

Plessy v. Ferguson: An Individual's Response to Oppression

Segregation

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Grade Level	11th Grade	**Time Frame**	2-3 class period(s)
Subject	Social Studies	**Duration**	180 minutes
Course	U.S. History		

Essential Question

What are the responsibilities of an individual in regards to issues of civil rights?

Summary

Segregation was a pivotal issue in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Homer Plessy took a stand against segregation and the notion that separate but equal was legal. Upon reviewing and evaluating the Fourteenth Amendment, Jim Crow Laws, the Plessy v. Ferguson case, and other elements that lend to this era, students will examine and evaluate if "separate but equal" exists and the impact of Homer Plessy's role in the fight for civil rights.

Snapshot

Engage

Students will independently study, analyze, and question a photograph as an inquiry activity. They will formulate feedback about the photograph. Then, they will work in small groups to discuss and craft two critical questions per group that will be used throughout the lesson.

Explore

Students will work in small groups to investigate the Fourteenth Amendment, Jim Crow laws, images, and the Plessy v. Ferguson case. The goal is to become experts of their assigned topic as well as create takeaway (key point) posters to use as teaching tools.

Explain

Working in small groups, students will use their designed posters to formulate a takeaway (key point) presentation. Each group will present their learning in an engaging manner (via song, visual, short essay, poem, etc.). They will also engage other students in a question/answer session where they will be responsible for facilitating learning.

Extend

Students will reflect on learning and participate in small group and whole class discussions revisiting the thought-provoking questions established in the initial activity. The teacher will prompt students when

necessary and facilitate learning using discussion questions and activities.

Evaluate

Students will reflect on learning through the use of a Quick Write activity where they will select a question, answer the question, and defend it using notes and learning materials from the lesson.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: United States History (9th through 12th grade))

USH.1.2B: Examine the purposes and effects of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments.
USH.1.2C: Assess the impact of the Black Codes, Jim Crow laws,and the actions of the Ku Klux Klan.
USH.2.1F: Assess and summarize changing race relations as exemplified in the Plessy v. Ferguson case.

Attachments

- I Used to Think but Now I Know - Spanish.docx
- I Used to Think but Now I Know - Spanish.pdf
- I Used to Think but Now I Know.docx
- I Used to Think but Now I Know.pdf
- Image Deconstruction and Analysis - Spanish.docx
- Image Deconstruction and Analysis - Spanish.pdf
- Image Deconstruction and Analysis.docx
- Image Deconstruction and Analysis.pdf
- Plessy v Ferguson Reflection Quick Write - Spanish.docx
- Plessy v Ferguson Reflection Quick Write - Spanish.pdf
- Plessy v Ferguson Reflection Quick Write.docx
- Plessy v Ferguson Reflection Quick Write.pdf
- Separate but Equal - Spanish.docx
- Separate but Equal - Spanish.pdf
- Separate but Equal.docx
- Separate but Equal.pdf

Materials

- Large poster board or large piece of butcher paper - each group will need one
- Markers
- (Optional) Chrome Books or tablets
- Smart board/whiteboard
- Pencils and paper
- Hand outs, if technology is unavailable

60 minutes

Engage

Display Document 1, which depicts a man using segregated water fountains. Students will complete a Photo Deconstruction activity by independently studying, analyzing, and questioning the photograph using the "Image Deconstruction and Analysis" handout. The handout provides a space for students to write down their deconstruction of the photo while also directing them to look for certain items. For example, students will write down people, places, items, and placement in the photograph as well as their impression of the photograph as a whole. Next, students will write two statements and one question on the handout.

Then, in groups of three to four, have students discuss their responses on the handout with one another. You may ask groups to identify what similarities and differences they had, or you may ask students to discuss their overall impressions with one another.

Direct group members to work together to narrow down responses to only two questions, statements, and/or connections that were the most thought provoking to their group.

Have one student from each group write the two selected responses from their group collaboration on the whiteboard. To close the Engage activity, give students time to read and discuss questions posted by all groups. Student-selected responses will remain posted and will be revisited during the lesson.

Teacher's Note

During any form of group work in this lesson, the teacher must remain highly engaged with students in order to facilitate learning. Depending on the structure of your classroom, you may choose to let students gather themselves into small groups or you may choose to pair them. One easy way to pair students is to number them off. Put all ones in a group, all twos in a group, all threes in a group, and so on. The group work should take a maximum of 25 minutes.

60 minutes

Explore

For this section, students should be arranged in groups of four to five students. To group students, you can have them draw numbers or you can place them in groups at your discretion. Each group will be assigned one document (listed below) and will work to become experts of the material they are assigned and will facilitate a learning opportunity for the remaining groups.

On a large sheet of chart paper, each group will create a presentation of their assigned source. This presentation can be an advertisement, Twitter feed, political cartoon, political propaganda, poem, short essay, story, song, etc., that best represents a minimum of five key components of their learning. During the learning process, require each group member to identify five key pieces of information to contribute to the group discussion and project.

Teacher's Note - Groups

It is advisable to recommend jobs within the groups. Jobs could include researchers, reporters, communicators, graphic artists, etc. Since each group will have a different task, some jobs may not fit well, so add jobs as you see fit. Circulate around the room to encourage members to remain on task.

Teacher's Note - Technology

If students have access to technology, such as a Chromebook or iPad, they can use the links provided to access their assigned document/task in lieu of using paper handouts. If technology is not available, visit each document prior to the start of the lesson and print the documents out ahead of time. Creating a laminate class set may cut down on the number of copies required for the activity and allow for continued use from year to year.

Group 1: (Doc. 2 - link) Evaluate the Fourteenth Amendment, specifically paying close attention to verbiage regarding separate but equal. *Example: Students should identify the following words from section one of the Fourteenth Amendment as verbiage that relates to separate but equal, "nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."*

Group 2: (Doc 3 - link) Evaluate the court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Groups may want to analyze the decision through the majority as well as the dissent by Justice Harlan.

Group 3: (Doc. 4 - link and attachment) Read the context of the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* court case. Then, analyze the photographs in the attached document titled Separate but Equal, You Decide! If technology is available, students can visit the Library of Congress for additional images and photo information. Using the "Image Deconstruction and Analysis" handout may be helpful for this group.

Group 4: (Doc. 5 - link) Investigate the Jim Crow laws. Students may look for specific ways in which public facilities were segregated, or they may want to investigate the financial implications of Jim Crow segregation.

Group 5: (Doc. 6 - link) Explore the backstory of Homer Adolph Plessy. Students may look at why Homer Plessy was selected for the legal challenge and the implications for his participation in the case.

Group 6: (Doc. 7 - link) Investigate the passage of separate but equal laws in the South. Students may investigate the history behind the passage of segregation throughout the United States.

Group 7: (Doc. 8 - link) Explore the history of black codes during the Reconstruction period. Students may compare the passage of black codes in the North versus the Jim Crow laws in the South following Reconstruction.

60 minutes

Explain

Using the posters that were created in groups, students will develop a plan to present the topic they were assigned. Each group must communicate verbally the key learning points with the intention of teaching the remaining groups the key elements of their assigned topic. Each group will open the floor for questions, comments, and/or feedback but limit this to a few questions for time purposes.

Example Response

Group 1 evaluated the Fourteenth Amendment. A poster representing their learning was created. In this case, they composed a rap and wrote the lyrics on their poster. Now as a group, they will perform the rap, highlighting the key points of the Fourteenth Amendment to communicate their learning and to teach others about the amendment as well. After presenting, they asked for questions and feedback and led a short discussion about the Fourteenth Amendment. For an example of a rap, or takeaway project, view student work on the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments.

Each group member is responsible for a role in the presentation. He or she must teach one key component of learning from group work.

While each group is presenting, the audience members will be required to take notes independently. Before presentations begin, direct students to use a sheet of notebook paper to take notes over each group's presentation. Remind students that notes over the presentations will be submitted for a possible grade.

Teacher's Note

Set a standard for time requirements. It is advisable to limit the presentation to 5-7 minutes. If the conversation is of high quality and relevant, it would be important to allow for a time extension or ask students to write down questions or feedback to be revisited when and if time permits.

40 minutes

Extend

To begin the Extend portion of the lesson, have students turn to a partner and create a T-Chart labeled, I Used to Think But Now I Know (a template is located under Attachments).

On the chart, have students work with their partners to come up with three things they used to think and the new information they now know. When they have finished, have each group share one thing from their chart with the class. It would be helpful to set a timer for students working on their charts.

To reiterate the goal of this lesson, show this short PBS video (linked here or URL located under Resources).

Upon finishing the video, go back to the original questions and statements written on the board at the beginning of the lesson. Lead a class discussion over these questions.

Then, lead a class discussion using the following questions:

1. What was Plessy's intent and how was that intent changed, somehow, by the Supreme Court's interpretation of the law?
2. Can fairness be legislated by law? What is an individual's responsibility to fairness?
3. Did the Plessy decision allow people to discriminate more freely? What was the aftermath?

Teacher's Note

Give students time to formulate their ideas and learning. Let them discuss, when necessary, in groups or with a partner, but come back to a whole-group discussion so everyone can listen and contribute.

40 minutes

Evaluate

To evaluate learning, students will compose a Two-Minute Paper to reflect on learning and provide feedback. Notes from all learning activities may be used to defend answers.

Teacher's Note

A Two-Minute Paper is a type of a quick-write strategy. If you think some students would benefit more by having a few additional minutes, add them. However, the papers and the time to write them should still be limited. Tell students to write their response to one of the questions based on their learning during the lesson. Responses should thoroughly answer the prompt and defend the student's viewpoint with textual evidence. A minimum number of sentences is not required.

Students will be given choice by allowing them to select and respond to one of the following questions. **"Plessy v Ferguson Reflection Quick-Write" handout** with the six quick-write questions has been attached. Feel free to use the handout or to verbally pose the following questions for students to respond to.

1. What are the responsibilities of an individual regarding issues of civil rights?
2. Plessy intentionally sat in the wrong section of the train car, refusing to sit in the segregated car. He wanted to challenge the Jim Crow laws through legal proceedings under constitutional rights granted by the Fourteenth Amendment. The Supreme Court decided that separate but equal was constitutional as long as the facilities were equal. In your opinion, was this Homer Plessy's individual response to oppression?
3. Can we legislate true fairness? What do the results of Plessy v. Ferguson and its aftermath teach us about our own US history?
4. Was continued civil disobedience by African Americans the only recourse after the Plessy decision? Can you think of other issues where civil disobedience might be the only recourse?
5. What would happen to a modern society if Plessy v. Ferguson had not been overturned by later civil rights rulings, such as Brown v. Board of Education? Where would we be now?
6. Are the states who are requiring members of the people community to use the bathroom that is assigned to their biology a variation of the "Plessy" issue? Why or why not?

Teacher's Note - Evaluation

There are multiple ways to evaluate this lesson. A quick way to gauge participation would be to look over the notes that students took during presentations. For a formative assessment, teachers can grade the quick-write responses. In evaluating these papers, teachers should look for two items: stance and evidence.

Resources

- Barnes, R. (2011, June 5). Plessy and Ferguson: Descendants of a divisive Supreme Court decision unite. The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/plessy-and-ferguson-descendants-of-a-divisive-supreme-court-decision-unite/2011/06/02/AGji3hJH_story.html
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- History.Com. (2024, January 22). Jim Crow Laws. https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws
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- K20 Center. (n.d.). Photo or picture deconstruction. Instructional Strategy. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/140
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Two-Minute paper. Instructional Strategy. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/152
- Masur, K. (2011, December 7). Washington's black codes. The New York Times. http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/12/07/washingtons-black-codes/?_r=0
- National Archives. (n.d.). The Fourteenth Amendment: U.S. Const. Amend. XIV. http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=43&page=transcript
- PBS LearningMedia. (n.d.). Plessy vs. Ferguson [Video file]. http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/bf09.socst.us.const.plessy/plessy-v-ferguson/
- Timesmachine. (n.d.). The Jim Crow cars: Separation of white and colored railroad passengers. http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9A00E5DA1239E033A25755C1A9649D94619ED7CF