



Teaching Guide

SEGMENT 7, WEBISODE 13

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



Segment Overview

While the 1950s were marked by prosperity and pop culture, the decade had its dark side as well. Prejudice against black Americans was alive and well in the United States. Blacks could not eat in white restaurants or stay in white hotels. In many places, especially in the South, bathrooms and drinking fountains were segregated. Black Americans were outraged. If they were equal citizens under the law, how could they be prevented from taking a sip from a water fountain? Why were black baseball players not permitted to stay at the same hotels as their white teammates?

The answers to these questions trace back to a seminal Supreme Court opinion issued in 1892, *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Homer Plessy, a thirty-year-old shoemaker, was a mix of “seven-eighths white and one-eighths black.” On a trip on the East Louisiana Railroad, Plessy was told to sit in the “colored” car. He protested in a suit that made it all the way to the Supreme Court. The case was based on interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment, which gives all United States citizens “equal rights and protections” under the law and makes those rights apply to all states. Unfortunately, the court set the separate but equal precedent that would have an impact for over eighty years.

Teacher Directions

1. Explain the following information to the students.

In order to completely grasp the impact of the Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, students must understand the importance of the Fourteenth Amendment. The amendment passed in 1868 shortly after the end of the Civil War, gave former slaves the rights of full citizens of the United States. This amendment required all states to support and extend rights and privileges to all citizens without exception. That provision meant that no state could claim states’ rights and pass laws that directly countered the laws of the nation. Specifically, the Fourteenth Amendment prohibited individual states from denying any citizen his or her fundamental rights, and, further, it extended the right of due process in legal matters.

2. Display the Transparency: *The Fourteenth Amendment*.

Note to the Teacher: Only Section 1 of the amendment is quoted.

3. Guide the students through the language and meaning of particular phrases, such as the following.



Let's Discuss

Let's Discuss, Cont.

- “born or naturalized citizens” — What is the difference between the two? What must people do to become naturalized citizens?
 - “No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges of citizens”
4. Discuss the meaning of abridging privileges. What privileges had been denied to people who lived in slavery?
 - “...nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without the due process of the law.” Help students understand that due process means that everyone is presumed innocent until proven guilty; hence everyone has a right to a fair trial. People of any race or ethnic group cannot be treated differently under the law.
 5. Conclude this discussion by stressing the importance of the Fourteenth Amendment. Ask students how this amendment affects their own lives or those of their parents and relatives.

Teacher Directions

1. Students use the Student Sheet: *1950s Scavenger Hunt* to search the library and the Internet, if available.

Note to the Teacher: Tell students that to earn credit for their answers they must cite their sources – websites, books, authors, page numbers, issues. Students should acquire the habit of citing sources early on, thus reducing future issues and problems relating to plagiarism.

The purpose of this exercise is twofold. Students focus on the Nifty Fifties, yet the questions and answers reveal that the Nifty Fifties were not always so nifty for all citizens.

2. Once students have completed this exercise, the class comes together in a circle and discusses each answer or response. At times, interrupt the discussion to ask for sources.

Teacher Directions

1. Students discuss how they would feel if because of their race they were not allowed to eat at certain restaurants. Take a drink at a fountain. Use a restroom. Rent a hotel room.
2. Randomly distribute slips of paper to a number of students. Explain that the students with the slips of paper have suddenly been denied access to certain restaurants, water fountains, restrooms, and hotels. Ask the students how they feel about discrimination based on having a certain slip of paper.



History Sleuth



What do you Think?

3. Re-assemble the class and discuss not only how discrimination works, but also the effects of discrimination on self-image, self-confidence, and human emotions.

Teacher Directions

1. Students read the Student Sheet: *A Modest Complaint*.
2. After reading this document, students spend ten minutes freewriting about their contributions to a Student Bill of Rights.
3. Working in small teams, students create a list of ten rights for students across the United States. Stress that students should not complain about personal or local school-related issues. Encourage students to write about the needs and pressures of contemporary education. The primary focus of this assignment is for students to identify what all students have the right to learn in an environment that fosters such learning.
4. Students share responses with the entire class and select the ten best statements. Post the results in the classroom as a teaching tool and a reminder that the students themselves created the rights.
5. Promote a discussion about what the students think needs to be done to improve education today for all students. Through this activity help the students understand the importance, seriousness, and consequences of discrimination in education or unequal access to a quality education.

Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

Language Arts — Students write a memoir of a time during elementary school when they experienced being excluded from a group. Examples might be failing to make a sports team; not being included in a social group; not being invited to a party. Generate ideas from the class before writing begins.

Library/Internet/Language Arts — Students research one of the following groups, individuals, or events.

Ray Kroc
Dr. Jonas Salk
Elvis Presley
Chubby Checkers
The Kingston Trio
The Hula Hoop



Connections, Cont.

Dwight D. Eisenhower
Nikita Khrushchev
Sugar Ray Robinson
Alaskan Statehood
Hawaiian Statehood
Charles Yeager
Bing Crosby
Bob Hope

Music — Students listen to Elvis Presley recordings. Discuss what it was about Presley's persona that made him so popular. What made Presley so controversial? What other now famous musicians or rock groups became popular during the fifties? Choose several to listen to in class. Discuss the mood, tone, and messages of the music.

Music/Dance — Students listen to a Chubby Checker recording of "The Twist." Students try dancing the Twist in class.

Art — Students draw a large circle (as large as will fill a page). They draw a straight line, or even an X in the circle. The goal is to have the diagram look like a contemporary sign that symbolizes "No Dogs Allowed" or "No Smoking." Inside the circle, students draw items that did not exist in the 1950s. Before students begin, brainstorm as a class what some of those items might be.

The Fourteenth Amendment



All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law.



Nifty Fifties Scavenger Hunt

You will be given several days to complete this assignment. Even if you share answers, you will still learn something! Nevertheless, try to discover the answers on your own by going to the library, using the Internet, asking your family and neighbors—and grandparents! Have fun!

1. Who was the president of the United States in 1956?
2. Who was the president of the United States in 1950?
3. Who was General Douglas MacArthur? What did he do in the 1950s?
4. Who was Ralph J. Bunche?
5. The minimum wage in 1950 was \$.75 an hour. What is the minimum wage today? How much would you make per hour today if you worked for McDonald's?
6. Who was Ben Hogan? Name his sport!
7. The Twenty Second Amendment was adopted in 1951. What was the purpose of the Twenty Second Amendment? Why is that important today?
8. Who was Adlai Stevenson?
9. Who were Julius and Ethel Rosenberg?
10. Who was Rocky Marciano?
11. What was a hula hoop?
12. Who was/is Sam Snead?
13. Who was/is Little Richard?
14. What were some television programs in the late 1950s?
15. Could you purchase a PC computer in the 1950s? Why or why not?
16. What kinds of cars were popular during the 1950s? Where were the gearshifts? Did all cars have air conditioning?
17. Who was Alfred Hitchcock?
18. Who was Ernest Hemingway?
19. Did Coca Cola exist in the 1950s?
20. Who became president after Eisenhower?

A Modest Complaint

Dear Students,

I am a teacher. I love teaching. I love seeing each one of you when you come into my classroom each day. But sometimes I worry about you. I want you to grow up strong and well educated so that you can have happy lives and successful careers. Yet, many of you do not see that a good education can help you have happy lives in the future. Some of you think that doing homework is silly and a waste of time. You would rather watch television. Some of you miss too much school. You would rather sleep in or play with friends. Some of you already have been introduced to drugs and other bad things that keep you from learning what you need to know to have a good life. On the other hand, some of you work very, very hard despite major family or personal problems. I know that many of your lives are not easy, yet you still come to school and get your homework done.



There are many well-known American citizens who grew up under difficult conditions. Read about people like Thurgood Marshall, the Supreme Court Justice, or Lou Gehrig, the baseball player, or Clare Booth Luce, a United States Senator. All of them grew up recognizing that they had a right to a good education. Each of them overcame problems in childhood.

Your teacher soon will be asking you to work in class teams to create ten statements forming a Student's Bill of Rights. Before you begin writing, think about the following.

Focus your Bill of Rights on your own rights to gain a quality education in the United States. Think more about the rights of all American children and students and less about your own personal rights. You may want to write that students should not have to do homework. Think about that statement. Although not doing homework may be your personal preference, will a no-homework rule help all children receive an education? Your class Bill of Rights statement should identify the basic rights that will ensure a quality education for all students.

Do a good job on this assignment! I will be proud of you!

Sincerely,
A Teacher and a Friend