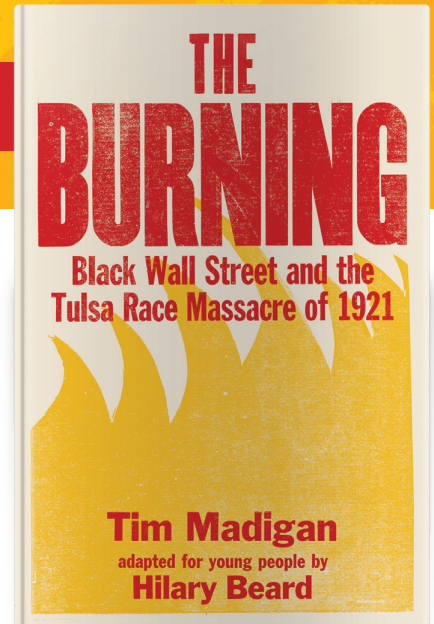


A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO

THE BURNING

DISCUSSION GUIDE BY
GERMAINE TARVER



ABOUT THE BOOK

The Burning is an unfiltered examination of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, the deadliest domestic outbreak of violence in America since the Civil War. This horrific spree of the killing of Black people in Greenwood, a section of Tulsa made up of Blacks from all socioeconomic backgrounds, can only be accurately described as a genocide.

The Burning is a magnificent portrayal of Black lives, resolute in moving beyond the barriers of a post-slavery society steeped in extreme violence and Jim Crow laws. Throughout, we are shown a complete picture of people who did their best to step out of the chains of racism to build a city of Black entrepreneurs, lawyers, doctors, teachers, mechanics, and domestics who valued and uplifted the community that their hard-earned dollars created and sustained. Despite the times, we see tenacious people using their skills and knowledge not only to grow the wealthy society referred to as Black Wall Street but also to grow a place where Black citizens were respected and embraced no matter the amount of money they made. And when Greenwood was burned down during the Tulsa Race Massacre, we see these same tenacious people withstand the persecution and rebuild Greenwood!

Along with the beauty of Greenwood, *The Burning* also methodically outlines the racism that pervaded Tulsa as whites set out to murder all of the Black residents and then burn every example of Black success. The multitudinous accounts of unbridled racism are almost inconceivable as the death and trauma of this massacre rained down on Greenwood's Black residents for eighteen hours—and the aftermath, for weeks. For many residents, it was even longer.

In this adaptation for young readers of Tim Madigan's *The Burning*, the author Hilary Beard does a tremendous job of bringing to the fore this contemptible event in American history that has been whitewashed for a hundred years. The narratives and data that she brings to the pages are sure to change the minds of those who emphatically deny or even doubt the veracity of the Tulsa Race Massacre.

GERMAINE TARVER is an educator and writer. She has a BA in music and education and an MEd in education. Her career as an educator spans just shy of twenty-five years and includes the positions of supervisor of literacy, literacy coach, and classroom teacher. Tarver is also the author of a young adult fiction title, *If It's Magic*. She is a native New Jerseyan and is happily married with two wonderful teenagers!

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE TO SUPPORT UNDERSTANDING

The Burning is a book that details the deadliest domestic outbreak of violence in America since the Civil War, the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. This disturbing event may require some pre-reading to build knowledge in preparation for the intense investigation of racism that your children or students are about to undertake.

Here are three highly recommended resources that may support young readers as they embark upon the journey of uncovering the ugly truths of racism.

TED TALK: “THE DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY”

In her talk, the novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns of the dangers of a single story that can be used to give a false perception, break the dignity of a people, and flatten their experience. She speaks about the power of many stories to empower and humanize. Throughout *The Burning* young readers will witness how the telling of a story from one perspective breeds misinformation, ignorance, and even death. Adichie’s talk will also help readers understand the power of writing (and publishing) and how it can bring to life the full experience of a people.

Here is the link to the talk. For anyone using this guide in print format, go to ted.com and in the search box type: The Danger of a Single Story: <https://youtu.be/D9Ihs241zeg>.

TED-ED: “HOW ONE JOURNALIST RISKED HER LIFE TO HOLD MURDERERS ACCOUNTABLE”

This short video details the work that the journalist Ida B. Wells did to expose the truth about lynching in the American South. Through this text young people will learn why whites lynched Black people and will see, again, the power of journalism and the press.

Here is the link to the talk. For anyone using this guide in print format, go to ted.com and in the search box type: How One Journalist Risked Her Life to Hold Murderers Accountable: <https://youtu.be/fygjGXnaV9w>.

A UNITED STATES MAP

Provide your students or children with a copy of or link to a political map of the United States. This will orient them as the author references different states throughout the country.

A NOTE TO EDUCATORS, PARENTS, AND CAREGIVERS

First of all, thank you for reading this book with your students or as a family!

The goal of *The Burning* is to make young people aware of a reprehensible event that many people have tried to erase from history. *The Burning* examines the abomination of racism and the heroism and perseverance of Black people.

Please know that digging into the infrastructure of racism requires exploring difficult topics and brutal events in history. Please also know that the author Hilary Beard is aware of the difficulty of reading and processing hard history. Because of this, she has devoted the majority of the book’s introduction to helping teens deal with the stress and feelings of discomfort that they may experience when reading *The Burning*. Beard also shares with young readers the idea that “uncomfortable feelings produce new truths, and with them, new possibilities. They also help to empower us to address unresolved issues.”

It must be noted that as you read *The Burning* you may experience a wide range of emotions—from surprise and pride to shock, shame, and discomfort as you encounter stories that run counter to the dominant narratives of both Black people and white people in American society. The Black residents of Greenwood seem to defy the odds, building wealth that rivals the more

affluent whites in Tulsa to create the district aptly named Black Wall Street. But in Greenwood we also see a true community of Black people, regardless of socioeconomic standing, sustaining a place that empowers all Blacks to live where their Blackness is respected and revered. And during the Tulsa Race Massacre, when Greenwood is burned down, we see Blacks with the resolve and ingenuity to rebuild their community, a feat that many would have said could never happen once, let alone twice.

Educators, parents, and caregivers, appreciate this time shared reading *The Burning*. Appreciate the opportunity to sit as a class or a family and hold meaningful conversations about the effects of racism, especially as you may be learning about this instance in history for the first time. And as you read and discuss, revel in the gift of witnessing determination and resilience at its highest levels as narratives of incredible Black feats of perseverance and prosperity are unraveled. Page by page, consider the seeds of awareness and enlightenment that you are planting in your students or children, teaching them the importance of advocacy and speaking truth to power. Know that this kind of enlightenment can only be reached when we are taught complete and complex historical narratives.

PRE-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Have you heard of the Tulsa Race Massacre? If so, what do you know about it?
- Consider the TED Talk that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie gave on the danger of a single story. How does she depict the single story as being dangerous? Do you agree?
- Consider the TED-Ed video on Ida B. Wells. What is the power in writing and the press?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION

- In this section Beard gives many reasons for telling the whole story. What are some of those reasons?

PROLOGUE

- What surprised you as you read the prologue? What did you learn?

CHAPTER 1

- As you read this chapter think about what surprises you. Write down any questions you have.

CHAPTER 2

- During the Reconstruction period, Blacks were focused on equity and whites were focused on economics. Why do you think the two groups had such different focuses?
- In what ways do we see the resilience of Black people in this chapter?
- Consider Booker T. Washington's and W. E. B. Du Bois's stances on education. How do they differ and which better serves Black people? Why do you think this?
- The Reconstruction period was the most violent in American history. Of all the documentations of violence explained in this chapter, which surprises you the most? Why?

CHAPTER 3

- What is the significance of John B. Stradford building a library for the Black citizens of Greenwood? How might a library affect the lives of Black people?
- As we read, we are presented with repeated instances of racist whites burning down schools, libraries, and newspaper offices. Why do you think those places were targeted? How are these places significant to Black people?
- Which narrative about a person or a family who moved to Greenwood impressed you the most? Why?

CHAPTER 4

- How do we see the power of the press played out in positive and negative ways in this chapter?
- How does Beard portray systemic racism in America's system of justice?
- How does Ida B. Wells embody the phrase "speaking truth to power"?
- What do Thomas Moss's last words say about himself, the state of Black people, and the state of the nation at this time?
- Consider all that Captain Jackson endured throughout his life: war, extreme violence, threats of death, the imperatives of fighting back and defending Blacks. Does it surprise you that he gave the type of speech that he gave at the church? Why?

CHAPTER 5

- Consider Red Summer in 1919 and the lynching of Roy Belton. Why might white mobs use lynching as a way to kill? Why was this a preferred method of murder?

CHAPTER 6

- Reread the third paragraph on page 64 and the last three paragraphs on page 65. Which of the two reasons given for the intense violence in Tulsa would you say is the main one? Why?
- Reread the second to the last paragraph on page 66. How might fear play a role in this example of the Ku Klux Klan's ideology on increasing their strength through increased membership?

CHAPTER 7

- In the Tribune article about Dick Rowland, how did the author use words to incite and words to sensitize?
- Sheriff McCullough felt sorry for the young Black man who was to be hanged for killing a deputy. Would you say the sheriff is a part of a systemically racist justice system or an outlier?

CHAPTER 8

- It is understandable why the people of Greenwood would be terrified and infuriated by the possible lynching of Dick Rowland. What does the author do to justify or legitimize this intense anger?

CHAPTER 9

- Do Sheriff McCullough's actions in this chapter confirm or go against how you thought he might treat Dick Rowland?

CHAPTER 10

- Why do you think the white citizens of Tulsa perceived the defiance of the Black citizens as a threat?
- In this chapter we see some white citizens of Tulsa who chose to do what is right. How did the choices that they made positively affect this already volatile situation?

CHAPTER 11

- Shakespeare wrote, "Lawless are they that make their wills their law." Would you say this quote is true of all the people in Tulsa and Greenwood who are a part of the mayhem in this chapter? Why?
- Consider all of the events that occurred in this chapter. If you were writing this book, what title would you give this chapter and why?

CHAPTER 12

- In this chapter, where do we see examples of the fighting becoming bigger than protesting the possible lynching of Dick Rowland?
- Bullets and fire are being used to destroy Greenwood. How has law enforcement also made itself a weapon of war?
- Consider the danger of telling only one side of a story. What is the danger in the National Guard documenting the attack on Greenwood as a "Negro Uprising"?
- This chapter gives examples of the unthinkable depths of racism. How do these examples tie into white people's notion of white supremacy?
- Consider the events on page 116 with mobs of people reinforcing their ammunition and preparing for large-scale attacks. Do you think there were people in those mobs who did not want to kill Black people? What does this say about the weight of silence?

CHAPTER 13

- The title of this chapter is “Daybreak.” Think about the symbolism of daybreak. What is ironic about this chapter’s title?
- We continue to see white men who are drunk with the insanity of racism. Of all the racist acts in this chapter, which stood out to you most? Why?
- On pages 120 to 122 we learn about the white boy Walter Ferrell whose family lived on the border of the Black community. Why do you think the author chose to include information about Walter in this recounting of the attack?
- O. W. Gurley understands the racist nature of the White people in Tulsa. As he watches Greenwood being attacked he denounces the decision to protect Dick Rowland from being lynched. What are your thoughts on the stand he takes?
- Consider the decisions O. W. Gurley makes in this chapter: He chooses to stay in his hotel with his wife instead of defending Greenwood with the other men; he blames the burning and destruction of Greenwood on Dick Rowland; and he tries to run to some of the more amiable whites in Tulsa for protection. Would you consider Gurley to be disconnected from reality or strategic and practical? Or do you see him in a different light?
- On pages 133 to 134, the author details O. B. Mann’s thoughts about being at war and killing Germans versus killing the white people who invaded Greenwood. What are your thoughts on the validity of the distinction between the killings?

CHAPTER 14

- How does the author portray the burning of Mount Zion Baptist Church as being like the death of a loved one?
- In this chapter we see another example of whites destroying a school. Why is the act of destroying a school more heinous than destroying the beautiful homes of Greenwood?
- How did the Tulsa World newspaper contribute to the burning of Greenwood?
- How do the white adults of Tulsa allow the white teens to feel the trauma of the burning?

CHAPTER 15

- This chapter details the truth about the ethnic cleansing that took place in Greenwood and talks about the same type of terroristic attacks that continued to take place through 1950. Given what you have learned in this book so far and other information that you know about the history of the United States, what conclusion can you draw about life for Black people in the United States during this time period?

CHAPTER 16

- Consider all that we learn about Dr. Jackson in this chapter. What would you say is tragic about his life?
- As Captain Jackson grieves the loss of his son, he feels shame in the hope and sense of promise that he felt for Blacks in America. He feels that Black progress against White mob violence is an illusion. Do you agree? If so, why?

CHAPTER 17

- How do you know that protecting Greenwood's Black citizens was not a priority for the Oklahoma National Guard?
- What do we learn about Judge Oliphant's character in this chapter?

CHAPTER 18

- As the title of this chapter, "Sickening Aftermath," states, we see the sickening aftermath of the burning. But we also get a glimpse of the humanity of some whites in Tulsa. Which examples stood out to you?
- In this chapter we see a father teach his sons a "lesson" about uprising as a sin. How might the father's actions create trauma in his sons?
- It is safe to assume that many of Greenwood's citizens, both Black and white, suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. Reread the list of symptoms on page 175. Talk about a symptom that you believe Blacks from Greenwood probably suffered from.

CHAPTER 19

- When the white reporter Faith Hieronymous spoke to the Black people in McNulty Park, most Blacks spoke kindly and openly to her. What does this say about the people of Greenwood?
- How does the author show us the trauma that has been inflicted upon the Black people of Greenwood in this chapter?
- What would you say is the irony in the white soldiers giving Bill a green piece of paper to ensure he is not returned to the holding camp?
- How did Easter Smith help Faith Hieronymous write a successful article?
- In this chapter we learn that some Blacks blamed Dick Rowland and the Tribune's incendiary coverage for the burning. Other Blacks felt that anything could have ignited the genocide in Greenwood. With which do you agree?

CHAPTER 20

- Based on what we learn in this chapter, how did Tulsa's white leaders further victimize and dehumanize the Black people of Greenwood?

CHAPTER 21

- How does this chapter portray the resilience of Black people?
- At one point in the chapter, O. B. Mann is horrified that the Black residents of Greenwood are celebrating and seemingly harbor no hate for the whites of Tulsa. What is your opinion on how Blacks should move forward?
- Throughout this chapter the author shows how Greenwood is returning to normal. How do Madigan and Beard also show that this return to normalcy is only on the surface for some?

CHAPTER 22

- How does this chapter reveal the power of the press, both the white press and the Black press?

CHAPTER 23

- What would you say is the most disheartening information that you learned in this chapter? Why?
- What would you say is the most uplifting information that you learned in this chapter? Why?
- The information in this chapter makes the claim for reparations for the families of the Greenwood residents. Which piece of information would you say makes the strongest argument for reparations?

POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What will you do to share the history of Black Wall Street?
- What will you do to help shed light on the Tulsa Race Massacre or any other race massacre in U.S. history?
- How might this book create a path to a more equitable society, where the ideology of the Black Lives Matter movement is realized?