

The Hate U Give: Tilton School's 2021 Summer Reading Project

The Invitation

More than a year has passed since George Floyd's murder re-ignited a world-wide public and private reckoning on race in America.

This month we observed the one hundred year anniversary of racial violence that destroyed an affluent African-American community in Tulsa, Oklahoma's Greenwood District.

In the last year, we have witnessed escalating hate-inspired violence against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and for decades we have both recoiled at and lamented acts of hate targeting Jews, Muslims and the LGBTQ+ community.

And today, possibly at the very moment you are reading this post, state legislatures around the country continue the debate over the inclusion of "divisive concepts" in the K-12 classroom.

Each of these moments affirms the need for schools to stand up, to commit to Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and to actively promote JEDI communities for students, teachers and their families here on campus and around the world.

Tilton School is committed to helping students understand the events, structures and systems that dictate today's cultural, social, political and economic realities. Choosing Angie Thomas' 2017 novel [*The Hate U Give*](#) for our Summer Reading Project continues this commitment into the 2021-22 school year.

Like us, the characters in Thomas' fictional world must respond to a young black man's lethal encounter with the police. We are in the front seat of a Chevy Impala with the novel's teenage protagonist, Starr Carter, as she witnesses the deadly shooting of her lifelong friend Kahlil. Kahlil's death becomes a national headline. The community erupts, some seeking to discover and some to obscure the truth, but only Starr knows what really went down in Kahlil's Impala.

This summer, we invite all Tilton School community members to follow Starr as she traverses between two worlds -- her home in the African-American neighborhood of Garden Heights, and her mostly white independent day-school, Williamson Prep. As

the novel unfolds, we watch her two, code-switching selves unify into a powerful force for justice and equity.

In June and July

Read the novel. Record your observations, your emotional reactions, your epiphanies in a Google Doc, on your phone, in a video, in a journal or in a personal diary. You might use the [Anti-Defamation League's discussion questions](#) to get started with your reflections. The important thing is to generate a record of your experience reading the novel, a record you can return to later in the summer and in the fall.

What else can you do?

July-August

Watch "[Anatomy of a Scene](#)" a short *New York Times* video in which Tillman narrates his choices as a filmmaker in the film's early "the talk" scene.

Read the *Atlantic's* [review](#) of the novel, in which columnist Anna Diamond writes,

*Appealing to readers across age, not just race, is a goal for Thomas as well. In a recent interview with Cosmopolitan, she explained, "Young adult' is a critical age, and I knew that if I showed Starr going through these types of things, I could provide a mirror for some young adults and a window for adults—a lot of [whom] read young adult books—who might bring open hearts to a story that I told from her perspective, when they might normally look at a topic like this and say, 'No.'" But thanks to Thomas's absorbing storytelling, those who read *The Hate U Give* will be right beside Starr, grappling with understanding entrenched prejudice, where it comes from, and what role she—and those at home—have in exposing and combating it.*

Listen to the [Vermont Reads](#), May 2021 podcast "An Evening with Angie Thomas" in which the writer talks about her life in Jackson, Mississippi, her experience as the only person of color in her creative writing program, and how the police shooting of Oscar Grant in 2009 in Oakland, California moved her to begin work on *The Hate U Give*. You will hear Thomas identify **compassion** as "a cousin of understanding and

empathy” and as “one of the strongest weapons against racism, poverty, sexism, homophobia and so many other societal ills.” What do you think? Do you agree?

When School Starts

We'll watch: George Tillman Jr.'s 2019 [film](#)

We'll think: What elements of the film remain true to the novel?
How does the film differ from the novel?
What is the effect of these differences?

We'll talk: in the classroom in the dorms in advisor & grade-level groups

We'll write: analysis reflection poetry story

We'll create and share content: video audio blog posts

And we'll do all of this, like carrying bricks of hope, to build a more compassionate, understanding and empathic community on the hill and in our communities beyond the hill.