

Brown v. Board of Education (1954)

Museum Connection: Family and Community

Purpose: In this lesson students will examine some of the events that led to the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954). These events include the actions of many individuals who exercised their constitutional rights to petition the government through the legal process.

Course: United States History

Time Frame: 1 - 2 class periods

Correlation to State Standards:

United States History State Curriculum:

5.0 CONTENT STANDARD: HISTORY – Students will examine significant ideas, beliefs and themes; organize patterns and events; analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time in Maryland and the United States.

Expectation 5.4: Students will demonstrate understanding of the cultural, economic, political, social and technological developments from 1946-1968.

3. Analyze the major developments, controversies and consequences of the Civil Rights Movement between 1946-1968 (5.4.3).

Objective: Examine the battle for school desegregation, including *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) and the roles of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Thurgood Marshall (PS, G)

Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards Framework Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

CCR Anchor Standard #1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textural evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textural evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

RH.11-12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards Framework Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

CCR Anchor Standard #1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

WHST. 11-12.1 Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.

1b Develop claims(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

1e Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Objectives:

Students will identify the individuals who participated in the events that led to the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

Students will analyze the events that led to the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

Vocabulary and Concepts:

injunction	a court order requiring a person to do, or refrain from doing, a particular act.
plaintiff	in civil law, the party who brings a suit or some other legal action against another (the defendant) in court.
segregation	the separation of or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group from the rest of society.
unconstitutional	contrary to constitutional provision, and so illegal, null and void, and of no constitutional or legal force or effort.

Materials:

For the Teacher:

- Teacher Resource Sheet 1, “After *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)”
- Teacher Resource Sheet 2, “Answer Key”
- Teacher Resource Sheet 3, “Vocabulary Cards (cut apart before lesson)”
- Bulletin board materials (construction paper, stapler, etc.)

For the Students:

- Student Resource Sheet 1, “*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)”
- Student Resource Sheet 2, “*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) Guide Questions”
- Student Resource Sheet 3, “News Article about Linda Brown’s Complaint”
- Student Resource Sheet 4, “News Article about the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) Case”
- Student Resource Sheet 5, “News Article about NAACP Involvement in *Brown v. Board* (1954)”
- Student Resource Sheet 6, “Human Interest Story about Linda Brown”

Resources:

Publications:

- Christian, Charles M. *Black Saga: The African American Experience*. Washington, D.C.: Civitas/Counterpoint Publishing Company, 1999.
- Hine, Darlene, et al. *The African-American Odyssey*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 2000.

Williams, Juan. *Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary*. New York, NY: Random House, 1998.

“The Road to Brown” California Newsreel, 1990. (See website for ordering information, <<http://newsreel.org/films/roadtoobr.htm>>)

Documents the struggle for integration and the leadership of Charles Houston, Thurgood Marshall’s mentor. Includes the case of *Murray v. Maryland*.

Web Sites:

Brown v. Board of Education <<http://www.watson.org/~lisa/blackhistory/early-civilrights/brown.html>>

Find Law. <http://supreme.lp.findlaw.com/supreme_court/landmark2.html>

Historical Background:

The United States Supreme Court’s decision in 1896 in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, affirmed the “separate but equal” doctrine validating a practice that had been going on for decades. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), established in 1909 by an integrated group of activists, was vital in the fight to eliminate segregation, the separation of the races in all aspects of living (transportation, accommodations, education, etc.).

From *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) to *Brown v. Board of Education* (the 1954 case that reversed the “separate but equal” doctrine and led to the desegregation of America’s public schools), the road was far from easy. A battery of dedicated civil rights lawyers pursued almost every aspect of the law to identify a successful strategy to fight segregation and, for many years, dedicated scholars developed firm evidence of societal harm produced by the practice. In addition there were hundreds of brave men and women who offered themselves and their unique circumstances as test cases before the courts.

Among the *Brown* decision’s greatest champions was Charles Hamilton Houston, dean of the Howard University Law School, who taught many students at Howard to think in terms of “righting civil wrongs.” After training a cadre of lawyers who would dedicate their lives to civil rights, Houston left Howard University Law School to work for the NAACP. It was at the NAACP that Houston created a team of lawyers who would effectively use the legal system to overturn *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Houston's most famous student and protégé was Thurgood Marshall.

Marshall had worked with Houston on several research projects related to segregation in the South. He would eventually help Houston create the NAACP's Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc., better known as the Legal Defense Fund (LDF). The Legal Defense Fund staff soon included lawyers such as Constance Baker Motley and Jack Greenberg. The LDF strategy was to focus attention on the "separate but equal" doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). It was believed that many of the nation's citizens, particularly those outside the South, were eager to repair the damage wrought by centuries of bigotry and racial segregation. The strategy included an attack on the "separate but equal" doctrine as applied to public education. Houston and his colleagues believed that, if they demanded equal schools, the South would respond by integrating public schools because they would not have the necessary funds to establish and maintain black schools that were equal to white schools. It was assumed that black students in integrated

schools would gain the opportunities they needed for success in American society. The NAACP also decided to use the Fourteenth Amendment, a Civil War Amendment that guaranteed to citizens "the equal protection of the laws," as a basis for its arguments to end segregation. The members of the LDF--Houston, Marshall, Motley, Greenberg, etc.--believed that "by denying African Americans equal educational institutions the southern states would be in defiance of the U.S. Constitution."

The Road to *Brown*

In the 1930s, the NAACP led the fight to equalize salaries of black and white teachers. One case involved an Anne Arundel County (Maryland) principal, Walter Mills, who desired equal pay for all teachers, regardless of race. The NAACP was successful in this case. In 1938, the NAACP supported Lloyd Gaines, an African American student, who wanted to attend the University of Missouri Law School. After being denied admission, Gaines went to court. On appeal from a lower court decision, the Missouri Supreme Court ruled that Gaines could attend a neighboring state's law school at the expense of the University of Missouri Law School. On appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, the NAACP successfully argued Gaines' case; the justices ruled that the University of Missouri Law School had to accept him as a student. Gaines, however, never took advantage of the legal decision handed down on his behalf.

In another case involving the desegregation of public colleges, *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma* (1948), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the University of Oklahoma was obligated to provide a legal education for Ada Sipuel, using the Fourteenth Amendment as support. Another Oklahoma case involved *Maryland State Department of Education and Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture*

George McLaurin, a graduate student in his sixties who was admitted to the University but forced to sit in special seats where no one else sat. The Court found this “segregation” of a student to be unacceptable and unconstitutional

Many lesser-known state court cases argued by the NAACP are an integral part of the “road to *Brown*.” In fact, prior to the *Brown* decision, several school districts had complained of gross material inequities between black and white schools. Rigorous research verified racial inequality in schools separated by race. For example, schools attended by African American children in Clarendon County, South Carolina, were substantially inferior to those provided for white students.

Much of the credit for the NAACP’s convincing arguments before the nation’s courts was due to research by noted psychologist Kenneth Clark. Clark had

performed a series of tests with students that showed conclusively that segregation was a badge of inferiority and thus harmed the personalities of black school children. Presented with the statistics and results of Clark’s research and other expert testimony, the U.S. Supreme Court could not ignore the inequities and false claims of a segregated society.

Lesson Development:

Motivation:

1. Display **Teacher Resource Sheet 1**, After *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Ask:

- What do you see in this picture? (*classroom, mostly white students*)
- When do you think these pictures were taken? Why do you think that? (*a long time ago, 1940s or 1950s; clothing, hair styles, etc.*)
- What do you think is happening in this picture? (*confrontation, questioning a new student, etc.*)

Tell the students that they are going to read about a little girl who could be the African American girl in the picture. Return to this picture at the end of the lesson to revisit and discuss the initial responses of the students.

2. *Pre-reading strategy*--Distribute the pre-made vocabulary word cards to various students. Have students with a vocabulary word card read their word aloud. Students that have definitions should read their card if they think it is the correct definition. Display the words with the correct definitions.

3. Open link for **Student Resource Sheet 1a**, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and distribute **Student Resource Sheet 2a**, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) Guided Questions. For **Student Resource Sheet 1a**, select the content you would like for students to read and have them number the paragraphs before reading. (Note to teacher: You may wish to use **Student Resource Sheet 2b**, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) Questions with struggling readers. Answers are available on Teacher Resource Sheet 2.)
4. *Guided Practice*--Read the first paragraph and answer the first guided question by modeling a "Think Aloud."
5. Have students read the second paragraph of the story and answer the appropriate question with a partner. Discuss as a class.
6. *Independent Practice*--Have students read the remainder of the story and answer the questions independently.
7. As a class, discuss the guided questions and list important details of the story on the chalkboard or chart.

Assessment:

Divide students into groups of four. Each group will create a supplement to a newspaper covering the Brown decision. Each student will write a newspaper story covering one of the topics (the complaint, Supreme Court decision, NAACP actions, Linda Brown). Distribute one of each Student Resource Sheet to the groups:

- News article reporting any incident from the story:
 - Linda Brown's complaint
 - the Supreme Court case
 - the NAACP's actions
- Human interest story about Linda Brown

Have each group present their newspaper supplements to the class for discussion.

Closure:

Revisit **Teacher Resource Sheet 1**, After *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Discuss the students' initial responses and predictions and have students retell the "Brown" story based on the information gathered in this lesson.

Thoughtful Application:

Construct a bulletin board and post the stories with headlines, bylines, pictures, etc.

Schools did not immediately desegregate as a result of the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision. Eventually, all schools in the country did desegregate but many argue that schools in the urban centers did not achieve the same status as predominately white schools. Have students discuss the status of their current school or schools in the district. Attempt to reach a consensus as to whether or not the schools of today are truly desegregated and, if not, whether they are equal.

Lesson Extensions:

1. The Museum offers several school programs that connect to the curriculum lessons.
 - a. *Journey in History Theater* provides living history and theatrical performances which highlight African Americans in the museum's gallery.
 - b. Take the theme tour, *The fight for Justice* and examine the contributions made by Maryland African Americans in the battle for equality from Jim Crow through the Civil Rights Movement.
 - c. Contact group reservations for schedule updates.
2. Thurgood Marshall's role in winning the United States Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board* (1954) decision was preceded by an earlier victory in 1935. What were the circumstances and benefits of Marshall's defense of his client, Donald Murray? Look for the evidence in the Arts and Enlightenment gallery of the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture.
3. Construct a timeline listing the important dates leading to the *Brown* decision.

4. Pretend that the class is a major law firm. Have students prepare an argument to be presented to the U.S. Supreme Court. Students could assume various roles (fact finders, copy writers, orators). Present the final draft to another class or to an assembled group.
5. Visit the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture. Examine the schoolhouse exhibit and other exhibits on the Civil Rights Movement. Name methods or strategies that African Americans used to educate their children prior to *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.
6. Before *Brown v. Board of Education*, several legal cases were fought in court to desegregate schools on the graduate level. Research the legal case concerning Donald Murray versus University of Maryland's law school during the 1930's. Discuss how *Murray v. Maryland* impacted *Brown v. Board of education*.
7. Research the legal case of Ester McCready, and African American who desegregated the school of nursing program at the University of Maryland in the early 1950's.

Teacher Resource Sheet 1
After Brown v. Board of Education (1954)



The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The NY Public Library, Astor, Lenox & Tilden Foundations

“Attending a racially mixed class for the first time in their lives, two Virginia school girls exchange curious glances at a Fort Myer elementary school on September 8, 1954. The date, four months after the U.S. Supreme Court declared segregation unconstitutional, marked the beginning of integrated public schooling in Virginia.”

Maryland State Department of Education and Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture

Teacher Resource Sheet 2

Answer Key for Student Resource Sheet 2b

Paragraph 2	True
Paragraph 3	False
Paragraph 4	True
Paragraphs 5 & 6	False
Paragraph 7	True
Paragraph 8	False
Paragraph 9	True

Teacher Resource Sheet 3

Vocabulary Cards

Teacher directions: Prior to lesson, cut vocabulary word cards and definition cards apart for use in set 2 of the lesson.

Vocabulary Word: Detrimental	Definition: Causing damage or harm; injurious
Vocabulary Word: Fourteenth Amendment	Definition: An 1868 Constitutional Amendment declaring that all native-born or naturalized persons are citizens and have equal rights.
Vocabulary Word: Injunction	Definition: A court order requiring a person to do, or refrain from doing, a particular act.
Vocabulary Word: Plaintiff	Definition: In civil law, the party who brings a suit or some other legal action against another (the defendant) in court.
Vocabulary Word: Segregation	Definition: The separation of or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group from the rest of society.

<p>Vocabulary Word:</p> <p>Unanimous</p>	<p>Definition:</p> <p>Complete agreement</p>
<p>Vocabulary Word:</p> <p>Unconstitutional</p>	<p>Definition:</p> <p>Contrary to constitutional provision, and so illegal, null and void, and of no constitutional or legal force or effort.</p>

Student Resource Sheet 1a
Brown v. Board of Education (1954)

For Resource:

Click on link below

Under Table of Contents #3: Early Civil Rights Struggles
Click on #2: *Brown v. Board of Education*

<http://tinyurl.com/7svt63w>

Student Resource Sheet 2a

***Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) Guide Questions**

Answer these questions as you read the story.

Paragraph 1 How did the black schools compare to the white schools at this time?

Paragraph 2 Why was the NAACP of Topeka eager to help Linda Brown?

Paragraph 3 According to the NAACP, what message did segregation send to black children?

Paragraph 4 How did the Board of Education try to justify separate schools for black children in Kansas?

Paragraph 5 How did the District Court of Kansas rule in this case?

Paragraph 5 What happened on December 9, 1952?

Paragraph 7 Who read the decision that struck down the desegregation of schools?

Paragraph 9 What did this decision accomplish? What did not change?

Student Resource Sheet 2b
***Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) Questions**

Directions: Read the article on *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Determine if the following statements are true or false. Correct all false statements.

Paragraph 2 The NAACP of Topeka was eager to help Linda Brown because it thought segregation was wrong.

_____ True _____ False

Paragraph 3 Black children thought that they were special because they attended separate schools.

_____ True _____ False

Paragraph 4 The Board of Education justified separate schools for black children in Kansas because children would have to deal with being separated in their adult life.

_____ True _____ False

Paragraph 5 The District Court of Kansas ruled that segregation was unjust.

_____ True _____ False

Paragraph 5 On December 9, 1952, the Supreme Court first heard *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) but did not reach a decision.

_____ True _____ False

Paragraph 7 Justice Thurgood Marshall read the decision that struck down desegregation of schools.

_____ True _____ False

Paragraph 8 The decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) desegregated public schools but did not desegregate other public places.

_____ True _____ False

Student Resource Sheet 3

News Article about Linda Brown’s Complaint

**Write a newspaper article about Linda Brown’s complaint.
Make sure you include these details in the story:**

Who? _____

What? _____

Where? _____

When? _____

Why? _____

Student Resource Sheet 4

News Article about the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) Case

Write a newspaper article about the Supreme Court case.

Make sure you include these details in the story:

Who? _____

What? _____

Where? _____

When? _____

Why? _____

Student Resource Sheet 5

News Article about NAACP Involvement in *Brown v. Board* (1954)

**Write a newspaper article about the NAACP actions on this case.
Make sure you include these details in the story:**

Who? _____

What? _____

Where? _____

When? _____

Why? _____

Student Resource Sheet 6

Human Interest Story About Linda Brown

**Write a human interest story about Linda Brown.
Make sure you include all that you know about her from the story.**

Who was Linda Brown? _____

How old was Linda? _____

Who was her father? _____

Where did they live? _____

Why were they upset? _____

How was life different for Linda than for other children in the area?

Pretend that you have interviewed Linda. Include how she felt while this court case was going on.
