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Brown v. Board of Education

A FIGHT FOR SIMPLE JUSTICE

SUSAN GOLDMAN RUBIN

Guided Reading Level: Z+

Grade Level: HS

Interest Level: Grades 5 up

Instructional Strands in this Guide:

RI.5.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

L.3, 4, 5, 5b, 6

W.5.4, 7, 8, 9, 9b, 10

SL.5.1, 1a, 1c, 1d, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

RH.6-12.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10

L.6-12.1, 3, 4, 5

WHST.6-12.1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10

SL.6-12.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

“*Brown v. Board of Education* was one of the most important cases that this Court ever decided. It was really crucial in determining what it was that our Constitution means, and what our country stands for.”—Justice Sandra Day O’Connor

1. “Thurgood Marshall was America’s leading radical. He led a civil rights revolution in the twentieth century that forever changed the landscape of American society.” Write an explanatory text supporting this statement.
2. Create a time line of Thurgood Marshall’s life based on the information presented in *Brown v. Board of Education: A Fight for Simple Justice*.
3. When did Thurgood Marshall first discover his love of debate?
4. At what age did he know his purpose in life?
5. How was the use of psychology an “effective weapon for fighting segregation”?
6. List the five original cases involved in *Brown v. Board of Education* and explain how Susan Goldman Rubin uses reasons and evidence for each.
7. How did *Brown v. Board of Education* become five combined cases?



8. Describe the far-reaching impact of the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.
9. Explain how lawyers, doctors, professionals and other witnesses helped Thurgood Marshall prove that “separate but equal education” is unconstitutional.
10. Analyze the decision-making of the Supreme Court as it relates to *Brown*.
11. Define the separate and shared responsibilities of the judicial and executive branches of government.
12. Research and explain the policies and consequences of the
 - 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments
 - accomplishments and failures of Radical Reconstruction
 - rise of Jim Crow laws
 - Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)
13. Analyze the origins, goals and key events of the Civil Rights movement.
14. Compare core documents associated with the protection of individual rights, including the Bill of Rights and the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.
15. Is separate but equal attainable? Construct a persuasive argument.
16. Is separate but equal right?
17. The decision by community leaders and lawyers to use education as the main battleground for ending legal segregation is essential to the story of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Explain.
18. Identify and discuss the conditions and aspirations of freed African Americans in the years following the Civil War.
19. Evaluate the effect of segregation on people of color and on whites.
20. Identify the purpose and goals of education in American society, and explain why African Americans chose to challenge segregated education in their quest for equality.
21. Analyze the idea of Separate but Equal and its relevance within contemporary society.
22. Connect the idea of segregation to everyday contemporary life (ex. Imagine if some of your friends could learn only in certain classrooms or drink from a certain water fountain or eat at a certain table in the lunchroom).
23. What relevance do the following statements have in *Brown v. Board of Education*?

“In these days it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education . . . a right which must be made available to all on equal terms” (p. 114). *“To separate [black children] from others of similar age and qualifications because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone”* (p. 115).



24. What was most gratifying to Marshall about the decision?
25. After the Supreme Court ruling on May 17, 1954, what were some of the surprising effects of the decision, both positive and negative?
26. Where are the children of *Brown v. Board of Education* today?
27. What did Marshall mean when he said, “Integration hasn’t happened yet, that’s how slow ‘deliberate speed’ is” (p. 90).
28. Do you believe that segregation is spreading across the nation? Are we losing the dream?

Respond to the following facts. Use evidence from the text and other primary sources to support your answers.

- More than one third of states segregated their schools by law.
- *Brown v. Board of Education* started off as five cases.
- The lower court cases all ended in defeat.
- The plaintiffs took great personal risks to be part of the case.
- Thurgood Marshall argued the case for the plaintiffs.
- The U.S. government largely backed Marshall’s position.
- *Brown v. Board of Education* was a unanimous decision.
- The case had a sequel.
- The backlash to *Brown v. Board of Education* was widespread.
- U.S. schools today remain widely segregated.

Educator’s Guide prepared by Marla Conn, reading/literacy specialist and educational consultant



Photo Credit: Rich Schmitt

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Susan Goldman Rubin is the author of more than thirty-five books for children. Her *Freedom Summer: The 1964 Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* was an ALA Notable Book, a *Booklist* Editors’ Choice and a Golden Kite Honor Award recipient. She lives in Southern California.

