

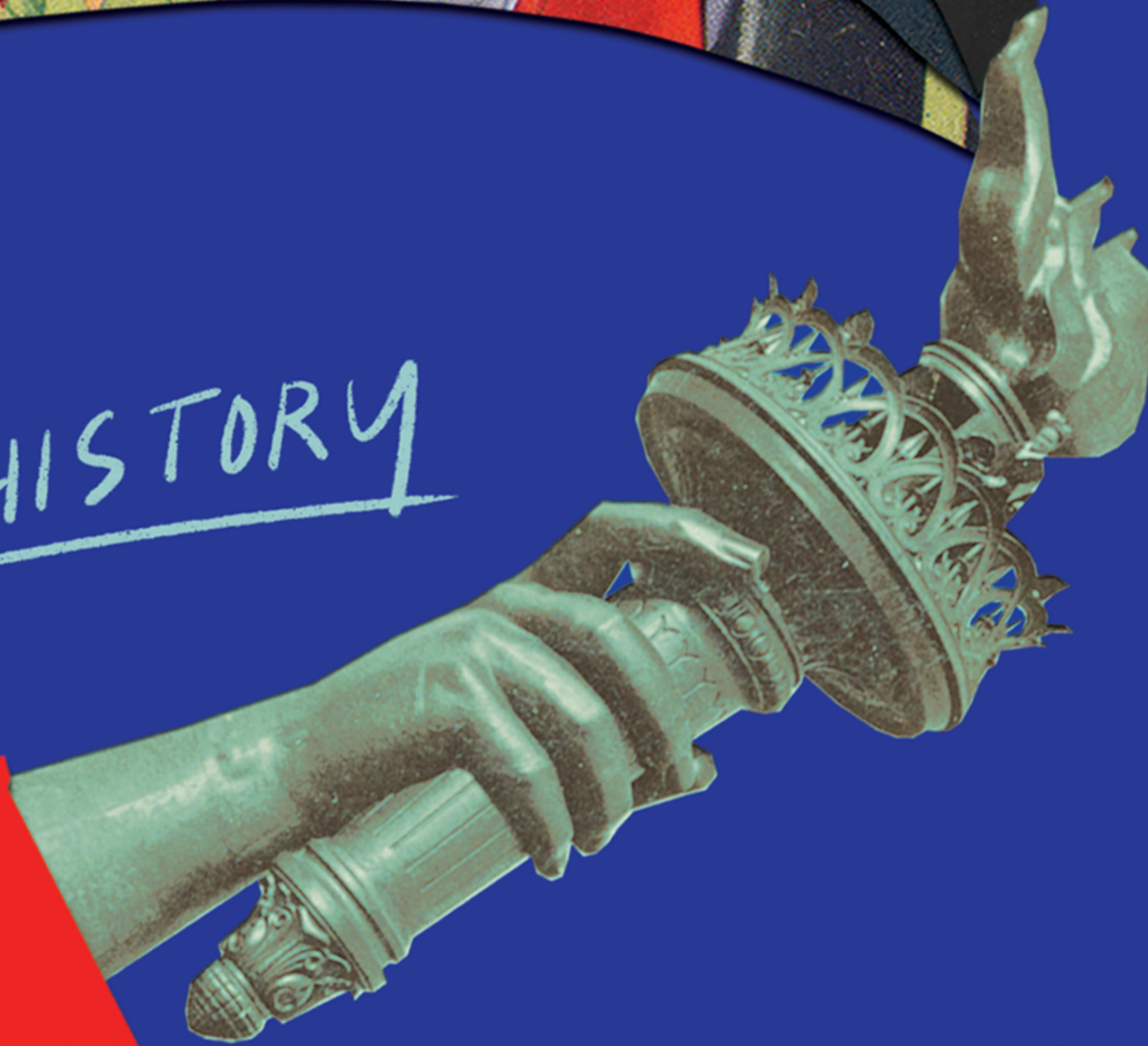
EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



VISUAL STORIES

FROM OUR

DYNAMIC HISTORY



AMERICA

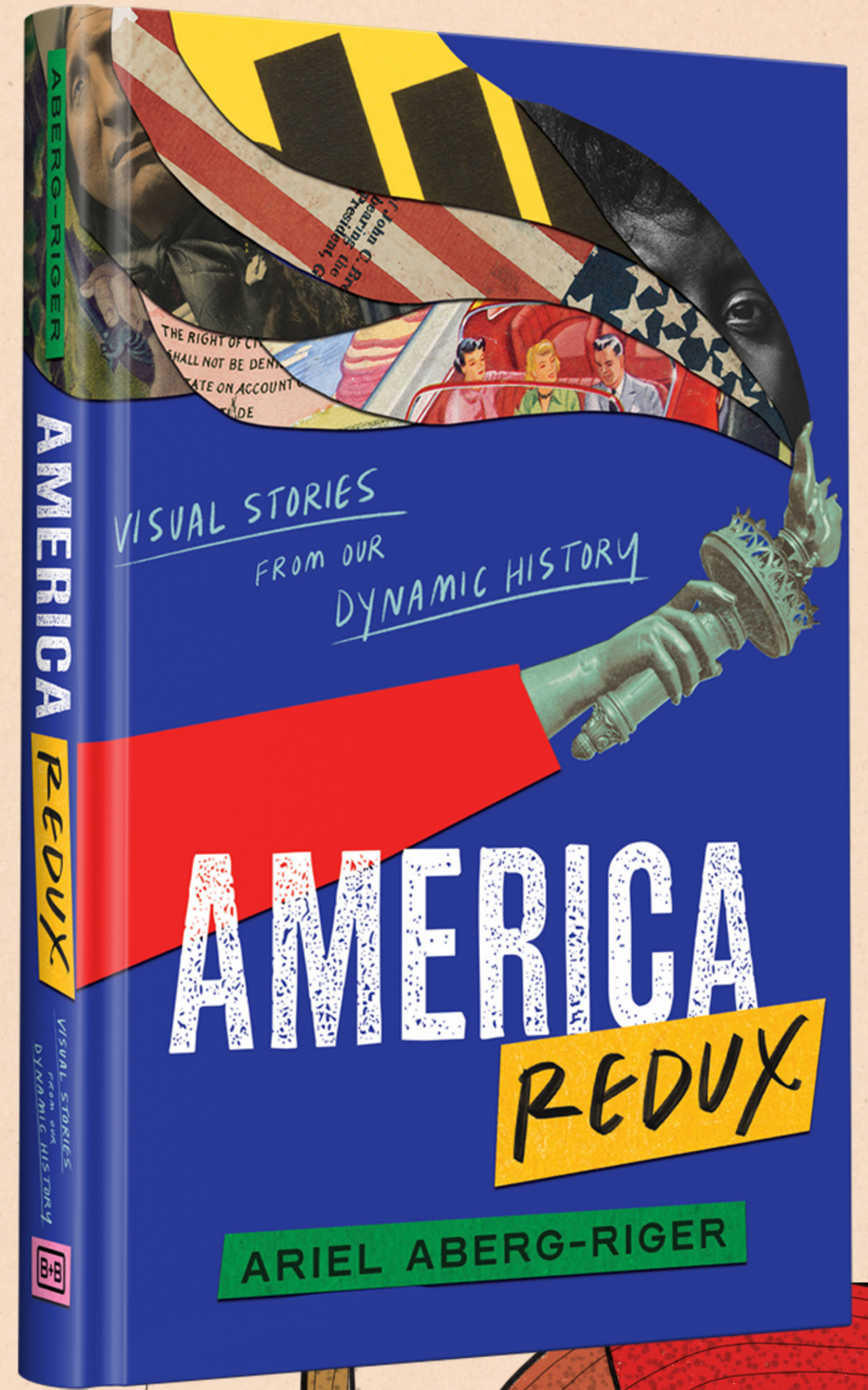
REDUX

ARIEL ABERG-RIGER

This is not your mama's history textbook.

ABOUT THE BOOK

To be honest, it is probably not yours (or your students') either. Instead, *America Redux* (2023) is a **refreshing, critical retelling of American history** through collage and written text. **Everything about this history book challenges what we know to be true**—about how books can be written, how and by whom history can be told, and whose stories matter. With 21 vividly depicted “chapters,” Ariel Aberg-Riger provides readers and teachers alike with **a resource that offers a more critical approach to reading, teaching, and discussing history.** *America Redux's* nonlinear, visual presentation of snapshots in American history invites all of us to make connections between the past, present, and future. **Whether you read it cover to cover or use excerpts to broaden your understanding of history, *America Redux* reminds all to invest in asking tough questions, telling important stories, and working toward a better, more inclusive future together.**



ABOUT THE CREATOR

Ariel Aberg-Riger is a visual storyteller who creates engaging, accessible stories about history, science, policy, and other forces that shape our lives. **Her work explores issues of equity and social justice, on topics that range from environmental racism to the public library.** Ariel's work has appeared in the *Atlantic*, the *Guardian*, *Bloomberg*, *Teen Vogue*, and more. She is a 2020 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow in Nonfiction Literature and lives with her wife and two kids in Buffalo, NY.



Photo courtesy of Ariel Aberg-Riger

→ Guide created by shea wesley martin, a literacy scholar-teacher based in the Midwest.

Art © 2023 by Ariel Aberg-Riger

PRAISE FOR *AMERICA REDUX*

"In this pictorial stunner, debut creator Aberg-Riger demonstrates the U.S.'s continually expanding history via nonlinear chronology that covers ground between the late 18th century and the 21st century. Aberg-Riger examines how each individual story tackles issues surrounding identity in politics, allowing readers to make connections and interrogate how seemingly isolated societal struggles intersect with one another. This work enthralls from start to finish, culminating in a triumphant victory that tackles censorship and revisionist history."

★ *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

"In this interactive, visually stunning compilation, Aberg-Riger assembles some of the stories U.S. history textbooks typically leave out. While the themes encompass difficult topics, Aberg-Riger concludes many chapters with ways activists have changed and continue to change the course of these ongoing issues in America. An essential resource to promote perspective and dialogue around American identity."

★ *Booklist* (starred review)

"This stellar offering combines startling facts, gripping prose, and appealing, vibrant collage illustrations that use photographs, maps, and other ephemera. Thought-provoking connections are made to today's burning issues, e.g., gun control, lack of affordable housing, and mass incarceration. Beautifully illustrated, riveting, enraging, and empowering: a must-read."

★ *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

"What really makes this work outstanding is the imaginative use of colorful images on every page, incorporating bold, handwritten text into the pictures. This dramatic and captivating format keeps the pages turning quickly and will engage the most reluctant readers . . . An excellent resource for kicking off classroom discussions. The work is well documented with extensive source notes leading the curious to additional resources. —VERDICT Truly remarkable! A must for every library."

★ *School Library Journal* (starred review)

"*America Redux* is THE history book that belongs in every high school in America. Aberg-Riger has provided a necessary and insightful conversation about history that highlights the history makers we know so little about. America can't know where it's going unless it knows where it's been, and *America Redux* is the ultimate guide for that."

—Angie Thomas, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Hate U Give*

TIPS FOR HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

America Redux is a collection of interwoven stories that invite dynamic, critical engagement with our nation's complex histories. Aberg-Riger's visual storytelling disrupts traditional linear thinking and teaching of histories and thus allows for many different points of entry and engagement. Consider the suggestions below as you prepare to use this book with learners.

***America Redux* is a work of art.**

As learners engage with this text, encourage close analysis of not only the stories and histories but also Aberg-Riger's artistic and structural choices. Consider providing students with a primer on collage or design so they are equipped with terminology to make sense of how the art and written texts work together throughout the book.

***America Redux* is a disruption.**

America Redux is an intentional disruption in the way we perceive, engage with, and teach history. Aberg-Riger's storytelling rejects linear, comprehensive, whitewashed histories which fill many traditional history books. It is purposefully non-comprehensive. Engaging with this book will require teachers and students to critically examine what they know to be true about our histories, who/what dictates that truth, and who/what is erased. Make space for diverse critiques and curiosity in the learning space.

***America Redux* invites engagement beyond text.**

More than anything, *America Redux* is a springboard for continued critical engagement with our histories, current events, and the world around us. As you prepare to read and teach this book with students, consult the bibliography, as well as local museums and organizations, and media sources to extend students' exploration and understanding of the world around them.

***America Redux* reminds us our stories matter.**

More than anything else, Aberg-Riger's focus on reclaiming history through storytelling invites readers to reflect upon, write, draw, and share their own stories. While reading *America Redux*, consider developing a practice of inquiry and sharing with students.

"WHEN MY BROTHERS TRY TO DRAW A CIRCLE TO EXCLUDE ME,
I SHALL DRAW A LARGER CIRCLE TO INCLUDE THEM."

—PAULI MURRAY

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Individual/Small-Group Analysis: Review of a History Textbook or Resource

Provide students with textbooks and history curriculum materials written in different time periods. Working individually, in pairs, or in groups, have students analyze the content and structure of the resource while considering the following questions:

About the Design of the Resource

- When was this resource published?
- Who published it?
- Who is the main audience—age, location, subject?
- How is the resource composed? Is it a book, pamphlet, digital resource? Are there pictures, maps, and written text? How might this impact readers' engagement with the content?

About the Content within the Resource

- How is information organized and structured?
- Whose perspectives or stories are told? What is the impact of this on how a reader might understand the history being shared?
- Whose perspectives or stories are left untold? What is the impact of this on how a reader might understand the history being shared?
- Does this resource affirm or disrupt traditional retellings of American history?

Individual Creative Activity: A Collage of Self

As an introduction to the collage-style art within *America Redux*, invite students to create their own collaged stories using magazines, old books, art supplies, or digital tools. When done, consider displaying the collages in a gallery or having students present their collage stories to each other.

Group Activity: Develop a Wall of Curiosity and Critique

Ask students how they might want to track their questions, insights, and critiques of *America Redux* while reading. Make space for them to create an annotation method that works best for them—graphic organizer, on-text note-taking, or journal reflections. Together as a class, develop a “Wall of Curiosity and Critique” (think: chart paper parking lot or Jamboard) where students might leave burning questions or thoughts. This wall can be used throughout your engagement with the text and encourages collaborative analysis and thinking.

Individual Reflection: Social Identity Wheel and Reflection

Before beginning, encourage students to think about how their own identities impact how they show up in the classroom and in the world. Consider using the Social Identity Wheel (<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/social-identity-wheel/>) worksheet to frame this activity along with the following reflection prompts:

- How do your identities impact how you engage with others?
- How often do you see your identities represented in pop culture or media you consume? How does this make you feel?
- How often do you see your identities represented in textbooks and classroom lessons? How does this make you feel?
- Do you think our own learning space prioritizes all identities, narratives, and histories *equally*? *Equitably*? Why or why not?

“THE VERY INK WITH WHICH ALL HISTORY IS WRITTEN
IS MERELY FLUID PREJUDICE.”

—MARK TWAIN



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

⇒ In “The Good Old Days,” the author connects the not-so-distant past (2020) to the Daughters of Confederacy’s origination and impact on what we learn today. How have curriculum and school culture affected other American realities throughout history?

⇒ How does Aberg-Riger’s historical account of slavery compare or contrast with how the topic has been discussed and taught in your history classes and books?

⇒ What do we learn about the complexities of women’s suffrage from Aberg-Riger’s discussion of it in *America Redux*? What connections might you make to your understanding of voting rights, civil rights movements, and representation in politics today?

⇒ The United States is often considered a melting pot of diverse cultures, identities, and backgrounds. How does Aberg-Riger’s discussion of immigration (“A Nation of Immigrants”) and family (“Traditional Family Values”) complicate the idea that this country is for everyone?

⇒ What are the values you consider to be most important and necessary in a family? How does that differ from the history of traditional family values discussed in Chapter 5?

⇒ Compare the activism discussed in “One Nation Under God” and “Home of the Brave.” What does it reveal about the values and goals of those organizing? What differentiates their approaches and efforts?

⇒ The author notes, “One out of every five firearms purchased in the U.S. today is an AR-style rifle” (p. 121). Does this statistic surprise you given the historical retelling Aberg-Riger provides in “Good Guy with a Gun”? What evidence do you see of Samuel Colt’s legacy in film/TV, music, news, video games, and day-to-day life?

⇒ What do the stories and art in *America Redux* teach us about our legacy of displacement, genocide, and dispossession throughout history?

⇒ “Down on the Farm” begins with an epigraph from Dolores Huerta: “Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world” (p. 213). Consider the examples of everyday people organizing for equality and justice. What connections might you make across the different narratives of activism, organizing, and community?

⇒ How does Aberg-Riger’s use of collage enhance the retelling of history? How do the art and structure of the book shape your understanding of the stories?

⇒ Review the place, time, and major events discussed in the text. How have geography, resources, and money fueled the trajectory of our country?

⇒ Who and what did the author choose to center in her visual history book? What impact does that have on the histories we learned and might consider in the future?



“WHEN WE MELT INTO THE POT WE USUALLY BECOME CHARRED CRUST AT THE BOTTOM.”

—CHUCK D

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Digging Deep: A Research Extension

Select several key events, people, or laws discussed in *America Redux*. Working in pairs, small groups, or as individuals, have students choose a topic from your curated list to learn more about. Invite students to create a mindmap, collage, or presentation that provides more information about the topic. As they research and create, encourage them to be intentional about how they are using historical artifacts, reflection, artmaking, and narrative to dig deeper into histories.

The History in Your Backyard: A Neighborhood Exploration

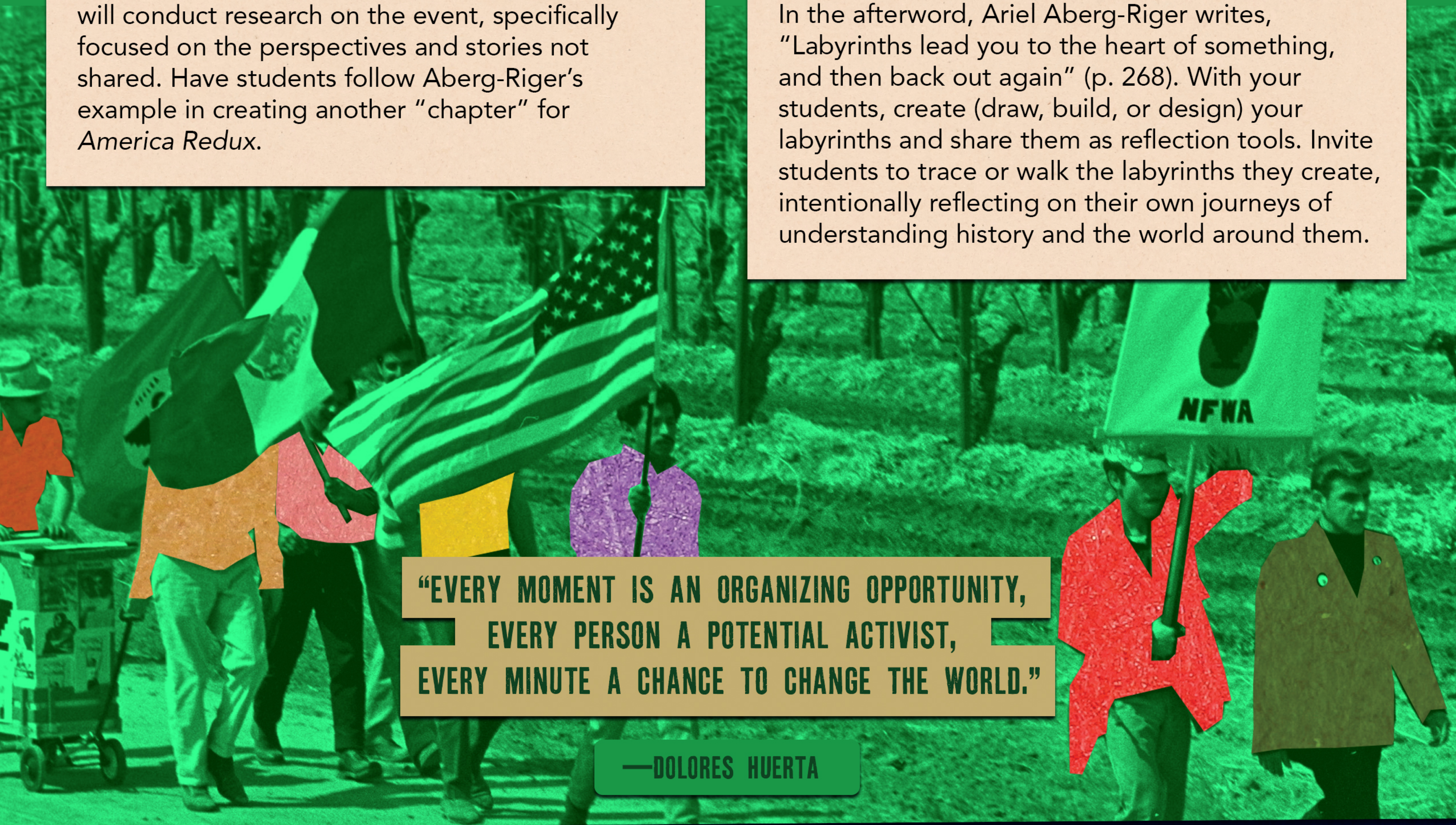
Display or distribute a map of your school's neighborhood. As a class or individually, have students survey the neighborhood, noting any features like highways, parks, parking lots. Students should also explore the neighborhood on foot to get a closer look at the people, places, and history in the neighborhood. Encourage them to record their findings with photographs, sketches, videos, and written notes. Afterward, make time for students to share their findings, research more about landmarks and key community leaders, and reflect on how the urban planning of the neighborhood reflects the history.

Get Critical: A Creatively Critical Retelling

Find 5–7 key events or time periods discussed in a traditional history book. Divide students into "Creatively Critical Retelling Teams" in which they will conduct research on the event, specifically focused on the perspectives and stories not shared. Have students follow Aberg-Riger's example in creating another "chapter" for *America Redux*.

Drawing and Walking Your Own Labyrinth

In the afterword, Ariel Aberg-Riger writes, "Labyrinths lead you to the heart of something, and then back out again" (p. 268). With your students, create (draw, build, or design) your labyrinths and share them as reflection tools. Invite students to trace or walk the labyrinths they create, intentionally reflecting on their own journeys of understanding history and the world around them.



**"EVERY MOMENT IS AN ORGANIZING OPPORTUNITY,
EVERY PERSON A POTENTIAL ACTIVIST,
EVERY MINUTE A CHANCE TO CHANGE THE WORLD."**

—DOLORES HUERTA