



Thurgood Marshall: Lesson Plan

Topic	
Thurgood Marshall was born in 1908 in Baltimore, Maryland. He was a lawyer with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or NAACP, the first African American Supreme Court justice, and one of the most prominent figures of the American civil rights movement. Marshall was a tireless advocate for individual and civil rights. Throughout his career, he used the courts to fight for racial equality and an end to legalized segregation.	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
Government, Politics, History	45 - 60 min
Video link:	
https://academy4sc.org/video/thurgood-marshall-fighting-for-civil-rights/	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
Students will be able to... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a brief summary of Thurgood Marshall's life• Discuss some of the most important cases in which Marshall was involved, including <i>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka</i>• Analyze Marshall's legacy as a lawyer and Supreme Court justice	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Supreme Court, NAACP, civil rights movement, <i>Plessy v Ferguson</i> (1896), separate but equal, integration	
Materials Needed	
Computers, worksheet	
Before you watch	
<u>Background Info:</u> Give students a brief overview of the "separate but equal" doctrine established in <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> . Explain the background of the case and the Supreme Court's ruling that separate public facilities for different races were	



constitutional as long as they were equal. More background information about *Plessy* can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

While you watch

1. Why couldn't Marshall attend the University of Maryland School of Law?
2. What did *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950) set the stage for?
3. What is the most famous case Marshall argued?

After you watch/discussion questions

1. Why is it important for schools to be integrated? How can integration benefit all students, regardless of race?
2. Marshall helped set a legal precedent to fight segregation. Laws alone, though, are not enough to eliminate segregation. What else needs to happen for desegregation to be successful?
3. Do you think we have finished dismantling the doctrine of "separate but equal"? Can you think of public facilities, jobs, or other areas in which some races are disproportionately represented?

Activity Ideas

Further Research: Assign each student a case that Marshall argued. Possible cases include: *Murray v. Pearson* (1936), *Chambers v. Florida* (1940), *Smith v. Allwright* (1944), *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948), *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950), and *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents* (1950). Students should answer the worksheet questions about their case.

Applications to Today: Marshall helped legally dismantle segregation in education, but de facto segregation still exists today. Have students research modern issues, such as tracking, surrounding the integration of schools. They can find sources online, but some links to get them started are:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/30/opinion/linda-brown-school-integration.html>
- <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/11/modern-day-segregation-in-public-schools/382846/>
- <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2019/05/11/weekend-read-brown-v-board-education-and-modern-day-segregation>

Students should write a response discussing what they have learned about modern-day segregation in schools.

Discuss: Why is integration important? What can we learn from a diversity of experiences? How can exposure to people different from us reduce biases? Teachers may also facilitate a discussion about segregation in their area. Is the school district racially homogeneous? Do nearby schools have a similar racial and socioeconomic makeup? Within the school, are there disparities in discipline or in academic achievement based on race? Much of this data can be found through the [Miseducation database](#).

Sources/places to learn more

1. Smentkowski, Brian P. "Thurgood Marshall." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 9 Mar. 2020, www.britannica.com/biography/Thurgood-Marshall.
2. "Thurgood Marshall." *NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund*, Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., 20 Nov. 2019, www.naacpldf.org/about-us/history/thurgood-marshall/.
3. "Thurgood Marshall." *Oyez*, www.oyez.org/justices/thurgood_marshall.
4. History.com Editors. "Thurgood Marshall." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 29 Oct. 2009, www.history.com/topics/black-history/thurgood-marshall.
5. "Thurgood Marshall." *Biography.com*, A&E Networks Television, 22 Jan. 2020, www.biography.com/activist/thurgood-marshall.