

EDUCATOR GUIDE

stay up: racism, resistance, and reclaiming Black freedom

by Khodi Dill

illustrated by stylo starr

Educator Guide by Fatma Faraj

GENRE: Young Adult Non-fiction

THEMES: civil & human rights, self-esteem & self-reliance, cultural heritage, African American, racism, equality, memoir

SUITABLE FOR: Grades 8+, Ages 14+

GUIDED READING LEVEL: Fountas and Pinnell Z

LEXILE: 1190L

COMMON CORE STANDARDS: RI.11.1,2,3,4,5,6,7

W.11.1,1a,1b,1c,1d,1e,2,2a,2b,2c,2d,2e,2f,4,5,6,9,9b

SL.11.1,1a,1b,1c,1d,2,3,4,5,6

L.11.4,4a,4b,4c,4d,5,5a,5b,6

SUMMARY:

An incisive, innovative, and inviting take on fighting oppression and fighting for racial justice.

Racism is a real and present danger. But how can you fight it if you don't know how it works or where it comes from? Using a compelling mix of memoir, cultural criticism, and anti-oppressive theory, Khodi Dill breaks down how white supremacy functions in North America and gives readers tools to understand how racism impacts their lives. From dismantling internalized racism, decolonizing schools, joining social justice movements and more, Dill lays out paths to personal liberation and social transformation.

Vibrant, dramatic collages by stylo starr complement Dill's propulsive voice. Fueled by joy and hope as much as by rage and sorrow, this groundbreaking book empowers racialized young people to be confident in their identities and embrace the fullness of their futures.

Please remember that the suggested questions and activities within this educator guide are meant to serve as a starting point. Educators are encouraged to select items from each part of the guided inquiry process that work best for their style of teaching and will help them meet their goals when covering the topics in this book. Activities and prompts should be tweaked and/or reformatted to best fit your students, context, and community to ensure equity and inclusion.

BEFORE READING THE BOOK

These activities build the context, introduce the topic of the book, and establish prior knowledge and interest.

1. What does the title of the book, *stay up: racism, resisting and reclaiming*, mean?
2. Copy this chart into your own document. Complete the chart with your understanding prior to reading the book.

	Definitions	Examples
racism		
resisting		
reclaiming		

3. Take a closer look at all the chapter titles.
 - Which title catches your attention first?
 - What do you notice about the titles?
 - How are upper and lowercase letters used in the titles?
 - Why did the author make these decisions? (Prediction)
 - What do you think of Khodi Dill's choice of language in the titles?
4. What is the importance of the author's note?

WHILE READING THE BOOK

These activities check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.

INTRODUCTION

1. Why do you think the author chooses to use a conversational tone in his writing, as opposed to stating facts throughout the text?
2. How do you think areas are divided in the area where you live in Canada? Do you notice a divide economically and/or geographically?
3. Create a chart to document the words/phrases that Khodi Dill uses in the text. Use this chart to ask questions, make connections, and develop understanding as you read through the book.

Page Number	Words/Phrases	Questions, Connections, and Understanding

4. What is anti-racism? How does Khodi Dill's version of anti-racism compare to your understanding? (p.4)

section I: the know-up

CHAPTER ONE: the gut knows whussup

1. Why did Khodi Dill choose to start with the story "the chocolate dinosaur"?
2. How might someone be perceived based on popular media? (p. 18)
3. Perfect English, straighter hair, or "dressier clothes." How are these examples of whiteness? (p. 21)

4. How does the word *carceral* work instead of the word *justice* in the term *justice system*? (p. 24)
5. On page 28, Khodi Dill writes about discouraging expressions of anger. He gives examples of righteous anger in songs. What might righteous anger look/sound like if not expressed in a song?

CHAPTER TWO: Black ain't a color; it's a concept

1. Colonization is an enduring process, not an event. What do you know about colonization?
2. What modern-day social hierarchies are unspoken? (Here's a clue: power).
3. The *colonial playbook* is the term Khodi Dill uses to describe how governments share what they did to suppress a group of racialized people. List how governments created inequities in Canada (The Indian Act) and South Africa (Apartheid).

The Indian Act: Canada	Apartheid: South Africa

4. What is meritocracy? Why has it been embraced by policy makers? What are the dangers? (p. 45)
5. How are the following statements problematic? (p. 46)
 - “If he’d only worked harder, he coulda been somebody!”
 - “Just pull up your bootstraps and you will succeed.”
 - “You can do anything if you put your mind to it!”
 - “Rise and grind!”
6. How could equal opportunities be considered an illusion? (p. 48)
7. What do you think of the following statement from page 52: “Racists often come across as some of the nicest people. And as their ‘polite racism’ (be it condescension, microaggressions, or saviorism) is often served with a smile, it rubs our faces in the already suffocating pretense of equality all around us”?

8. What are examples of unearned power and privilege? (p. 60)
9. How might you educate yourself to disrupt stereotypical statements/narratives?
10. *Resilience* is a term used in education to develop strategies on dealing with trauma and moving oneself forward.
Khodi Dill explores the term on page 68, through the lens of a racialized person. He states that “our resilience is often mythologized, commended, applauded, studied even, and usually without an eye toward changing the conditions that require such resilience in the first place.”
When reading this section, it seems like educators would like to develop resilience in students to help them move forward; however, for a racialized person, resilience has already been built into their experiences.
 - In your own words, what is resilience?

In the end, Khodi poses the following questions: “As a social goal, instead of striving to build resilience in racialized people facing colonial violence, how ‘bout we focus on reducing the need for that resilience in the first place? How ‘bout we focus on ending the violence instead?”

- How might the conversation shift from building resilience in racialized communities to discussing the issues at hand (i.e., violence)? What might be another issue?

section II: personal liberation

CHAPTER THREE: don’t be hatin’ (yourself)

1. Hair is a common target for microaggressions. List other examples of microaggressions.
Compare the intent and impact of the microaggressions.
2. What is internalized racism? (p. 43)
3. What does language learning mean to you?
4. How do words/phrases connect you to your classmates, friends, and family?
5. How does colonial language connect to internalized racism?
6. What does racial puberty mean? (p. 87)
7. Why did Canada suppress historical events like what happened to Viola Desmond? (p. 89)

8. Khodi Dill mentions KRS-One’s song “Sound of da Police” to “showcase lyrical wordplay, intonation and meaning.” (p. 90)

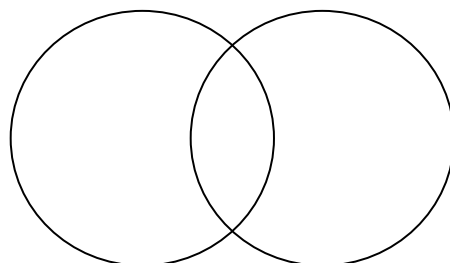
- As a reader, compare the meaning and build your comprehension of the two words KRS-One uses: *officer/overseer*

9. Positive thinking is an important part of moving to move past systems of oppression. Khodi Dill writes about the following people and how they made positive affirmations to create better futures for themselves. Find their affirmations and add them to the chart. Create your own Bright Future Affirmation in the chart.

	Bright Future (Prediction)
Muhammad Ali	
Assata Shakur	
Malcolm X	
Harriet Tubman	
YOU	

CHAPTER FOUR: how to show love, and rage, too

1. Read: “snuffing out Blackness” (p.106–109). What allows a city to create a slogan like “the friendly city”? What should places consider before putting a title like that on a place?
2. On page 117, the author makes a statement that, “rage is love too.” How might rage express itself as love through poetry?
3. Complete a Venn diagram to show the similarities and differences between *allyship* and *solidarity*.



4. Take a moment for personal reflection. How do you feel when someone asks you to not look so serious? Or they ask you to smile?
5. “Art and activism can transform . . . tragic confrontations into catalysts for greater collective consciousness and more effective resistance.” —Dr. Angela Davis (p. 128)
 - How does writing (or any other art form) help transformation?
6. How might you provide yourself with self-care in your life after reading sections of this book. (Try to center your thoughts with a social justice lens).

CHAPTER FIVE: Black like you

1. What is the percentage of hip-hop being played on Canadian radio now? How often is it played on radio?
How does dance fit into the cultural landscape? Why is music and dance not only reflected in Khodi Dill’s experience of growing up but also, as a key component of knowing oneself?
2. “It’s a daily struggle just to feel like an indivisible individual like one whole self, when it seems that people never want you to be too Black in white spaces or too white in Black spaces.” (p. 147)
 - Have you ever had to hold back a part of your identity to make someone else feel more comfortable? How did it make you feel? When have you felt fully like your authentic self? How might you hold that identity in more spaces?
3. How would you define your own style regarding:
 - Clothes
 - Spoken language
 - Written language
4. Read the section, “Black man of the woods” (p. 152–156). What is the disconnect between diverse communities and the outdoors?
5. What do you think of these imposter stories: John Howard Griffin (*Black Like Me*) and Archibald Stansfeld Belaney (“Grey Owl”)? Where else have you seen, heard, or read about “imposters” sharing a “lived experience” story?
6. How has language changed over time? Do you know any examples of words that have changed meaning over time?

section III: social transformation

CHAPTER SIX: make the old school new

1. Watch Jamila Lyiscott's [TED Talk](#), "Why English Class is Silencing Students of Color"
 - How does language connect to your identity?
 - Who makes the decision of how language is used in schools?
2. What do you think about language use in commercials? Can you think of any other examples where language "norms" have shifted?
3. Khodi Dill asks you to "peep" the list at the back of the book (p. 186) to help you decolonize your mind. Use the list as a recommended reading list. Choose one of the titles to read and reflect on what you learn about CRT (Critical Race Theory).
4. Take a look at the image of the 2020 Saskatchewan High School Graduation Rate (p. 188). What social barriers and institutional policies may be in place to cause this achievement gap based on this chart?
 - Read the section "schools reimagined" on pages 193–198. Write a letter to school officials on how providing better resources would support students in your community.
6. Imagine having a budget of \$9 million to create a plan that support students in your community. Consider what is needed. Organize your ideas in terms of needs, wants, and other considerations. It may also be a good idea to think in terms of a 3–5-year plan.
7. Look at the graphic on page 196: "What would it take to make schools more equitable?"
 - Take one of the circles on the graphic and expand on the importance of the idea (Flexibility, Freedom, Student-centered learning, Resources, Decolonization or Anti-oppressive curriculum)
 - Who might you share this knowledge within your school or community?

CHAPTER SEVEN: pick your battles and your team

1. This chapter asks you to reflect on what you have read, what your lived experience is, and what you plan to do with this newfound knowledge.
 - How can you be an ally?
 - Where do you start?
 - What does it look like?
2. Use "The Unlearning Checklist" (p. 223) to help guide you as you start to develop your understanding and role in being an ally.

3. Khodi Dill recommends finding progressive people in your local community, but you may also need to go online and find them on social media (p. 227). Review “Cultivating Allyship” (p. 228) as a starting place in finding your role.
4. How are the histories of Black and Indigenous people intertwined within Canadian history? How does understanding the two histories help create a context for decolonization?

AFTER READING THE BOOK

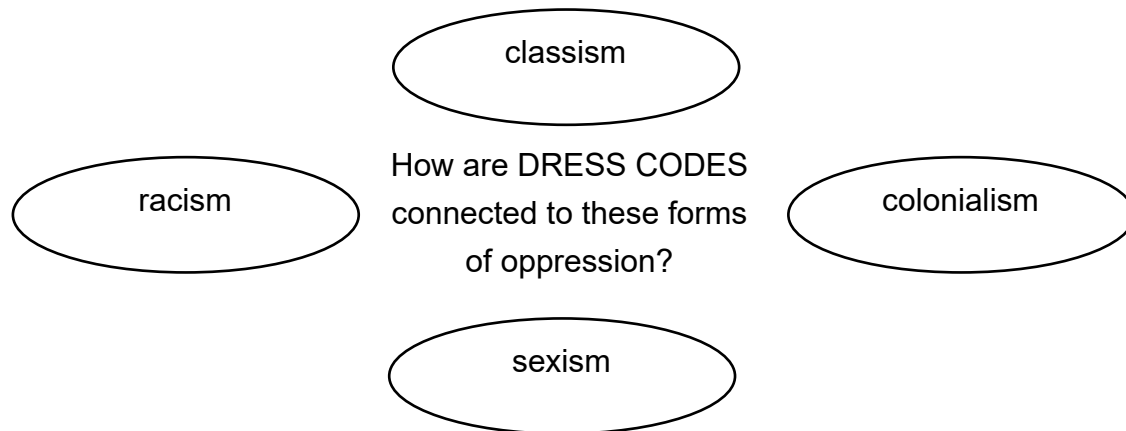
These activities inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further extensions.

1. Keep a journal for a week. Write this sentence: “Be better for each other than we were yesterday” at the top of each day’s entry. Use it as a prompt to document your journey.
2. Thinking of Canada’s TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission), there are [94 Calls to Action](#).
 - Check them out online.
 - Choose one of the Calls to Action.
 - How might institutions correct their understanding of the recommendations and make them truly work as amends?
3. Khodi Dill loves music. On page 134, he shares his essential hip-hop playlist. Listen to one or more of these songs (most are available online or via a streaming service).
 - What have you learned from listening to the songs?
 - Do you agree or disagree with this list?
 - What would you add or take away from this playlist?
 - Create your own essential playlist (your choice of genre).
4. Who are you? With a blank piece of paper draw or write down all the things about yourself (race, class, gender, sexuality, ability). Don’t limit it to those suggestions! What are your dreams? Hopes? Aspirations?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are only a start. They are designed to support the goal of helping students explore the story and their own creativity.

1. Complete the web below by adding more information to extend your knowledge of dress codes and how they connect to classism, colonialism, sexism, and racism.



2. Look for a historical walking tour of your community. Contact your local library to find out more about walking tours and the subjects they focus on. This may turn into an opportunity to advocate for a plaque or visible recognition of lost history.
3. Choose three popular songs (ideally from different genres) and review the themes and ideas that come from the lyrics. One step further: investigate the radio play history and chart position of the three songs you've chosen. (Fact: artists make money from radio play and not streams on streaming platforms).
4. Discover an independent artist from your city.
 - Who are they?
 - What is your favorite song?
 - What is the artist's message?
 - How might you share and promote their talent with others?
5. What is the history of spoken word/slam poetry?