racism by removing monuments, but it is also true that removing them dismantles one tool of the propaganda that has fostered support for White supremacy and racism for more than one hundred years." Why do you think there is still resistance to removing these monuments and, more broadly, letting go of the false narrative of the Lost Cause?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Screening the Lost Cause. The author references three American films, two that are iconic in film history and popular culture, and all that perpetuate the Lost Cause: *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), *Gone with the Wind* (1939), and *Song of the South* (1946). Choose one or more of these films and screen them over the course of several days. Challenge students to identify tenets of the Lost Cause as they view the films. After the screening, come together to discuss their observations.

Writing Reality. Reread chapter 18, focusing on textbook excerpts Virginia students were required to read as accurate Civil War and slavery history. Isolate examples, such as, "It was not difficult for the Negroes to adjust themselves to Virginia life" (page 236). Challenge students to rewrite these euphemistic and inaccurate lines to reflect enslaved Virginians' realities.

This guide was created by Colleen Carroll, literacy specialist, author of the How Artists See series, and director of curriculum and instruction at an independent day school in the New York metropolitan area. Learn more about her at about.me/colleencarroll.



PRAISE FOR WHITE LIES

★ “Meticulously researched, this is a must-have in the history classroom and beyond.” —*BCCB*

★ “Essential reading.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

★ “An important and compelling work that belongs in all high school and public libraries.” —*School Library Journal*

★ “A powerful offering that encourages readers to critically engage with historical record.” —*Publishers Weekly*

★ “An essential volume to understand the history of racial division in the U.S.” —*Booklist*

★ “Bausum’s short chapters and clear language help teen readers understand complex subjects.” —*The Horn Book Magazine*

★ “An accessible and enthralling work of nonfiction that...cracks open the Lost Cause narrative to reveal its composition of lies and the damage those lies have done to the United States.” —*Shelf Awareness*

