



Plessy v. Ferguson (1896): Lesson Plan

Topic	
<p>In <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i>, the Court decided to uphold state-sanctioned segregation of the races. The Court found segregation legislation as not in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. This established the doctrine of separate but equal.</p>	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civics • History • Social Studies 	30-45 mins
Video link:	
https://academy4sc.org/video/plessy-v-ferguson-1896/	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
<p>By the end of this lesson, students will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the Doctrine of Separate but Equal. • Explain the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. • Summarize the decision of <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> and its direct consequences. 	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
<p>Compromise of 1877, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> (1954), Affirmative Action</p>	
Materials Needed	
<p>Worksheet, Student Internet Access</p>	
Before you watch	
<p>Think-pair-share: What do you know about the Civil War, the Reconstruction Era, and Jim Crow South? After spending time to yourself thinking, share what you know with a partner, and reach out to other groups of partners if time permits.</p>	



While you watch

Complete the Worksheet.

After you watch/discussion questions

1. Do you believe that the “Separate but Equal” doctrine violates the 14th Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause?
2. Do you agree with Justice Harlan’s dissent that our Constitution is color-blind? Why or why not?
3. What do you think Justice Harlan would support affirmative action policies today? Base your answer on his dissent in *Plessy*.

Activity Ideas

- **Brainstorm:** What are areas of your life where you still see segregation today? Think about the impacts of these segregated spaces. Discuss in small groups, and plan out what you can do to acknowledge and/or fight against such vestiges.
- **Research:** Look into when Justice Harlan’s dissent has been quoted. Has it been quoted more to support or hurt Black causes? Compare these instances to what the quote meant in the context of *Plessy*. Debate in groups whether one or two such uses of Harlan's quote properly acknowledge the original meaning and consequences of it, or write a brief essay on the topic.

Sources/places to learn more

1. Gillman, Howard. American Constitutionalism, Second Edition. Volume II Rights and Liberties. [Virtual Source Bookshelf].
2. "Plessy v. Ferguson." *Oyez*, www.oyez.org/cases/1850-1900/163us537.
3. "Plessy v. Ferguson" *History.com* (October 29, 2009) <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/plessy-v-ferguson>.