

The 1898 Coup in Wilmington, NC

"We look to Wilmington in 1898, as to all this nation's racial history, not to wring our hands in a fruitless nostalgia of pain, but to redeem a democratic promise rooted in the living ingredients of American life."

Democracy Betrayed, Introduction, David S. Cecelski & Timothy B. Tyson

Overview

Wilmington, NC in the 1890s was an outlier in the post-Reconstruction American South, with members of Wilmington's Black community holding leadership roles in the political, economic, and social realms of a diverse city. Yet, even with the progress made by some Black community members in unfavorable conditions, the strategic violence that occurred on and leading up to November 10, 1898, when white supremacists staged a successful coup d'état of Wilmington's government, would forever change the prospering core of Wilmington's Black community. The campaign, waged all across the state but most notably in Wilmington, was designed to: intimidate and disempower the Black community; strip Black men of the hard-earned right to vote; and remove them from public office and other positions of leadership. Throughout the events of 1898 and after, at least 60 (and possibly hundreds) of black men were murdered, and more than 2,100 African Americans were banished or fled the city, altering the black-majority and progressive town permanently, with lasting economic consequences yet to be righted.

In this lesson, students will learn about the events of the 1898 white supremacy campaign and coup via a Power Point presentation, analyzing primary source documents, and class discussion. Students will explore the role of propaganda and spin in instigating the events of 1898 and will discuss the importance of learning about such history. This lesson will culminate with students creating a memorial design for teaching about the 1898 coup and honoring those impacted.

Grade

8-12

Essential Questions

- Why was Wilmington, NC considered a symbol of 'black hope' in the late 19th century? Who were some of the Black leaders making a difference?
- What were the events of the 1898 white supremacist campaign and coup in Wilmington, NC?
- Compare and contrast the Democratic, Republican, Populist, and Fusionist Parties of 1898.
- What effect did propaganda have on the unfolding of 1898 events?
- How did the events of 1898 impact Black progress, both in Wilmington and around the entire state?
- What are the most effective ways to remember the events of 1898 and elevate the voices of those who experienced the violence of white supremacy and racism?

Materials

- [The 1898 Wilmington Coup Power Point](#), available in the Database of K-12 Resources (in PDF format) at
 - To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click "View" in the top menu bar of the file, and select "Full Screen Mode"
 - To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to CarolinaK12@unc.edu
- Power Point Response Sheet and Answer Key, attached
- [Continuum of Change](#), an art exhibit as part of Initiative 1897; this exhibit is comprised of art that aims to highlight some of the many Black Americans who helped usher in change in the Wilmington, N.C. area prior to 1898 and provides a wonderful on-ramp for discussing Black agency, leadership, hope, and resistance.
- Excerpt from "The Ghosts of 1898," by Tim Tyson; special feature of the News and Observer, attached

- Teachers should read the full feature prior to implementing this lesson; it is available [here](#).
- Discussion Questions for Excerpt, attached

Additional Resources (optional):

- A substantial list of recommended resources for further study from previous Carolina K-12 events is available [here](#).
- Carolina K-12's virtual program recording, "[Wilmington 1898: The Hidden History of an American Coup](#)"
- Carolina K-12's virtual program recording, "[Democracy on the Line: Hope, Hostility & Lasting Legacies of 1898 Wilmington](#)" (featuring LeRae Umfleet)
- Carolina K-12's curriculum [Exploring Life in 1898 Wilmington & the Wilmington Coup with CROW, a novel for young adults](#)

Duration

- 2 or more class periods
- Additional homework time will be needed for the culminating memorial assignment

Preparation

Students should have a basic knowledge of the Jim Crow Era and white supremacy during the 1800s, as well as an understanding of expectations for respectfully discussing "hard history" and controversial issues. While this history brings up sensitive topics such as racism and violence, such history represents a part of our state's and nation's history that students must learn about in order to gain of comprehensive understanding of our past and its impact on the present. To ensure students are able to respectfully and empathetically discuss such topics, teachers must ensure a foundation of considerate dialogue and tolerance is present in the classroom. For techniques on building such a classroom community, see Carolina K-12's classroom management activities in the Database of K-12 Resources under the "[Activities](#)" section and our [Tips for Tackling Sensitive History & Controversial Current Events in the Classroom](#).

Procedure

Day 1

Introduction to the Wilmington Coup of 1898

1. Project the image on [Slide 2](#) of the Power Point and ask students to examine it, jotting down their observations and inferences. (Do not give students any indication regarding the events of the picture or time period represented yet.) Probe student thinking by asking:
 - What do you see here? What do you first notice about this image? What might be important in figuring out the story of this image?
 - What appears to be currently happening? What do you think may have happened before this photo was taken? What would you predict will happen next?
 - When and where do you think this photo was taken? What evidence makes you think this?
2. Allow students to share their thoughts then explain that this photo was taken on November 10, 1898 in Wilmington, NC and give students an introduction to the Wilmington coup, such as:
 - At 8:00 A.M. on November 10, 1898, about 500 white men assembled at the armory of the Wilmington Light Infantry. Led by soon-to-be mayor **Alfred Moore Waddell**, the crowd marched to the **Daily Record** office, the state's only black owned newspaper at the time. As they moved across town, the crowd swelled to approximately 2,000. The mob broke into the building, set it on fire, and watched it burn. The crowd then posed for a photograph in front of the burned-out frame.

Destroying the black-owned newspaper office was only one event in the string of racist actions taken by white supremacists in 1898 in Wilmington, North Carolina. In the name of white supremacy, dozens of Wilmington's black residents (the precise number isn't known) were murdered and many successful black citizens and their white allies were banished from the town. "A new social order was born in the blood and flames, rooted in what the News and Observer's publisher, Josephus Daniels, heralded as 'permanent good government by the party of the White Man.'")

This string of events, which became known as the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898, the Wilmington Coup, and the Wilmington Insurrection, "was a crucial turning point in the history of North Carolina. It was also an event of national historical significance. Occurring just two years after the Supreme Court had sanctioned '**separate but equal**' segregation in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the riot signaled the embrace of an even more virulent racism, not merely in Wilmington, but across the United States." (Source: Tim Tyson, *The Ghosts of 1898*)

Exploring the Events of 1890s Wilmington, NC

3. Next, ask students how many of them have heard about the Wilmington coup before or know something about what occurred in the 1890s in Wilmington. Have students share what they already know and note the number of students with prior knowledge, as this number will be relevant later in the lesson.
 4. Before delving into a discussion of the details of the coup, teachers may also want to show the Vox video, [When White Supremacists Overthrew a Government](#), which runs 12 minutes. This provides a streamlined "teaser" of the events, after which the PPT and questions below can be used to delve deeper into the various aspects of this complicated history.
 5. Explain to students that they are going to be learning about 1898 Wilmington, and the causes and effects of this tumultuous time period, via a Power Point presentation and discussion. Let students know that studying this period of history can be difficult due to the overt racism that was at play, as well as the unjust and violent treatment of African Americans by much of the white community. Let students know that you trust them to handle the information with maturity and encourage students to ask questions throughout the presentation and discussion. Provide students with the attached response sheet to fill out throughout the Power Point discussion.
 6. It is important teachers use the PPT as a basis for discussion rather than lecture, and teachers are encouraged to edit the PPT based on their own teaching and learning goals. Example discussion questions to pose for various slides:
 - Slide 3:
 - Before we begin, take a few moments to examine this graph. What information does the graph provide?
 - What do you notice about the population of whites to blacks?
 - Based upon this population information, what inferences might we make about Wilmington's society during these years?
 - Slide 5:
 - Why do you think Wilmington was considered a symbol of "black hope?"
 - How do you think the roles of African Americans in Wilmington compared to other Southern towns?
 - Why are such accomplishments by African Americans (such as being shop owners and professionals) even more noteworthy during this particular time period? (*Review with students that Reconstruction after the Civil War had only ended a few years earlier, in 1877.*)
- An excellent on-ramp to examine some of the impact being made in mid-1900s Wilmington by Black leaders is the [Continuum of Change](#) exhibit, which is comprised of art that aims to highlight

some of the many Black Americans who helped usher in change in the Wilmington, N.C. area prior to 1898. As curator Michael S. Williams notes, “Though Wilmington in 1897 was not a bastion of equality, we do know that Black Americans like **Dr. Lucy Hughes Brown, John C. Dancy and Mary Washington Howe** were making an impact in the city in the mid-1890s. Conditions were unfavorable, but they persevered.” Visit the site to view the pieces of art, read about these resilient individuals, and watch videos of scholars, community members, artists, etc. discussing them.

- Slide 6:
 - How are the Republican and Democratic Parties of today different than they were in the 1890s?
 - Based on the descriptions of these three political parties in the 1890s, do any of the parties have anything in common?
 - Let’s assume an election was right around the corner - what might two of these three parties gain by fusing/merging into one party?
 - Which of these two parties would you think would be most likely to fuse and why?
- Slide 7:
 - Given what you know thus far about the Democratic Party during the 1890s, how do you think its members reacted to such changes?
- Slide 8:
 - Based on Daniel Schenck’s comment that the 1898 campaign would be “the meanest, vilest, dirtiest campaign since 1876,” what do you envision took place throughout 1898? What kind of tactics do you think the Democratic Party resulted to specifically?
 - Why do you think the Democratic Party was so passionate about winning the 1898 campaign?
- Slide 9:
 - What is propaganda? Can you think of any recent examples of propaganda that you have encountered?
 - In what ways do political campaigns and politicians today still utilize propaganda? Why is it so important to identify and understand propaganda strategies being used, both historically and in current events?
 - Is propaganda always a negative thing? Explain.
 - How would you characterize the type of propaganda utilized by the Democrats during the 1898 election?

Propaganda and Intimidation in 1898 Wilmington

6. Let students know they are going to be examining various pieces of propaganda from the 1898 election period on Slides 10-12. Project each slide (or copy and handout the images) and have students examine each one for a few silent moments. (Given the content of the images, it is recommended this is completed as a whole class activity, and not in partners or small groups.) After silent reflection, discuss each piece of propaganda with students:

- Slide 10:
 - What do you see? What do you first notice about this document?
 - Ask a student volunteer to read the text.
 - What is the purpose of this document? Who do you think created it and why?
 - How do you think this document affected the election and why?
 - Let students know that this is an actual handbill distributed by Democrats throughout Wilmington to intimidate the six leading white Republicans at the time. After Republican Postmaster William Chadbourn gave in to Democratic pressures the “6” was changed to a “5” in local newspapers.
 - Why do you think Chadbourn folded to the pressure?
- Slides 11 & 12:
 - What do you see? What do you notice first?
 - What text is being used in this political cartoon?
 - What symbols are being used?
 - What message is the artist trying to convey? What is his goal?

- In what ways might the cartoon have influenced voters?
- What about this cartoon is offensive to our modern day perspectives? How does our perspective compare to that of 1898 society?

7. Continue on with the remaining slides, using discussion questions such as:

- Slide 13:
 - How would you characterize the Red Shirts?
 - Are there other hate groups the Red Shirts remind you of? (i.e. KKK)
Why do you think such hate shows itself in groups of people in this way? (*Begin discussing the concept of mob mentality with students.*)
- Slide 14:
 - Why do you think fear is such an intense motivator in situations like this?
 - What do you think certain members of the white community were so afraid of?
- Slide 15:
 - How would you characterize Alex Manly and why? What do you think of his decision to fight back with his pen? Do you think he knew what the consequences would be? What do you think you would have done?
- Slide 16:
 - What was Waddell's goal in this speech?
 - What do you imagine the various responses could have been to this, such as from Black Republicans? White Republicans? White Democrats? What might the consequences be of such responses?
 - Predict what is going to happen on Election Day. What makes you think this?
- Slide 17:
 - Why do you think so many Democrats turned out at the polls?
 - What do you think the consequences were for those who illegally stuffed ballots? (*There weren't any consequences for them!*)
 - Do you think the peace will last? Why or why not?
- Slide 18:
Based on everything you have learned so far, how would you characterize Waddell?
- Slide 19:
 - Characterize the response of the Committee. Why do you think they responded in this way?
- Slides 20-21:
 - Who was there to stop this mob of 2,000 angry men? How do you imagine it would feel to be in Wilmington on this day if you were an African American or a white Republican?
 - Do you think the mob is going to stop here?

Create a Newscast from the Daily Record

- 8.** At this point, pause on slide 22 and as a way to have students reflect on what they've learned thus far, tell students to imagine that they are a television reporter standing in front of the Wilmington Daily Record's office as the white mob is being photographed. Tell students to prepare a 3-minute newscast live from the scene, recapping what has happened. The newscast must include at least six facts from the discussion and must be realistic to the actual history. Students should write out their script and should also be prepared to deliver their news report to classmates at the start of the next class. (Students can complete this for homework.)

9. Teacher Notes:

- Remind students that they should treat this with respect, as the incredibly serious story it is. The goal of their news report is not to be creative or humorous in any way.
- Teachers should also discuss what language is appropriate to use in their TV cast. For instance, while racial slurs would have been utilized in 1898, students should not make use of such language in their assignment.

- Teachers also should point out to students that in actuality, there of course would have been no TV reporter in Wilmington, since television had not been invented yet.

Day 2

10. Start class by having a few student volunteers present their newscasts to class. Correct any misinformation and use the information students share as conversation starters. Encourage students to consider not just the facts, but also the strategies, explicit white supremacist messaging, and emotions likely experienced in 1898 Wilmington. Also, if there are any differences between the stories or angles students take in their newscast, point this out as it will be relevant to the later/optional “Propaganda & Spin” activity.
11. Continue with the PPT and discussion, picking up with Slide 23.
 - Slide 23:
 - What do you imagine the atmosphere was like in Wilmington on this day?
 - What protection would you have? If you were harmed by the white mob, what recourse do you think you would have?
 - Slide 25:
 - How did Waddell manage to overthrow the local government?
 - Did the black citizens who were unfairly fired have any recourse? Why?
 - Slide 26:
 - Of all the unjust treatment we have learned African Americans experienced, which do you think would have been most difficult to deal with and why?
 - Slide 27:
 - What trend do you notice that occurred in Wilmington’s demographics?
 - What might this tell us regarding what was occurring in Wilmington at the time?
 - Slide 28:
 - The events in Wilmington have been referred to as a “riot,” an “insurrection,” and a “coup.” Looking over this four-pronged plan, which of these titles, if any, is appropriate? Meaning, given that the riot was only one part of a calculated campaign of white supremacy, what other title might better describe this period?
 - “For more than a century, most historians have obscured the triumph of white domination in 1898 by calling it a ‘race riot,’ though it was not the spontaneous outbreak of mob violence that the word ‘riot’ suggests...historian H. Leon Pranner calls it a ‘massacre and coup.’ What another scholar terms the ‘genocidal massacre’ in Wilmington was the climax of a carefully orchestrated campaign to end interracial cooperation and build a one-party state that would assure the power of North Carolina’s business elite.” (Tim Tyson)
 - Slide 29:
 - How did the events of 1898 affect the African American community in Wilmington? The Wilmington community at large?
 - What lingering effects do you think resulted?
 - Discuss additional impacts such as the loss of generational wealth (no reparation was ever given to Black businesses or leaders for this injustice); post-traumatic stress and racial trauma; deaths due to stress and/or exposure to the elements when hiding in the swamp; etc.
 - At the start of the lesson, I asked how many of you knew anything about the coup and most of you did not. Even though this is such a monumental aspect of our state’s history, why do you think it is largely hidden/not discussed?

Optional: Exploring Propaganda and Spin

12. Optional: Tell students that you want to focus on the media’s role in the 1898 events, which would have consisted of newspapers. Divide students into small groups and tell them that they are first going to do some practicing as a news reporter, specifically as groups of reporters representing the school newspaper. Write the following statement up front where all students can see it:

- As of next month, all snack machines are being removed from school premises.

Tell students that you want them to write a short blurb (paragraph) announcing this news in the school newspaper. However, they must write it from the perspective of a group that you assign to them. Hand out one of the following assignments to each group (group assignments can be repeated if you have a larger class):

- Group 1: School administrators who are tired of the snack machines getting knocked over and vandalized
- Group 2: Student health advocacy group called “Making Healthier Choices”
- Group 3: Student athletes, who raid the snack machines daily when starving after practice
- Group 4: 12th graders who can’t leave campus for lunch and despise the cafeteria food
- Group 5: Cheerleaders who have been advocating for low calorie and fat-free snacks to be put in the vending machines
- Group 6: The Booster Club, who has relied on the proceeds from the vending machine to fund athletics (i.e. new uniforms, improved football field, etc.)

13. Give students 5-10 minutes to compile their news blurb then have each group share their blurb with class. Discuss:

- In what ways did our blurbs differ?
- Even though we were all responding to the same topic, why did our blurbs differ? (*they were told from people with differing perspectives and agendas*)
- In what ways does this happen in the media today?

14. Explain to students that when newsworthy events occur, those involved (be it politicians, citizens, etc.) often utilize “spin,” which is a heavily biased portrayal in one's own favor of an event or situation. “Spin Doctors” provide their point of view or interpretation of an event in a way that is compatible with their own agenda in an effort to sway public opinion. While traditional public relations may also rely on creative presentation of the facts, “spin” often, though not always, implies disingenuous, deceptive and/or highly manipulative tactics. Politicians are often accused of spin by commentators and political opponents, when they produce a counter argument or position. Discuss:

- In what ways do you use spin in your own lives?
- How was spin and propaganda used to fuel the conflict of 1898? (*Review how Democrats used racist propaganda and spin to break up the Fusion Coalition; how Daniel Russell used the News and Observer to publish newspaper stories to spread fear and anger regarding black citizens; review Alex Waddell’s “White Declaration of Independence”*)
- For any given event, is there a single truth about what happened or does it always depend on who is telling the story and how they tell it? Explain.

15. Project (or handout copies of) [Slide 30](#), which is an image of the Wilmington Morning Star and discuss with students:

- What do you see here?
- According to this article’s headlines, what happened in 1898 Wilmington?
- What is the goal of this article?
- Does this article utilize propaganda or spin? Explain.

16. Project (or handout copies of) [Slide 31](#), containing an image of a New York Herald article and continue discussing:

- What do you see in this second image?
- How does this article compare and contrast with that of the Wilmington Morning Star’s?
- Why is there such a vast difference in these two articles?

- Which article do you think represents the “truth?” Why? In 1898, which article do you think citizens would have assumed was the “truth?” Why?

Remembering the Events of 1898 Today – Construct a Memorial

17. Hand out the attached excerpt from the News and Observer’s 2006 special feature on the Wilmington coup, “The Ghosts of 1898.” In small groups, instruct students to read the article then discuss and answer the questions provided. (If each group member is to write their responses down, they’ll need to do so on notebook paper.) Once students have discussed in small groups, come back together as a class so that students can share their thoughts as a whole.
18. Tell students to imagine that they work for an art and design firm, and that have been tasked with creating a memorial design for 1898 Wilmington with the following mission: to “tell the story” of 1898 and its legacy, “honor the memory” of those who were killed or suffered in 1898 (as well as those who have worked for racial progress since those times), “heal the wounds” by continuing to work for reconciliation, and “foster the hope” by envisioning an inclusive society.
19. Teachers should determine whether to have students complete this as an individual, partner, or small group assignment, then project/explain the following:

You work for an art firm that is hoping to construct a memorial commissioned on the 1898 Wilmington Coup. It is your job to come up with an idea for the memorial design and represent a small version of it to the 1898 Foundation, the group selecting the final installation. The memorial can be anything you choose, as long as it works towards the goals of:

- Telling the true story of the 1898 events and the role played by white supremacy
- Honoring the memory of those who were killed and those who suffered
- Healing wounds and working towards reconciliation
- Fostering hope by envisioning an inclusive society

Your memorial can be designed on paper; in 3-D form using clay, wire, cardboard; or in any creative way you see fit. Your memorial can be literal or abstract, but must connect to the 1898 Wilmington Coup in the ways listed above.

20. Let students know when their memorial is due in class, as well as how they will be presenting it. It is recommended that teachers reserve an open space, such as the library, where students can set up their various design concepts. Teachers can give students time to freely rotate among the memorials then hold a vote where the class assumes the role of the 1898 Foundation and picks which memorial receives the “bid.”
21. After students have completed and presented their work, let them know that an actual memorial for the 1898 coup was finally created and installed in Wilmington in 2008. Project images of the memorial (a web search will populate many options) and allow students to weigh in on what they believe the interpretation of the installation is. Explain: “Over a century later, six paddles stand tall to commemorate the lives lost in 1898. Each of the paddles reach sixteen feet high, and represent the religious belief among African cultures that those pass from the world of the living to the dead in water. The use of the paddles is designed to remember the African-Americans that lost their lives in the violence of 1898.” ([Source](#))
 - Additional details can be shared from the article, [1898 Memorial Unveiled](#).
 - Teachers may also want to share with students that additional commemorative events take place each year. For example, in 2021, a memorial service was held for Joshua Hasley, who was murdered in the coup, but never laid to rest as was the case with many victims. Neighbors and city leaders gathered at

Pine Forest Cemetery to give Halsey the funeral he didn't have, after his remains were identified from a soil sample in an unmarked grave. Details are available [here](#).

- 22.** In a closing discussion, allow students to process questions such as:
- We know the events of 1898 negatively impacted black progress, both in Wilmington and around the entire state. In what ways are these impacts still felt today? How do we account for and atone for the long-lasting legacy of white supremacy and racial violence?
 - What are the most effective ways to remember the events of 1898 and elevate the voices of those who experienced the violence of white supremacy and racism, as well as those who resisted and persevered to the best of their ability?
 - Why is it critical that we know, remember and commemorate this history, even though it is a painful stain on our nation's history?
- 23.** Close class with an exit ticket in which you ask students to respond in writing to what message is being conveyed in the following quote from [Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 & Its Legacy](#): "We look to Wilmington in 1898, as to all this nation's racial history, not to wring our hands in a fruitless nostalgia of pain, but to redeem a democratic promise rooted in the living ingredients of American life."

Name: _____

The Wilmington Coup of 1898 – Power Point Response Sheet

1. Why was Wilmington, NC considered a symbol of “black hope” at the end of the 19th century?
2. Complete the following chart with information about the political parties at play in 1898 Wilmington:

Democratic Party	Populist Party	Republican Party
	Fusion Coalition	

3. What tactics did white Democrats use to break the alliance of the black and white Fusion Coalition in efforts to win the 1898 campaign?
4. What role did the media and propaganda play in the 1898 coup?
5. How did Alex Manly’s editorial fuel the Democrats’ campaign of propaganda and white supremacy?
6. Characterize Alfred Waddell:

7. Who were the Red Shirts and what “scare tactics” did they use to affect the 1898 campaign?

8. What affect did Waddell’s “White Declaration of Independence” have?

9. Summarize the four-pronged plan that occurred in Wilmington, NC:

1 _____:

2 _____:

3 _____:

4 _____:

10. Summarize the aftermath of the events in Wilmington. Out of the various types of injustice the African American community experienced, what do you think would have been most difficult to deal with and why?

11. Why is it important to study this period of history today, even though it might be difficult to hear based on the racism, violence, and calculated cruelty that was at play?

The Wilmington Coup of 1898 – Power Point Response Sheet

ANSWER KEY

1. Why was Wilmington, NC considered a symbol of “black hope” at the end of the 19th century?

Answers can include: It was a strong religious community that supported charitable organizations, and promoted educational improvements for African Americans; African Americans from a wide range of backgrounds were able to manage their own businesses and buy homes throughout the city; African American entrepreneurs owned barbershops, restaurants, tailor shops, and drug stores. The city boasted numerous black professionals such as attorneys, and African Americans held positions as firemen and policemen. In greater numbers than in many other North Carolina towns, Wilmington’s African Americans participated in politics and held municipal and political positions. The black male literacy rate was higher than that of whites.

2. Complete the following chart with information about the political parties at play in 1898 Wilmington:

Democratic Party	Republican Party	Populist Party
<i>Originally the party supporting slave holding; developed into a coalition of wealthy, working class, and rural white members; controlled the NC state and local governments from 1876-1894; coalition began to break up after 1880s/depression</i>	<i>Originally emerged as the anti-slavery party in the mid-1850s, though was not officially organized in NC until 1867; platform consisted of free enterprise, racial toleration, and political equality for African Americans</i>	<i>The “People’s Party”; founded by working class and rural whites (predominately farmers) who left the Democratic Party;</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">Fusion Coalition</p> <p><i>As the economic depression deepened, white Populists joined with Black Republicans forming the “Fusion Coalition” from 1894-1896; championed local self-government, free public education, and electoral reforms that would give black men the same voting rights as whites; won every NC statewide office in 1894 and 1896 elections; elected Daniel Russell to be governor</i></p>		

3. What tactics did white Democrats use to break the alliance of the black and white Fusion Coalition in efforts to win the 1898 campaign?

Wilmington Democrats determined that a campaign of racism would appeal to Wilmington citizens; causing doubt and fear in white residents with white supremacist propaganda would ultimately shatter the fragile alliance between whites and blacks in the Fusion Coalition; Intimidation of white Republicans and African Americans throughout the campaign was channeled through groups such as the White Government Union and Red Shirt brigades, both developed and engineered by Simmons

4. What role did the media and propaganda play in the 1898 coup?

Newspaper stories and public speeches of white supremacists were used to create fear in white citizens of blacks; white society was cautioned of “black beasts” who would harm white women and white society if not stopped; with the support of the racist editor of the News and Observer, Josephus Daniels, who continually supported and printed such propaganda, white citizens were convinced that black equality would mean the end of their society as they knew it; Students may also mention the political cartoons discussed as part of the PPT

5. How did Alex Manly’s editorial fuel the Democrats campaign of propaganda and white supremacy?

He was outraged by a speech that supported the cruel act of lynching (black men were often lynched when accused of attempting a relationship with or making any type of comments to white women). Manly pointed out that white women may choose to be with a black man. This gave the Democrats support for their propaganda, and they begin to spread more hate and violence regarding Wilmington blacks.

6. Characterize Alfred Waddell:

He was a former Confederate soldier; passionate speaker; racist, white supremacist; spread hate and propaganda in fiery speeches that were aimed at turning white citizens against blacks, thus giving Democratic Party more power;

7. Who were the Red Shirts and what “scare tactics” did they use to affect the 1898 campaign?

Group of Democratic Party members who disrupted African-American church services and Republican meetings; patrolled streets before the election and intimidated black citizens from voting in the 1898 election

8. What affect did Waddell's "White Declaration of Independence" have?
Wilmington's Fusionists remained in office after the 1898 election, since they had not been up for reelection in this year; Waddell and the Democrats wanted them gone however, so he issued the "White Declaration of Independence" calling for the disenfranchisement of black voters; the day after the declaration, he lead the march of 2000 whites to destroy the Record; Red Shirts rode into black communities on horseback spreading violence against blacks; during the chaos, a coup d'état was staged forcing the Fusionist mayor, aldermen, and police chief to resign; they were banished from the city and replaced by Democrats such as Waddell, who became mayor
9. Summarize the four-pronged plan that occurred in Wilmington, NC:
 - *Steal the election. Under the banner of white supremacy, the Democratic Party used threats, intimidation, anti-black propaganda and stuffed ballot boxes to win the statewide elections on Nov. 8, 1898.*
 - *Riot. On Nov. 10, armed whites attacked blacks and their property.*
 - *Stage a coup. As the riot unfolded, white leaders forced the mayor, police chief and other local leaders to resign from their offices, placing themselves in charge.*
 - *Banish the opposition. After seizing power, whites removed opposition by banishing their most able and determined opponents, black and white.*
10. Summarize the aftermath of the events in Wilmington. Out of the various types of injustice the African American community experienced, what do you think would have been most difficult to deal with and why?
Answers will vary.
11. Why is it important to study this period of history today, even though it might be difficult to hear based on the racism, violence, and calculated cruelty that was at play?
Answers will vary.

Excerpt from “The Ghosts of 1898”, by Tim Tyson

Despite their importance, the events in Wilmington have remained largely a hidden chapter in our state’s history. It was only this year [2006] that North Carolina completed its official investigation of the violence. The report of the Wilmington Race Riot Commission concluded that the tragedy “marked a new epoch in the history of violent race relations in the United States.” It recommended payments to descendants of victims and advised media outlets...to tell the truth about 1898.

Even as we finally acknowledge the ghosts of 1898, long shadowed by ignorance and forgetfulness, some ask: Why dredge this up now, when we cannot change the past? But those who favor amnesia ignore how the past holds our future in its grip, especially when it remains unacknowledged. The new world walks forever in the footsteps of the old. The story of the Wilmington race riot abides at the core of North Carolina’s past.

And that story holds many lessons for us today. It reminds us that history does not just happen. It does not unfold naturally like the seasons or rise and fall like the tides. History is made by people, who bend and shape the present to create the future. The history of Wilmington teaches us that the ugly racial conflict that shaped North Carolina and the nation during much of the 20th century was not inevitable. So long as we remember that past, we might overcome its legacy.

...

When the violence ended, a war of memory persisted. Our politically correct public history, carved into marble on our university buildings and the statehouse lawn, exalts the men who overthrew an elected government in the name of white supremacy, including Charles B. Aycock and Josephus Daniels. No monument exists to the handful of visionaries who were able to imagine a better future, beyond the bounds of white supremacy. Nor do we remember those who gave their lives for simple justice. Instead, we mistake power for greatness and celebrate those responsible for our worst errors. The losers of 1898, though flawed themselves, have far more to teach us than the winners.

...

A new Fusion movement, one rooted in hope and generosity, and encompassing not only blacks and whites but new immigrants to the state, could still redeem the best dreams that have made us. We look to Wilmington in 1898, then, not to wring our hands in a fruitless nostalgia of pain, but to redeem a democratic purpose. And so we hold fast to what Charles Chesnutt, an African American from North Carolina and one of our great writers, called “the shining thread of hope,” which permitted him, over a century ago, to close his own story of the Wilmington catastrophe:

“There’s time enough, but not to spare.”

*Tim Tyson, “The Ghosts of 1898”
Special Feature, News and Observer, November 17,
2006*

Name: _____

Discussion Questions for “The Ghosts of 1898”

1. Tyson states of the 1898 events in Wilmington that “despite its importance, the coup has remained a hidden chapter in our state’s history.” Why do you think this is?
2. Tyson recounts the question that some people ask, “Why dredge this up now, when we cannot change the past?” What answer does he provide for why it is important to study the past, even as difficult as it may be?
3. In your opinion, why is it important to be aware of the 1898 Wilmington events? What can we still learn from this history in today’s world?
4. What message is Tyson trying to convey when he says that “history does not just happen?”
5. Tyson states “When the violence ended, a war of memory persisted.” What is he referring to in his description of a “war of memory?”
6. Many monuments exist across our state (from the names of college dorms to statues in downtown areas) of people who may have made contributions, but also often made bad choices. In your opinion, what should happen to such monuments and why? (i.e. should they be torn down, should they be amended with additional information, should other monuments be added, etc.)
7. Why do you think Tyson notes that the “losers” of history are flawed also? What does he mean when he says they have far more to teach us?
8. Tyson mentions the Wilmington Race Riot Commission, which was formed in 2000 to develop a historical record of the event and to assess the economic impact of the coup on African Americans locally and across the region and state. Why do you think this Commission was finally formed over 100 years later?
9. The Commission’s final report recommended that descendants of victims of the coup receive payments for the wrongs done to their ancestors (reparations.) Do you agree with this recommendation? Why or why not? What are other ways that those treated wrongly in 1898 can be honored today?
10. What does Tyson mean when he says that “We look to Wilmington in 1898, then, not to wring our hands in a fruitless nostalgia of pain, but to redeem a democratic purpose?”
11. When Tim Tyson calls for a new Fusion movement, what do you think he is encouraging? In what ways, in your everyday life, can you meet this call?