

# Where Did It All Begin?

By Debbie Dickerson

## Overview

This lesson is to be used with the Jim Crow and the Supreme Court map information on the site. To begin, have students watch the video *Separate But Equal* or *Simple Justice*. Most school media centers will have one of these videos on site. Then, from the extensive number of historic court cases listed on the map, students pick one case that interests them. They should then look through the document for key words or names they can search for more information to help determine the origins of the case. Students research the case back to its very personal, local roots to tell the story of the case from its inception. Resources to help students include web sites, newspaper archives, and books. They also may want to contact local historical societies to assist them. This lesson is for middle and high school students with *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow* PBS series or after participating in lessons about Jim Crow. Students will need some background information about Jim Crow to understand why these cases were historically significant.

## Curriculum Standards

For a list of standards that this unit addresses, [click here](#).

## Time Required

Students will need at least two weeks, probably longer, to thoroughly research the origins of a case and write their findings in a short essay (4-8 pages).

## Materials Needed

- **Jim Crow and the Supreme Court map**
- Library access
- Internet access
- The PBS video series, *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*

## The Lesson

### Anticipatory Set

First, download the photos of Linda Brown's school, Monroe Elementary, from the web site, <http://brownvboard.org/tour/tmonroe.htm>, and show them to the students. Then, tell students that this little girl had to walk past Sumner Elementary to Monroe School, a school for black children. She lived with her family in Topeka, Kansas, and her father decided he was going to do something about it. Also, inform students that the Browns were only one of a long list of plaintiffs in the case, and their name, by alphabetical default, got the title name for the case. From this point, explain to students that this is only one small piece of the *Brown v. Board of Education* case that made integration possible. Finally, instruct them to find the origins of this or another Supreme Court case to locate the story behind the case name.

## Procedures

1. Have students look through the Jim Crow and the Supreme Court map on the site. Instruct students to choose a case that they would like to learn more about.
2. Once they have selected a case, have students read it, looking for keywords that will help them search for more information about the case such as names, places, etc.
3. Instruct students to start searching web sites, libraries, or other archives for information to help them find the origins of their case. Students may even want to contact historical societies for more information. Inform the school media specialist and technology specialist of this project, so they can help students if they need it.
4. Once students have their information, have them write a short essay (4-8 pages) explaining what they found, including if they found an individual that had the courage to venture forth with or without the help of organizations like the NAACP. The essay should read like a chronological story with the origins of the case coming at the beginning, the case itself as the middle, and the decision of the court as the conclusion.
5. Have students make a visual aid to help others understand the significance of their case (a poster, diorama, or other visual), then, using these aids, share some of the highlights of their cases with the class.

### **Assessment**

Grade both the written essay and the visual aid according to the following guidelines.

- Essays need to:
  - Have a beginning, middle, and end;
  - Use complete paragraphs; and
  - Demonstrate good word choice, organization, sentence fluency, and grammatical conventions.
- Use the following **six-trait writing rubric** not only to help you grade it, but also to guide students on the grading criteria.
- Visual aids could be graded according to originality, creativity, and effort. Adjust your grading, if necessary, to meet the level of your students and the amount of experience they have making visuals.

### **Related Works**

The following web sites are helpful in finding information on court cases:

- **The Jim Crow Gateway**
- <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/nation/courts/supremecourt/20012002/>
- [http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/supcrt/](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/supcrt/)
- <http://supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/>
- <http://www.findlaw.com/casecode/supreme.html>
- <http://www.blackpages.com>

If you are interested in focusing on the *Brown v. Board* cases, go to the ***Brown v. Board of Education Unit*** in the Teacher Resources Section.

### **Interdisciplinary Links**

This lesson focuses on research, which is an integral in many disciplines. You could also link this lesson to literature by reading other text about the cases or to civics because of the historical significance of the cases.

This lesson was submitted by Debbie Dickerson, a Government teacher in Topeka, Kansas.

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## Six-Trait Writing Rubric

Directions: Give students a score from 1-5 on each of the six traits. You can average the scores to give the student an overall score. You may give scores of 4 and 2, if the student's paper falls in between two descriptions. See the following Web site for more information about Six-Trait Writing: <http://www.angelfire.com/ks/teachme/sixtrait.html>

Areas for Evaluation	Scoring and Criteria		
	5	3	1
<b>Idea and Content</b>	<p>Paper is clear and holds the reader's attention all the way through.</p> <p>Writer knows the topic well and chooses details that help make the subject clear and interesting.</p>	<p>Reader can figure out what the writer is trying to say, but paper may not hold the reader's attention all the way through.</p> <p>Some ideas may be fuzzy or may not seem to fit.</p> <p>Writer may spend too much time on minor details and/or not enough time on main ideas.</p>	<p>Paper is unclear and has no apparent purpose.</p> <p>Writer does not seem to know the topic very well.</p> <p>It seems as if the writer wrote just to get something down on paper.</p>
<b>Organization</b>	<p>Paper presents ideas, details, and examples in a logical order that makes it very easy to follow.</p> <p>Paper has an inviting beginning and an ending that works well.</p> <p>Details seem to fit where they are placed.</p>	<p>Writer tries to present ideas and details in a logical way, but the order may be unclear.</p> <p>The introduction and/or ending may be weak.</p> <p>Some details may seem out of place.</p>	<p>Ideas seem tossed together, and the paper is hard to follow.</p> <p>Paper has no sense of a beginning or an ending.</p> <p>In a story, it may be hard to tell what happens first or next or last.</p> <p>In an essay, it has no logical order of ideas.</p>
<b>Voice</b>	<p>Writer is very sincere, individual, and honest.</p> <p>Writer seems to speak directly to the reader.</p> <p>Paper may show originality, liveliness, excitement, humor, or suspense.</p>	<p>Writer tries to deal with the topic but does not seem very involved with subject matter.</p> <p>Reader can almost guess what the writer will write next.</p> <p>Writer may repeat ideas everyone has heard or read before instead of trying something new or unusual.</p>	<p>Writer makes no apparent effort to deal seriously with the topic.</p> <p>Writer may not have understood the assignment or may not have cared about saying anything serious or important.</p> <p>Paper is flat and lifeless, and has no feeling.</p>
<b>Word Choice</b>	Writer carefully selects	Writer chooses ordinary or	Writer uses a limited

	<p>words that make the message clear and are fresh, original, and fun to read.</p> <p>Writer may experiment with new words or use everyday words in a new and interesting way.</p> <p>Writer uses colorful expressions and experiments with figurative language effectively, developing imagery well.</p>	<p>general words that get the message across but only in a run-of-the-mill way.</p> <p>Writer may attempt using some new words, but they may not fit.</p>	<p>vocabulary and has a hard time finding the right words to get the meaning across.</p> <p>Writer does not attempt to use new words.</p> <p>Words create no clear images.</p> <p>Writer uses words incorrectly.</p>
<b>Sentence Fluency</b>	<p>Paper is easy to read and understand, flowing smoothly from one idea to the next.</p> <p>Writing sounds natural.</p> <p>Sentence structure is varied and adds interest.</p> <p>Sentence structure is correct.</p>	<p>Most sentences are understandable but not very smooth or graceful.</p> <p>Reader may have to reread to follow the meaning.</p> <p>Writer tends to start sentences the same way.</p> <p>Writing may be wordy.</p>	<p>Sentence flaws make this paper hard to read and understand.</p> <p>Writer does not seem to understand how words and sentences fit together or where one idea stops and another begins.</p> <p>Sentences are often awkward or confusing.</p> <p>Writing does not follow sentence patterns people use when they talk, making it difficult to read paper aloud.</p>
<b>Writing Conventions</b>	<p>Paper has no glaring errors in writing conventions and is easy to read and understand.</p> <p>Punctuation is correct and helps the reader understand each sentence.</p> <p>Spelling is correct.</p> <p>Paper has no major errors in grammar.</p>	<p>Reader can follow the writing; however, writing errors may cause the reader difficulty in concentrating on the content.</p> <p>Punctuation errors reflect careless editing.</p> <p>Spelling errors sometimes confuse the reader.</p> <p>The reader notices some errors in grammar.</p>	<p>Paper has so many errors in writing conventions that the reader has a very hard time just getting through it. Some parts may be impossible to follow or understand.</p> <p>The writer does not know how to use capital letters or punctuation marks.</p> <p>Spelling errors are frequent.</p> <p>Errors in grammar are common and stand out.</p>