

## **The Journey to Equality: From Freed Slaves to Full Citizenship**

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### **Overview**

This unit is intended to supplement the eighth grade U.S. History curriculum. *The Journey to Equality: From Freed Slaves to Full Citizenship* explores in further depth the struggle of newly freed slaves after the Civil War. Students will begin by defining equality and what was intended by the statement “All men are created equal.” They will compare the rights of slaves, newly freed slaves and white property owners immediately before and after the Civil War. The unit will also investigate the laws that were created and enforced to keep the races separate or segregated. Students will create a timeline of events to show the progression of rights for African Americans. The unit will culminate with a Dr. Seuss book, “The Sneetches” in which students will correlate current society’s population to that of the children’s book.

### **Rationale**

The unit I intended to create will enhance the eighth grade U.S. History curriculum. This curriculum begins with the formation of the American Colonies and the disputes that led to the American Revolution and eventually the writing of the United States Constitution. During this period in our history is the first contradiction in terms. While the Declaration of Independence declares that “all men are created equal,” the Constitution goes on to define slaves as three-fifths of a person. In addition, women of all races were completely left out of the document, leaving the statement “all men are created equal” to be null and void in the United States.

As the curriculum continues its study of the development of our free nation, the issue of slavery becomes a central conflict among the northern and southern

states. From the Underground Railroad to Abolitionists, there is a growing movement to end the practice of slavery and amend the constitution to declare it illegal. This movement eventually leads to the secession of southern states from the union and the ensuing Civil War between the north and the south.

The plight of slaves is overshadowed in the curriculum by the impact of a war in which Americans fought Americans. From February 9, 1861 when the Confederate States of America are formed with Jefferson Davis as president to May 1865, when Confederate forces surrender, the focus is on the key battles of the war and the casualties suffered by both sides. In the end, over 620,000 Americans died in the war, with disease killing twice as many as those lost in battle. Fifty thousand survivors return home as amputees. Yet the battle for freed slaves is just beginning.

With no education, money or even a place to live, the emancipation of slaves was only the beginning of the long struggle ahead for African Americans in this country.

Although the recognition that slavery was immoral is an important factor in our nation's development, the prejudice and hatred toward African Americans remained fully intact for many years to come. The development of the Freedmen's Bureau by the government to ease the transition of former slaves into free society did not combat the injustices and lack of legal protections for African American citizens. Acts of violence and the uprising of terror groups like the Ku Klux Klan, ran unchecked and unchallenged in the south for many years. Although slavery had ended, the suffering had not! African Americans were treated as second class citizens at best. With no right to vote, no protection from law enforcement and no voice in government, they were forced to remain in a society where they could be mistreated, assaulted or even murdered without impunity. Nearly 4,500 African Americans were lynched in the United States between 1882 and the early 1950s. In fact, many states acted to further limit the rights of African Americans, including their ability to integrate into even the most basic aspects. Segregation limited their access to buses, trains, restaurants, schools and even water fountains. The message in the south was clear. African Americans were not going to be accepted as equal citizens. Through the development of Jim Crow Laws, whites were able to ensure the enforcement of their hatred and bigotry of the African American race. The justice system became as unequal and biased as the society it represented, leaving African Americans no hope of retribution or protection. All white juries would never indict nor convict white defendants accused of crimes against people of color. However, African American defendants had no chance of a fair trial if accused of crimes against whites.

The education of African American students was another indulgence in inequality. These children were not afforded up to date materials, facilities or even transportation. Although the Supreme Court upheld “separate but equal” in the original “Plessy vs, Ferguson” case, the one lone dissenter, who argued in favor of Plessy's case, and seemed to be the only one with a real understanding of equality, wrote his own speech regarding the case and its decision. Justice John Harlan wrote:

“Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law...In my opinion, the judgment this day rendered will, in time, prove to be quite as pernicious as the decision made by this tribunal in the Dred Scott case...The present decision, it may well be apprehended, will not only stimulate aggressions, more or less brutal and irritating, upon the admitted rights of colored citizens, but will encourage the belief that it is possible, by means of state enactments, to adopt the recent amendments of the Constitution.”

Justice Harlan's words proved to be prophetic. It was not until the case of Brown vs. Board of Education in 1954 that "separate but equal" would no longer be the law of the land.

In 1952, the Supreme Court was approached by four states and the District of Columbia, challenging the constitutionality of the segregation of races in the public schools. They wanted desegregation in the public school system, because the current segregation was not equal and it violated their freedoms as citizens of the United States of America.

Linda Brown was a black girl attending fifth grade at the public schools in Topeka, Kansas. She was denied admission into a white elementary school. The NAACP took up her case, along with similar ones in Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware. All five cases were argued together in December, 1952 by Thurgood Marshall, a black lawyer who headed the NAACP. The entire nation was on its tiptoes waiting for the courts decision.

However, the decision did not come that quickly. For two more years the case was argued and reargued. The court's decision was finally handed down on May 17, 1954. Chief Justice Warren delivered the opinion of the Court:

“We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason

of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.”

The conclusion reached by the Supreme Court was due in large part to their findings that segregation of white and African American children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the minority children. Chief Justice Warren included the following statement in his opinion from the court:

“The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law, for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of Negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system.”

The Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision did not abolish segregation in other public areas, such as restaurants and restrooms, nor did it require desegregation of public schools by a specific time. It did, however, declare the permissive or mandatory segregation that existed in 21 states unconstitutional. It was a giant step towards complete desegregation of public schools. Even partial desegregation of these schools, however, was still very far away.

Some areas embraced integration after the *Brown* decision, while others submitted only after further prodding from the courts. School administrators quickly realized that they faced many problems, such as increased violence and increased disparity in the abilities of students in the same classroom. Also, because of de facto segregation, many Northern school districts had to resort to busing as a means to achieving integration, which resulted in heightened racial tensions. Yet despite its problems, integration of the public schools of America was an important step towards equality among all the races.

One of the most famous cases involved Little Rock's Central High School, where Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus joined local whites in resisting integration by dispatching the Arkansas National Guard to block the nine black students from entering the school on September 3, 1957. President Dwight Eisenhower responded by sending federal troops to protect the students. The crisis in Little Rock showed America that the president could and would enforce court orders with federal troops. When eight of the nine black students successfully completed the school year, they showed America that black students could and would endure the intense hatred that racist white students could dump on them. Through the battles of desegregation in schools, the civil rights movement grew

and called for the end of all segregation. In the early days, litigation and lobbying were the focus of integration efforts, but the *Brown* decision led to a shift in tactics. From 1955 to 1965, "direct action" was the strategy--primarily bus boycotts, sit-ins, freedom rides, and social movements.

While some groups and individuals within the civil rights movement advocated Black Power, black separatism, or even armed resistance, the majority of participants remained committed to the principles of nonviolence – a decision by an oppressed minority to abstain from violence for political gain. The commitment to nonviolence gave the civil rights movement great moral authority. Using nonviolent strategies, civil rights activists took advantage of emerging national network-news reporting, especially television, to capture national attention and the attention of Congress and the White House.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which required equal access to public places and outlawed discrimination in employment, was a major victory of the freedom struggle, but the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was its major achievement. The 1965 Act suspended literacy tests and other voter tests and authorized federal supervision of voter registration in states and individual voting districts where such tests were being used. African Americans who had been barred from registering to vote finally had an alternative to the courts. If voting discrimination occurred, the 1965 Act authorized the attorney general to send federal examiners to replace local registrars.

The Act had an immediate impact. Within months of its passage on August 6, 1965, one quarter of a million new black voters had been registered, one third by federal examiners. Within four years, voter registration in the South had more than doubled.

The enormous gains of the civil rights movement stand as a model to future minority groups. Unfortunately, the full effect of these gains is yet to be felt. "Equal rights" struggles now involve multiple races, as well as the issues of rights based upon gender and sexual orientation. Racism has lost its legal, political, and social standing, but the legacy of racism: poverty, ignorance, and disease, confront us. "They are our enemies, not our fellow man, not our neighbor," said President Johnson at the end of his voting rights speech. "And these enemies too--poverty, disease, and ignorance--we shall overcome."

## **Objectives**

- 1** Students will be able to define “equality” used in the Declaration of Independence
- 2** Students will be able to describe rights not afforded slaves
- 3** Students will be able to write a brief response to discrimination issues in current society
- 4** Students will be able to create a timeline of significant events in the civil rights movement
- 5** Students will be able to identify key supreme court decisions in the civil rights movement
- 6** Students will be able to explain the origins of the term Jim Crow
- 7** Students will be able to give examples of Jim Crow Laws
- 8** Students will be able to define segregation and integration
- 9** Students will be able to describe the components of the Equal Rights Act of 1964
- 10** Students will be able to create an acrostic poem
- 11** Students will be able to determine the underlying meaning of picture or painting

## **Strategies**

Students will write in journals and respond to quotes from key figures in the civil rights movement. They will respond to comprehension questions about the quotes and apply them to current trends in society.

Students will research Jim Crow Laws enacted during segregation and give an oral presentation about their findings. They will apply visuals to the presentation and develop internet skills by utilizing search engines to gain information for their presentations.

Students will observe videos, pictures and paintings with the aim of answering specific questions. They will participate in class discussions and share personal opinions to demonstrate a sense of understanding of the material presented.

Students will create a timeline of events and develop research skills by identifying key events in the civil rights movement by date. They will produce their timeline utilizing computer software, such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Publisher, WordPad, etc.

## **Classroom Activities**

### **Day One:**

In order to discuss equality, you must first define it and set some parameters. The Declaration of Independence states that “all men are created equal,” so the first activity is to define “equal” as it is used in this document.

In special education, it’s sometimes easier to begin with what something does not mean, rather than what it does. So, to begin this lesson, I would ask students to brainstorm on a piece of paper how people are not equal (height, weight, money, housing, jobs, etc.). This could be done with a partner or in small groups. After 3-5 minutes, discuss some of the obvious differences between people as a class.

Next, I would ask them to brainstorm some things that are supposed to be equal for everyone. It might help them to frame this as things we all have to abide by or have the right to do (laws, voting, protection by police and fire departments, access to courts, etc.). Once you discuss their lists, you will most likely need to introduce some of the facets of our society that are intended for everyone, as listed above.

As a wrap-up to the group discussion, I would use the overhead or chart paper to make a T-chart listing what is equal and what is not equal according to the group discussion.

Finally, the group is ready to actually define “equal” or “equality.” The American Heritage Dictionary (Student Edition) defines equal as “Being the same for all members of a group, even.” This definition fits well with the class discussion and background knowledge of the Declaration of Independence. Furthermore, they define equality as “The condition of being equal, especially the condition of enjoying equal rights.” These two definitions will narrow the scope of what we are talking about in the phrase “All men are created equal.”

In closing the activity for the first day, I would ask students to write a journal entry (1 paragraph or more) for the topic, “Do you believe that our country treats everyone equally today? If not, what group or groups do you think are mistreated?” It’s important to note that journal entries are used in my class to express ideas and opinions. I do not grade them for grammar or spelling mistakes and always give feedback to what they have written. It might be as simple as “I agree,” but often I write follow-up questions to clarify what students mean or offer suggestions they did not consider. My students value this communication from me since it is personal and meant only for them. Anytime I give back journals, they quickly turn to the last entry to read what I have written to them. If

I have asked them a question, they quickly respond and hand it back to me. Journals are not viewed as “writing assignments” in my classroom.

### **Day Two:**

Also, in my classes, I use warm-up activities to review the concept from the day before. Generally, they are very brief (3-5 minutes) and we discuss them shortly after the late bell rings. I have everyone complete it in a composition book and check to see that it is done each day. Otherwise, most students would skip the activity.

As a quick review of our discussion on equal/equality, I would put the following quote on the overhead from Thomas Jefferson:

*“The mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few bootied and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God.”*

Under this quote, I would ask the following questions:

1. What two things are being compared in this quote? (horse, rider)
2. If you had to choose between the two, who would you rather be? Why?

Once we discuss their answers, we’re ready to discuss which groups Jefferson was referring too (slaves-as horses, slave owners-as riders).

Slaves were not seen as “equal” or having “equality” as we defined it in class on day one. They were not considered as part of the group of “All Men.”

Our 8<sup>th</sup> grade American History curriculum covers the period of time from the Declaration of Independence through the Civil War, so my students would be able to identify that slaves or African Americans were not part of the group. We discussed this earlier in the school year when we covered the development of the Constitution and the “Three-Fifth’s Compromise.” This essentially declared that slaves only counted as three-fifths of a person when assembling the United States Congress and how many representatives each state would be awarded. It did not provide any rights whatsoever to slaves.

Once we review the status of slaves prior to the Civil War, I would have students complete a Venn Diagram comparing rights of whites to slaves. This is a review activity, but having them work in small groups or with a partner will increase the discussion. After 3-5 minutes, complete a group Venn Diagram on

the overhead or chart paper through a class discussion. They should have identified that whites had more rights (vote, own property, own slaves, travel freely, education, practice religion, protection of property, marriage, etc.). Conversely, slaves had no rights that were not shared by whites. The only common rights (somewhat) the two groups shared were the right to practice religion and the right to marry (if agreed upon by both slave owners). This visual will demonstrate that whites clearly had more rights than slaves.

Now that we have covered the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation (freed the slaves) in American History, discuss what the Venn Diagram should look like for whites and freed slaves (all rights would be in the shared section of the diagram). Again, I would create this new diagram on the overhead or chart paper for everyone to see. Most of my students in the past have believed that once the slaves were freed their lives were the same as whites. It's important to demonstrate that this was not actually the case.

In order to do this, have them complete a short timeline activity. They may use internet search engines for the dates or reference materials from the library (all my students would choose the internet). On the timeline they need to include the following:

13<sup>th</sup> Amendment ratified  
14<sup>th</sup> Amendment ratified  
15<sup>th</sup> Amendment ratified  
Civil Rights Act  
Development of Freedmen's Bureau  
Start of the Ku Klux Klan  
Enforcement Acts  
Plessy vs. Ferguson

This timeline would be collected and graded. Anyone who could not finish in class would need to complete it for homework.

### **Day Three**

Today's warm-up will address the timeline from yesterday as math word problems (yes, we do math in social studies).

1. A male slave who was set free by the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 was not allowed to vote until 1870. However, it was 3 more years before he actually voted for the first time. How many years passed before the freed slave was allowed to vote? Show all work. ( $1870-1863+3=10$  years)

2. The Freedmen's Bureau helped to establish Howard University in 1867. That university still exists today. How old is Howard University? Show all work.  $2005-1867=138$  years old

Once we review the answers to the warm-up we will discuss the timeline that was created yesterday. Using an overhead of the timeline activity, I would put them in order and briefly discuss each one.

**1865 – 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment** – Abolished Slavery (made it illegal to own slaves or force people into servitude)

**1865 – Freedmen's Bureau** – The bureau's chief focus was to provide food, medical care, help with resettlement, administer justice, manage abandoned and confiscated property, regulate labor and its most notable task, and establish schools. Over 1,000 schools were built, teacher-training institutions were created, and several black colleges were founded and some were financed with the help of the Freedmen's Bureau.

**1866 – Ku Klux Klan** - Originally a social fraternity, was organized in Pulaski, Tennessee. In 1867, General Nathan Bedford Forrest, the Grand Wizard of the Empire, converted the Klan into a paramilitary force that served to directly oppose the formation of Republican governments set up by Congressional Reconstruction acts.

**1868 – 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment** – Equal Protection Under the Law (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 laws).

**1870 – Enforcement Acts** - criminal codes that protected blacks' right to vote, hold office, serve on juries, and receive equal protection of laws. If the states failed to act, the laws allowed the federal government to intervene. The target of the acts was the Ku Klux Klan, whose members were murdering many blacks and some whites because they voted, held office, or were involved with schools.

**1875 – Civil Rights Act** - *Be it enacted*, That all persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of inns, public conveyances on land or water, theaters, and other places of public amusement; subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law, and applicable alike to citizens of every race and color, regardless of any previous condition of

servitude.

**1896 – Plessy vs. Ferguson** – Supreme Court decision that upheld segregation laws used in the south to keep blacks and whites separated.

After discussing these events briefly, students should begin to understand the difficulty faced by Blacks after the passage of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment. If time permits, you could also go back and redo the Venn Diagram from day two to demonstrate that freed slaves still did not share all the rights of whites. To further explore this, we will begin looking into “Jim Crow Laws.”

First, it’s important to explain where the term “Jim Crow” came from. There are different historical explanations, one being that of Thomas Dartmouth Rice. He was an early comical actor who painted his face black and spoke in a southern dialect. He represented slaves as “happy-go-lucky” people in America after observing a slave in Ohio or Kentucky. His representation of slaves was for entertainment of white people and became widespread around 1832. The following picture is often associated with Rice.



In addition to the picture, the lyrics for a song associated with Rice include: *"Weel a-bout and turn a-bout / And do just so. / Every time I weel a-bout / I jump Jim Crow."*

As a follow-up activity, students will pretend they are a former slave and write a letter to Thomas Rice detailing the mistakes of his song and image of slaves. Students should include at least four reasons for unhappiness (beatings, separation from loved ones, long hours of working the fields, no rights, etc.). They should also include how Thomas’ portrayal of slaves impacted the beliefs of white people of that time (led them to believe life was not that bad for slaves).

## **Day Four**

The warm-up for today is a mini-quiz of the terms that have been introduced so far. A word bank is included as an accommodation for special education students, but could benefit lower level general education students also.

<b><u>Word Bank</u></b>	
Freedmen's Bureau	13 <sup>th</sup> Amendment
Ku Klux Klan	14 <sup>th</sup> Amendment
Jim Crow	15 <sup>th</sup> Amendment

1. Established to ensure a smooth transition for former slaves into free society. One task was to help build schools for blacks.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Freedmen's Bureau)
2. Abolished slavery in all states of the United States.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (13<sup>th</sup> Amendment)
3. A social group that became a paramilitary to frighten and murder blacks (and whites who helped them).  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Ku Klux Klan)
4. Amendment that gave all men (regardless of race) the right to vote.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (15<sup>th</sup> Amendment)
5. A term used to describe black people.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Jim Crow)
6. Amendment that guaranteed equal protection under the law for all citizens of the United States.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (14<sup>th</sup> Amendment)

After reviewing the answers to the mini-quiz, review the discussion on "Jim Crow" from day three (origin of the phrase). Today, students will begin a research activity on the actual laws that were created to keep blacks segregated from whites. There are many good websites available with the history and examples of various Jim Crow Laws, so regardless of how many students are in the room; there will be little chance of several students using the same laws. Some of the samples of websites that provide good sources are;

[www.nps.gov/malu/documents/jim\\_crow\\_laws.htm](http://www.nps.gov/malu/documents/jim_crow_laws.htm)

[www.jimcrowhistory.org](http://www.jimcrowhistory.org)  
[www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/)

Students need to include the following in their report:

- 1 One actual Jim Crow Law (written as found in legislation)
- 2 Impact on black citizens (and white)
- 3 Name of state where law was adopted
- 4 Area of society affected (buses, hospitals, restaurants, etc.)
- 5 Rights affected by the law for blacks
- 6 One picture depicting any Jim Crow Law (sign on a building, segregated group of people, etc.)

Once they have collected their data, they will prepare a brief (2-5 minute) oral presentation on the Jim Crow law they found. Students will be evaluated on both the written aspect of the report as well as the presentation.

Oral presentations are difficult for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in general and especially difficult for special education students. The purpose of this presentation is more for practice than assessment. However, students will need a rubric for expectations of oral presentations in order to be successful. The following is an example of such a rubric:

#### Oral Presentation Rubric

- |   |       |     |
|---|-------|-----|
| 1. Speaks clearly enough for everyone to hear | _____ | /2  |
| 2. Stands up straight                         | _____ | /1  |
| 3. Makes eye contact with audience            | _____ | /2  |
| 4. Connects visual (picture) to presentation  | _____ | /2  |
| 5. Presents all required information          | _____ | /3  |
| Total   | _____ | /10 |

This activity will carry over to day five. Students should finish all their research today and only need to complete the final draft and present tomorrow.

### **Day Five**

Since today is a continuation of the research reports and oral presentations, there will not be a warm-up activity. I usually post “Start working on your final drafts and note cards for presentations.”

Students will be encouraged to ask questions and make comments about the presentation of laws. However, time may not allow for extended discussion after each presentation.

### **Day Six:**

The warm-up for today is a journal entry reflecting on the various Jim Crow Laws that were presented yesterday. Students will respond to the following:

Describe how your life would be different if you had to live by “Jim Crow Laws?” Would you feel differently about yourself if you were forced to be segregated from other races?

After everyone has finished writing in their journals, volunteers can respond to the journal questions. Most students will identify that they wouldn’t be going to school with children of the opposite race or be able to socialize freely with them (movies, restaurants, etc.). The second part of the question may be more difficult for them to comprehend. Based on their race (white or black), they may not think segregation would have any impact on how they feel about themselves. It will take some discussion on how not being allowed to eat in the same restaurant or drink from the same fountain or having to give up a seat on the bus for someone of another race would make you feel inferior. One way to personalize this idea is to compare it to how 8<sup>th</sup> graders treat 6<sup>th</sup> graders in middle school. Although they use the same facilities, if an 8<sup>th</sup> grader wants to sit in a certain seat in the cafeteria and a 6<sup>th</sup> grader sits there, what would happen? In most situations, the 6<sup>th</sup> grader will be made to get up (unless someone intervenes). If you always had to remain in the status of the 6<sup>th</sup> grader, you would not feel the same as you do today! 6<sup>th</sup> graders are inferior to 8<sup>th</sup> graders. This is basically the same principle (although not even close to the same scale) as segregation.

This discussion will no doubt lead to students saying “I wouldn’t get up or let someone treat me like that.” This is exactly how some people felt during the era of Jim Crow laws, which led to the beginning of the Civil Rights movement. Most students are familiar with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his movement of peaceful demonstrations. An excellent video, “Selma, Lord, Selma” depicts the life of two 12-year old girls in Selma, Alabama during 1965. Segregation is still

the order of the day in the South and Martin Luther King Jr. is leading voter-registration drives. Based on Sheyann Webb's memoir, this movie effectively describes the brutality of the civil rights movement, concluding with the murder of two of the main characters. It will definitely leave students with a true sense of what life was like during segregation and open a discussion on how people could have been murdered without any action by police or the justice system.

### **Day Seven**

The movie “Selma, Lord, Selma” will take 2 class periods. It’s important to discuss the outcome of the movie immediately afterwards. Students will have a lot of questions, first being, “Was this a true story?” It is based on a true story, but some of the details are not exact. However, the main events did happen.

As a homework assignment tonight, students should write a movie review (summarize the movie and write a personal response). This will assist in identifying any concerns that exist for some students.

### **Day Eight**

As a warm-up activity, display the following quote from Martin Luther King Jr.:

“We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people.”

1. Based on the quote, what do you think the word “vitriolic” means?
2. Which do you think is worse, people who do bad things or people who stand by and do nothing to stop it? Why?

Discussing the quote and questions will lead into the final discussion on Civil Rights for African Americans. Since students have been reading “Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry” in Reading class, they are very familiar with the disparities of segregated schools. The novel does an excellent job of showing the frustration of the Logan children with having to walk so far to school while the white children get to ride a bus. It also describes the poor condition of materials and the school itself, as compared to the white school.

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation of schools was unconstitutional, based on the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment (Equal Protection Under the Law). This led to the integration of schools and was a major victory for the Civil

Rights Movement. However, it was not an easy process for black students to enter formerly all white schools.

A Norman Rockwell painting, “The Problem We All Live With” depicts this time in history. It was inspired by Ruby Bridges, a young black girl who was the first to integrate into a majority white school in New Orleans after the Brown v. Board of Education decision. Using this picture (easily assessable through [www. teachingtolerance.org](http://www.teachingtolerance.org)), ask students to answer the following questions:

- What do you think is taking place in this painting?
- Where do you think the young girl is going? What do you think are the circumstances?
- What do you think the girl is thinking and feeling?
- Who do you think the men in the painting are? What relationship do you think they have to the girl?
- When and where do you think this scene may have taken place?
- What was going on in the U.S. in that time and place? How might this relate to the painting?
- How does the painting make you feel?
- What questions does it evoke? If you could ask the girl or the men in the painting a question, what would it be?
- What do you think the artist is trying to tell us? Why do you think he called the painting, *The Problem We All Live With*?

As a follow-up to the picture, ask students how schools are different today. Some students will point out that we don’t have laws banning groups of students from entering public schools. Others might point out that it’s safer for minority students to go to school. However, depending on the population of the school, some classes might discuss that some schools are still “majority white” or “majority black.” Even though there are no laws forcing schools to be this way, it still happens. List the pros and cons of this situation and brainstorm how it could be changed? In their journal, have students write how they would feel abiding by their ideas (busing, combining schools, etc.).

## **Day Nine**

Today’s warm-up activity will address desegregation and address discrimination of minority groups. Display the following quote from President John F. Kennedy:

"It is as old as the scriptures and is as clear as the American Constitution. The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights

and equal opportunities, whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated. If an American, because his skin is dark, cannot eat lunch in a restaurant open to the public, if he cannot send his children to the best school available, if he cannot vote for the public officials who represent him, if, in short, he cannot enjoy the full and free life which all of us want, then who among us would be content to have the color of his skin changed and stand in his place? Who among us would then be content with the counsels of patience and delay?"

1. Which group of people is President Kennedy addressing? (Whites)
2. How does the proverb, ‘treat others as you would want to be treated’ apply to this quote?
3. Define the word “content.”

Once everyone has answered the questions, review the answers and ask students if they would be “content” living during the times of segregation or during the beginning of desegregation? A short discussion should reveal that they would not be content, but eager to move forward to complete equality. Have them identify some characteristics of the first black students who have entered majority white schools, by asking them “what kind of person would it take to walk into a school that’s majority is different from you?” What if you were shy? What if you were scared? Would you make it?

As a follow-up activity, have students create an acrostic poem, using their names (first or last) and traits they have in common with those original minority students who ended segregation (brave, strong, kind, eager, determined, proud, etc.). The following is an example of an acrostic:

**P**roud  
**c**Aring  
**d**e**T**ermined  
**T**enacious  
**k**Ind

Allow students to use the computer to generate a final copy of their acrostic to

display in the room. Have them include a clipart image that goes along with the theme (peace sign, equal sign, rainbow, etc.) These will serve as reminders of the positive traits they possess and the traits that are necessary to survive in difficult situations.

### **Day 10**

The final warm-up for this activity is a journal entry. Students should respond to the following questions in their journals:

Has our country come a long way towards equality for African Americans? Why or why not? Are there other groups in our country that are discriminated against? Who? Give one example of how they are discriminated against.

Once students have finished their journals, let them know that today is the final day of this unit. Recap the struggle African Americans have faced from slavery through segregation and the civil rights movement. Ask students to share their journal responses to which groups in our country are discriminated against. Depending on how informed they are, you may get a variety of answers from Middle Easterners to Homosexuals and even still African Americans. The point of the question is that discrimination still exists!

As the final activity, you will read the children's book "The Sneetches" by Dr. Seuss. Although Dr. Seuss books are written for younger children, my middle school class still enjoys hearing me read them. This book is also less popular than most of the Dr. Seuss collection, so it is likely that many of the students will not have heard of it.

Introduce the book as a story about a community where there are two types of people, one with stars on their belly and one without. Those with stars are snobbish and considered privileged, while those without wish they could be like the star group.

Read the story aloud to the class. Have them answer the following questions when you finish (either aloud or written responses):

1. What privileges did the star-bellied sneetches have? How did they make the plain-bellied sneetches feel?
2. How did the plain-bellied sneetches behavior change once they got stars on their belly?

3. What did Francis McMillan McMonkey McBean gain from his role in the book?
4. Did the sneetches learn anything? At what cost?
5. Who are the plain-bellied sneetches in our society? What privileges may not be afforded to them?

After discussing the answers, remind students that unlike this story, the United States guarantees equal protection for all of its citizens. Although some citizens are not provided with the same rights as others, we must continue to press our government to enact laws that will fulfill the promise of “All men are created equal.”

### **Annotated Bibliography/Resources**

#### **Books for Teachers**

1. 1. Sterling Stuckey, *Call To Freedom* (Austin, Texas: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 2003).  
Provides background information on American Revolution and framing of the Constitution (8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook).
2. Kenneth L. Karst, *Belonging to America: Equal Citizenship and the Constitution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).  
Explains concept of “Equal Protection Under the Law” and gives insight into the mindset of the framers of the Constitution.
3. Donald G. Nieman, *Promises to Keep: African-Americans and the Constitutional Order, 1776 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).  
Describes the progression of the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments to the Constitution. Explains the significance of each amendment to African Americans of the time period.
4. Dudley, Mark E. *Brown v. Board of Education: school desegregation.* Twenty-First Century Books, 1994.  
Discusses the issues, the players, and the arguments involved in this important case that successfully challenged school segregation.
5. Fireside, Harvey. *Brown v. Board of Education : equal schooling for all.* Enslow, 1994.

Presents background information, the case itself, and the far-reaching impact it has had.

6. Bridges, Ruby. *Through my eyes: Ruby Bridges*. Scholastic, 1999.  
Ruby Bridges recounts the story of her involvement, as a six-year-old, in the integration of her school in New Orleans in 1960.
7. Fireside, Harvey. *Plessy v. Ferguson: separate but equal?*. Enslow, 1997.  
This book gives a step-by-step account of the hearings in the Supreme Court of this case that challenged the basic underpinnings of segregation laws.
8. Haskins, James. *Separate but not equal: the dream and the struggle*. Scholastic, 1998.  
A history of the struggle of African Americans for equality in education beginning from the time of slavery, with coverage of key court cases and incidents.
9. Rasmussen, R. Kent. *Farewell to Jim Crow: the rise and fall of segregation in America*. Facts on File, 1997.  
This is a history of segregation in the United States in such areas as housing, education, employment, transportation, public accommodations, and efforts to end it.
10. Finlayson, Reggie. *We shall overcome: the history of the American civil rights movement*. Lerner, 2003.  
Uses the words of spirituals and other music of the time to frame a discussion of the civil rights movement in the United States, focusing on specific people, incidents, and court cases.

### **Books for Students**

1. Taylor, Mildred D. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Puffin Books, 1991.  
Vivid story of a share-cropping family in the south during segregation. Excellent portrayals of segregated schools and injustices to African Americans during this time period.
2. Hanson, Joyce *I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly: The Diary of Patsy, A Freed Girl*. Scholastic Press, 2003.  
Fictional diary written from the viewpoint of a 12-year old former slave. Describes her life as a free person during the Reconstruction Era.

3. Thomas, Velma Maia *Lest We Forget: The Passage from Africa to Slavery and Emancipation* Crown Publishing, 1997

Excellent visuals of slave life. Interactive, three-dimensional exhibits.

4. Thomas, Velma Maia *Freedom's Children: The Passage from Emancipation to the Great Migration* Crown Publishing, 2000

The sequel to "Lest We Forget" describes the excitement and terror felt by newly freed slaves.

5. Hamilton, Virginia *Many Thousands Gone: African Americans from Slavery to Freedom* Knopf, 1993

Overview of the history of slavery. Includes stories about life experiences of individual slaves.

### **Web Sites**

1. **Rise and Fall of Jim Crow**

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/>

**WNET.**

Companion site to the PBS series, with resources, lesson plans, interactive maps, and tools and activities.

2. **Remembering Jim Crow**

<http://www.americanradioworks.org/features/remembering/>

**American Radio Works.**

A companion site to the NPR radio documentary on segregated life in the South (broadcast in February 2002). Presents 28 audio excerpts, ranging from one minute to ten minutes in length, and approximately 130 photographs, arranged in six thematically-organized sections.

3. **The History of Jim Crow**

<http://www.jimcrowshistory.org/>

**Richard Wormhiser, Bill Jersey, Sam Pollard, WNET.**

This site for educators was produced as an online companion to *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*, a four-part television series that tells the story of the African-American struggle for freedom during the era of segregation.

4. **Atlanta 1906: A Race Riot**

<http://www.wabe.org/atlantariot1906.html>

**Public Broadcasting Atlanta.**

Produced by Public Broadcasting Atlanta, in conjunction with the PBS series "The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow," this visual history of the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot is a useful education tool that offers an introduction to this traumatically

violent event in the city's not-so-distant past.

5. **African American World**

[www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/)

Web site on African Americans and their historic struggles from the civil rights movement to the Jim Crow era.

6. **Behind The Veil: Documenting African American Life in the Jim Crow Era**

<http://cda.aas.duke.edu/btv/index.html>

Housed at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University, this research effort attempts to correct historical inaccuracies of African American experiences during the period of legal segregation through the voices of those who lived it.

7. **Encyclopedia Britannica's Guide to Black History**

<http://blackhistory.eb.com/>

The Encyclopedia Britannica's Guide to Black History examines five centuries of black heritage from the slave revolts of early America through the successes of the Civil Rights Movement.

8. **Jump Jim Crow, Or What Difference Did Emancipation Make**

<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/calheritage/Jimcrow/>

This Web site features information relating to the era of Jim Crow, from the Freedmen's Bureau to stories of daily life.

9. **"Jim Crow" Laws**

[http://www.nps.gov/malu/documents/jim\\_crow\\_laws.htm](http://www.nps.gov/malu/documents/jim_crow_laws.htm)

Created by Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site Interpretive Staff. List specific Jim Crow Laws by different states.

10. **We Shall Overcome**

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/>

Details historic places and people from the civil rights movement. Excellent visuals and hyperlinks to specific events and people.

## **Videos**

1. Burnett, Charles, *Selma, Lord Selma* Disney, 1999. I

In 1965 two schoolgirls decide they can no longer tolerate discrimination, and decide to join in the march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Based on the memoirs of Sheyann Webb-Christburg and Rachel West Nelson and co-starring Yolanda King, daughter of Dr. King.

2. Palcy, Euzhan, *Ruby Bridges* Disney, 1998 The story of Ruby Bridges, who during the racially charged 1960s helped change history. At six-years-old, Ruby is chosen to be the first African-American student to integrate her local New Orleans elementary school. She is subjected to the true ugliness of racism for the very first time.

## **Appendix - Content Standards**

Throughout this unit, the following Citizenship standards will be addressed:  
The student will

- Demonstrate the ability to use correct vocabulary associated with time (past, present, future).
- Identify sources for reconstructing the past.
- Compare ways in which families and groups conduct their daily lives: beliefs, foods, celebrations, rites of passage, etc.
- Use letters, maps, journals and photographs as evidence for reconstructing the past.
- Create and interpret timelines
- Recognize the influence of geographic features on peoples lives.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how rules and laws help protect people and property.
- Show beginning understanding of government functions and characteristics of good leadership.
- Recognize major political issues and current events.
- Identify factors that contribute to cooperation and conflict among people or groups.
- All students examine and evaluate problems facing citizens in their communities, state, nation and world by incorporating concepts of methods of inquiry of the various social sciences.
- Demonstrate the ability to investigate a community issue from multiple points of view.
- Demonstrate their skills of communicating, negotiating and cooperating with others
- Demonstrates the ability to work effectively with others
- Recognize the components of fairness

Technology standards to be addressed include:

All students demonstrate basic computer literacy, including word processing and the ability to access the global infrastructure, using current technology.