



SPHERE

Fostering Civil Discourse and Diverse Viewpoints for Every Classroom

Brown v. Board: How Does It Continue to Shape America?

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Learning Objectives

- Understand the historical context of *Brown v. Board of Education*.
- Examine the ongoing impact of *Brown v. Board* on education and society in the United States.



Essential Questions

- Why was *Brown v. Board of Education* a landmark case in US history?
- What role did *Brown v. Board* play in the broader context of the civil rights movement?
- What evidence exists of ongoing challenges related to educational inequality in the United States?
- In what ways can individuals and communities work toward achieving the principles of *Brown v. Board* today?

Media

- [Brown v. Board of Education Ruling; transcript](#)
- [Timeline of events leading to the Brown v. Board of Education decision](#)
- Chart paper, markers

Part I: *Brown v. Board*—History

BROWN V. BOARD IN IMAGES

The media the students will be talking about should be on display as the students walk in. This media should be easy to interpret but also have layers of meaning that encompass what rights were won and worth fighting for in terms of *Brown v. Board*. Examples: "The Problem We All Live With" by Norman Rockwell or any image that can be found when searching online for "Brown v. Board."

WARM-UP ACTIVITY

Journal prompt: What does this image mean to you? How does it relate to the civil rights movement? How does it relate to civil rights today?

CLASS ACTIVITY 1

Students need to know and understand what led to the *Brown v. Board* decision. You can do this any number of ways, but a living timeline shows students all that happened before the Civil War up until the decision in 1954. Look at the rulings that can be found at the National Archives ("Timeline of Events Leading to the *Brown v. Board of Education* Decision of 1954").

Give pairs and/or small groups of students a piece of chart paper, one of the events from the archive, and time to research the event.

- They can start with the information from the National Archives article, or you can have them do their own research with just the title of the event.

- Each pair or group needs to create a poster that shares information about their given event. This information should include the date really big at the top and then words, phrases, drawings, etc. that show what the event is and the significance of the event.

1857: *Dred Scott, Plaintiff in Error v. John F. A. Sanford*

1866: *Civil Rights Act of 1866*

1868: *Ratification of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution*

1875: *Civil Rights Act of 1875*

1896: *Plessy v. Ferguson*

1909: *Founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*

1935: *NAACP begins challenging segregation in graduate and secondary schools*

1938: *State of Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada*

1949: *Briggs v. Elliott*

1950: *Sweatt v. Painter*

1950: *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*

May 17, 1954: Supreme Court Rulings: *Bolling v. Sharpe*

Skip *Brown v. Board* as it will be discussed during the next class period.

- Students should share their poster information in chronological order and then post the posters on the wall for all to see.

Reflection: What do you notice about the events? What are the causes and effects? What is the timeline of the events?

CLOSING THE LESSON

These questions can be used at the end of class to bring the topics of today's lessons together:

- Who benefited from these events?
- Who benefits now?

Part II: *Brown v. Board*—Today

Review of *Brown v. Board*

WARM-UP ACTIVITY

Journal prompt: What is *Brown v. Board*, and how did it shape the United States?

Discuss the major components of what led to the decision. Have students make inferences about what the decision is and what it did for the United States based on the activities from the previous class period.

Please make sure that the posters from the previous class period are still up for the students to look at and read.

CLASS ACTIVITY 2

Have students read the *Brown v. Board* ruling transcript in pairs or small groups. Instead of dividing it up for them, let the groups decide how they will read the transcript. Give a copy of the transcript to each person to read and look over. Give each pair or group time to read and mark up the text. They should look at the transcript in terms of the following:

- what the decision did immediately;
- how it was challenged right after (see what they know about history);
- how it is being challenged now (inferences are good here);
- the most important parts of the decision; and
- the key takeaway (a quote with explanation).

Share with students the modern-day challenges to *Brown v. Board*. Look at the list below for videos, images, and articles that suit you, your classroom, and your district.

List of Sources	
Video clips	"America Divided: The Class Divide" (2016) "Reigniting the Promise of Brown v. Board: A New Era in Education Equity" (Education Trust, 2020) "Segregation in American Schools" (PBS NewsHour, 2019)
News articles	"60 Years after Brown v. Board, Where Are All the Black Teachers?" (The Atlantic, 2014) "The Resegregation of Jefferson County" (ProPublica, 2015) "The Shame of America's One-Room Schoolhouses" (New Yorker, 2018)
Online resources	The Civil Rights Project at the University of California, Los Angeles National Center for Education Statistics, School and District Search EdBuild Ted Talks YouTube Education channels Educational policy journals Think tanks



CLOSING THE LESSON

These questions can be used at the end of class to bring the topics of today's lessons together:

- Have the goals of *Brown v. Board* been fully realized?
- Why or why not?

Common Core State Standards

- **RH.11-12.1:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- **RH.11-12.2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source.
- **RH.11-12.7:** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media.
- **WHST.11-12.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
- **WHST.11-12.4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- **SL.11-12.1:** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions.
- **SL.11-12.2:** Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media to make informed decisions.
- **L.11-12.2:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
- **L.11-12.6:** Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.

Cross-Curricular Connections

INTEGRATION OF INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.8: Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources.

CRITICAL THINKING AND ANALYSIS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9: Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event.

RESEARCH SKILLS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects.