

Title: Desegregation and Civil Rights Lesson Plan

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Course: American Government

Time Frame: 2 class periods

Subjects:

Civil Rights, Civil Rights, African-American History

Grade Levels:

9

Classroom/Homework Activity to be performed:

Students will be placed in groups to analyze primary documents relating to civil rights during the post-WW1 to 1948 time period (both pro and con regarding desegregation). Together, they will create a timeline of the documents given as well as broader historical events (Great Depression, Presidential elections, WWII, etc). Then they will then come to a conclusion about why President Truman chose to desegregate the military.

Rationale:

The primary purpose of this lesson is to help students understand that government leaders should do what is best for the country even if they personally disagree with the action. Secondary purposes are to highlight the difficulties inherent in making decisions, give students a picture of civil rights in a segregated society, and to show that even the President cannot do “whatever s/he wants.”

Lesson objectives - the student will:

*Understand that government policy decisions can be difficult

*Apply knowledge of the Executive Branch to show why a President cannot do “whatever s/he wants”

*Successfully analyze primary documents

District, state, or national performance and knowledge standards/goals/skills met:

From the MO Show-Me Standards:

State:

SS 2. continuity and change in the history of Missouri, the United States and the world

SS 3. principles and processes of governance systems

SS 6. relationships of the individual and groups to institutions and cultural traditions

SS 7. the use of tools of social science inquiry (such as surveys, statistics, maps, documents)

District:

12-R b. Functions and styles of leadership

12-4 d. How laws are made, changed, and enforces

Kansas Standards

Benchmark 3: The student understands how the United States Constitution allocates power and responsibility in the government.

1. (K) describes the purposes, organization, and functions of the three branches of government and independent regulatory agencies in relation to the United States Constitution.
2. (K) explains Constitutional powers (e.g., expressed/enumerated, implied, inherent, reserved, concurrent).

Benchmark 5: The student engages in historical thinking skills.

1. (A) analyzes a theme in United States history to explain patterns of continuity and change over time.
2. (A) develops historical questions on a specific topic in United States history and analyzes the evidence in primary source documents to speculate on the answers.

Secondary materials (book, article, video documentary, etc.) needed:

Remy, Richard C. Ph.D. United States Government: Democracy in Action New York City: Glencoe-McGraw Hill, 2008. (see specifically pg 244-261, 406-41)

National Archives collected documents -

Student-led research on African-Americans in WWI and II, desegregation of the U.S. military

Biographical information of Truman's role in WWI "<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/lifetimes/military.htm>"

Primary materials (book, article, video documentary, etc.) needed:

Letter written by Truman on 8/18/48_to Ernest W. Roberts__
"Suggested changes to Truman's message on Civil Rights

Letter to Bess Wallace 14 July 1918

"http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/ww1/documents/fulltext.php?documentid=1-11"

Executive Order 9981: "<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/9981.htm>"

The Negroes Historical and Contemporary Role in National Defense:
"http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/documents/index.php?documentdate=1940-11-25&documentid=2&studycollectionid=deseg&pagenumber=1"

Decisions Episode 14 1964 episode #14 of Harry S. Truman's CBS show about decisions he made during the Presidency. (about 26 min)

Robert Winston letter to Harry S. Truman, 29 April 1948

Irvin Dagen letter to Harry S. Truman, 15 June 1948

Harry S. Truman memo: copy of letter to Tom Clark, 20 September 1946

Truman, Harry S. *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman*. (Columbia: U of Missouri Press, 1997).

Technology Required:

Internet Connection, Or hard copies of documents, overhead/digital projector, misc. photos of WWI and WWII service by African Americans, lynchings, Jim Crow

Full description of activity or assignment:

Previous lessons in this Civil Rights pre-unit will introduce basic concepts so that students will be prepared to apply Harry S. Truman's WWI and presidential experiences to his decision to desegregate the military in 1948 and move into the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. They will also have a working knowledge of executive powers. On the first day, students will explore documents pertaining to segregation and on the second day, they will look at letters regarding opinions about desegregation.

I Next, students will be placed in groups and given time to research the contributions of black soldiers in WWI and WWII through library time, homework, and/or provided with the aforementioned documents.

I Each group will create a timeline or flowchart showing when each document was created as well as the broader context or historical period (Great Depression, FDR elected, Pearl Harbor, etc)

I Each group member should provide 2 summaries of war efforts by minorities, one from WWI and one from WWII, as well as one example of Jim Crow or segregation. (No one in the group can have the same story.)

I Students will then answer the following questions in regards to the documents provided:

1. Using facts from your research, why would black soldiers be angered having segregated units in the military?
2. Using your knowledge of early 20th century society, why would (some) white soldiers be hesitant to serve with them?
3. Do you think Truman thinks the contributions of black soldiers are a positive or a negative in the military?
4. As president, you are Commander in Chief but you are also elected to do what the citizens want.
 - a. Which "group" will be easier to please?
 - b. Which group do you want to keep happy?
 - c. What will you do if the military or the citizens rebel?

If time remains, end with an article on the Isaac Woodard case (or begin the 2nd class period with it).

Then for the second class period:

I Students will free write an answer the following pre-written "bell ringer" question that states: "Can the President do whatever s/he wants? Why or why not?"

I Students will be led in a think-pair-share activity to converse about the checks and balances placed on the executive branch, and then they will share their answers with the class.

I If time ran out on the first day, share Isaac Woodard documents. Otherwise, review desegregation and civil rights

stories from previous class period.

I The groups will be given a copy of Truman's 18 August 1948 letter to Ernest W. Roberts. After reading, they will answer the following questions:

I What event does "living eighty years behind the times" refer to?

I What is "social equality?"

I What does Ernie think about integration? What does Truman think about it?

I What does this quote from the third paragraph tell us about Truman?

"I am not asking for social equality, because no such thing exists, but I am asking for equality of opportunity for all human beings and, as long as I stay here, I am going to continue that fight."

I Then students will look at correspondence to the President giving individual's opinions (for example, see Dagen and Winston letters).

I Show Episode 14 of Decisions

Then groups will be given Executive Order 9981 and will answer the following questions:

I How did President Truman's beliefs about black people change during his lifetime?

I Do you think it was hard for President Truman to decide to desegregate the military?

I Why would he do it if he personally (at that time) did not believe in social equality?

I What was happening in the country that was changing Harry S. Truman's mind and about segregation?

I Why would a president have to make decisions he might not completely agree with?

Finally, as independent practice, students will complete a short essay incorporating material from the lesson:

"Do you think it is better to have the Constitution give us rules about what the Executive Branch can do or to have a king who can make whatever rules he wants? Why?" Which one is better if you aren't the President/King? Use facts from our study of civil rights and types of government to support your answer.

Full explanation of the assessment method and/or scoring guide:

Students will be graded on three aspects of this lesson

participating in research and group work

appropriately completing all questions from the given packet

one-page essay from final question

Scoring is as follows:

Participation in research and group work:	total pts:	20
Using time appropriately in the library		1 3 5
Contribution to appropriate timeline		1 3 5
Timeline integrating documents and events		2 4 6 8 10

Appropriately completing all questions from packet assigned tasks	total pts:	30	Completing all
	1 3 5		
Complete paragraphs for 4a, 4b, 4c (5pts each)		5 7 9 11 13 15	
Contributing to finding answers for other questions		2 4 6 8 10	

One page essay covering the final question	total pts:	20
Appropriate length		1 3 5
Fully answers all questions		2 4 6 8 10
Appropriate grammar and spelling		1 3 5

/ 70 pts