Teaching American History Controversial Issue Lesson Plan Template

**Lesson Title:** Segregation is Dead 2012: Do you agree or disagree?

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**Appropriate for Grade Level(s):** 11th grade

**US History Standard(s):**

H2[9-12].3 Analyze how different cultures, points of view, and self-interests influence compromise and conflict over territories, borders, and resources.

H3[9-12].9 Identify and describe the major issues, events, and people of minority rights movements, i.e. Civil Rights Act of 1964, Black Power Movement, United Farm Workers, American Indian Movement, Viva La Raza, and the Women’s Rights Movement.

H3[9-12].16 Analyze the responses of individuals to restrictive social and political systems.

H3[9-12].17 Analyze how ideals and institutions of freedom, equality, justice, and citizenship have changed.

Key Ideas and Details 1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

**Controversial Issue:** segregation past and present

**Objective(s): At the end of this lesson, students will be able to…**

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to formulate and communicate opinions regarding the current state of segregation. Students’ explanations of their opinions will reveal synthesis of vocabulary, as well as analysis of a variety of documents.

**Rationale: Why Teach This Issue? (50-100 words)** As adults, students will undoubtedly have to contend with controversial issues. The results of future debates will dramatically impact the state of society. Likely, some of said debates will revolve around race, and the allocation of rights and resources, as the civil rights legislation of the 1960’s did not resolve all race related issues. Considering the aforementioned forecast, it is prudent to prepare students with the skills for participation in democratic debate, informed decision making and opinion generation, as well as to arm students with an understanding of the civil rights movement and its ongoing effects.

**Student Readings (list):** demographics for McQueen High School, demographics for Hug High School, *Brown v. Board of Education-50 Years Later* from <http://www.policyalmanac.org/culture/archive/brown_v_board.shtml>, *Where We Live Fuels a Divide* by Johnathon Briggs from http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/education/balte.segregate16may16,0,3733538.story?page=2, *What Brown Means Today* by Kristina Dell from http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,639014,00.html, *US Schools are More Segregated Today than in the 1950s*by Gary Orfieldfromhttp://www.projectcensored.org/top-stories/articles/2-us-schools-are-more-segregated-today-than-in-the-1950s-source/, and *School Desegregation Battle: A Thing of the Past . . . and the Present* by [Mary C. Curtis](http://www.politicsdaily.com/bloggers/mary-c-curtis) from <http://www.politicsdaily.com/2011/01/16/school-desegregation-battle-a-thing-of-the-past/print/>.

**Total Time Needed:** 2-50 minute class periods or 1 block period

**Historical Background & Context (+/- 250 words):** The civil rights movement did not occur in a vacuum. In order to understand the era of American history, and more importantly why racism extends into the present, one must know what happened to African Americans 300 years before Martin Luther King Jr. proclaimed that he had a dream, as well as what has happened to African Americans since non-violent resistance reached its height.

Essentially, African Americans have lacked the means to achieve the American dream, even after slavery was abolished because of both individual and institutionalized racism. White people, both rich and poor, and white culture in general, have benefited economically, socially, and politically from segregation, both de jure and de facto.

The effects of separate but equal have had catastrophic consequences on African Americans. Laws and practices have prevented black people from pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps, from owning a home and holding a steady job, which all begins with adequate education (de Jong 54). This vicious cycle that set the stage for prolonged segregation started with slavery.

Interestingly, the first Africans in the Americas were not necessarily slaves. Rather, the institution emerged as a means for whites to improve their economic interests (de Jong 17). While some secured economic success, whites with limited incomes guaranteed themselves spots in the upper echelons of the social strata. Slavery ushered in a new social system where skin color actually counted more than money (de Jong 13).

The white man’s burden was lightened by slavery to such an extreme degree that a lot of African Americans continued to struggle even in the Reconstruction era, after the institution was abolished. Citizenship, and all that it entailed, such as voting rights and equal treatment under the law, did not assure achievement. Freed slaves needed access to land, equipment, and education to coexist in a capitalist society (de Jong 18). Regardless of newfound freedom, such necessities were not afforded to African Americans.

Instead, African Americns were subject to Jim Crow laws. As de Jong eloquently explains, “The Jim Crow system replaced slavery as a means of subordinating black people and maintaining the connections between class and race” (7). The laws, best summed up by the 1896 case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, stipulated that separate but equal was constitutional. In essence, Jim Crow laws, or segregation, denied African Americans alternatives (de Jong 20).

*Brown v. Board of Education*, a 1954 courtroom battle commandeered by the NAACP, ended de jure segregation. Alas, de facto racism remained entrenched even after schools were desegregated. Black students attempting to attend predominantly white schools endured physical attacks and other types of intimidation (de Jong 39). White flight to suburbs sans African Americans also degraded integration (de Jong 41).

The government gave in after 1969, taking a more relaxed approach to integration because of the pressure it purportedly placed on families and communities (de Jong 61). The 1974 Millken decisions effectively invalidated *Brown v. Board of Education,* and African American students were once relegated to separate but equal status (de Jong 63). African American students were often grouped or tracked into lower level, remedial classes. Schools in African American neighborhoods lacked funds for adequate educators and materials in their dilapidated schools.

Indeed, activists of the civil rights movement did enjoy an array of accomplishments, including the integration of schools. However, as aforementioned, the civil rights story is yet to enjoy it’s happily ever after. Schools are still segregated, and discrimination continues in housing, environmental policy, and the criminal justice system (de Jong 75). In favor of finance and international affairs that advance the value of the dollar, African Americans have had unequal access to the benefits of American capitalism” (de Jong 30). The capacity to achieve initiates in the classroom.

de Jong, Greta. *Invisible Enemy: The African American Freedom Struggle after 1965.* West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

**Detailed Steps of Lesson (including teaching methods/strategies that engage student participation):**

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| **Time Frame**  **(e.g. 15 minutes)** | **What is the teacher doing?** | **What are students doing?** |
| 10 minutes | Teacher will pass out two sets of demographics: one from McQueen High School and one from Hug High School. Teacher will grant students several minutes to read over the statistics. Teacher will explain that these are facts about students and school climates at McQueen and Hug. Based upon the demographics, do students think that segregation still exists in schools? How? Why? How do the demographics make students feel? Teacher will ask students to share their thoughts with someone sitting near them. | Students will peruse the demographics and consider the teacher’s questions. They will begin thinking about whether or not schools are still segregated and if so, how. They will react to the statistics that they read. Students will share their sentiments with their classmates and discuss reactions as a class. |
| 5 minutes | Teacher will inform students of the lesson’s objectives: students will formulate and communicate opinions regarding the current state of segregation after reading and analyzing a variety of documents, and obtaining a clear comprehension of relevant and historical vocabulary terms. Teacher will ask students what their initial opinions are. | Students will hypothesize about the current state of segregation based upon the opening activity. |
| 5 minutes | Teacher will review vocabulary needed to reach objectives: segregation, individual racism, institutionalized racism, de facto, de jure, Plessy vs. Ferguson, Jim Crow laws, Brown vs. Board of Education, and integration. | Students will participate in the review by responding with the term when teacher provides explanation. Students will also put the terms on the word wall. |
| 5 minutes | Teacher will tell students that they’ll be reading articles about the current state of segregation in schools in order to answer the question: is segregation dead in 2012? There are five articles, and students will be numbered off from one to five to determine which articles they will read. Teacher will tell students that they will form groups representing each number once articles have been read individually. Teacher will ask that students make annotations on their articles to highlight main points, questions, evidence suggesting that segregation still exists, and excerpts illustrating that segregation is dead. Teacher will tell students that they will use their annotations to share findings with group mates. | Students will write down instructions. |
| 5-10 minutes | Teacher will circulate as students read their articles. Teacher will help students make annotations. | Students will read their assigned articles. They will look for main ideas. They will ask the teacher questions about anything confusing encountered. Students will take note of evidence substantiating the current existence of segregation, as well as evidence suggesting that segregation has subsided. |
| 10-15 minutes | Teacher will sit with groups as students share findings from the articles that they read. Teacher will prod students to consider what the article said about Brown being a success, as well as what each article said about schools still being segregated. | Students will take turns explaining their articles with group mates. Students will start by sharing the main idea of the article. They will say what they think was the main idea and why. Students will share anything interesting that they learned from the article. Finally, students will say that the article supports that segregation still does or does not exist and why. |
| 5 minutes | Teacher will ask students to get back into the same groups from the previous day’s lesson to review the five articles. | Students will take a few minutes to review where they left off with the previous day’s lesson. Students will quickly summarize the five articles that they read and what they said about segregation in schools 50 years after Brown. |
| 15-20 minutes | Teacher will call the class back together to have a thrash out. Teacher will draw a line in the middle of the class. Teacher will ask students who think segregation is dead to stand on one side of the room, and those who think segregation exists are to stand on the other side of the room. Teacher will ask that all students participate, and that students use vocabulary and reference the articles that they read or heard about. | Students will decide which side of the room they want to stand on based upon the articles that they’ve read or heard about, as well as the vocabulary that they have learned. Students will move to the appropriate side of the room. Students will go back and forth defending their positions. Students will have the opportunity to change sides. Students will also regroup and talk amongst themselves about what they are missing from their arguments. Students can use notes and articles. |
| 10 minutes | Teacher will show excerpt from *Freedom Writers* when Hillary Swank’s character has students walk the line regarding race. Teacher will ask students to note their reactions, and whether the clip changed their perspective on the state of segregation. | Students will thoughtfully watch the clip. They will take note of initial reactions, as well as integrate the scene into their evaluations on the state of segregation. |
| 5-10 minutes | Teacher will instigate a whole class discussion to conclude the lesson. Teacher will ask the students to share their sentiments on segregation. Is it dead, or does segregation in schools still exist? How do they feel about segregation? How does it affect them? | Students will consider what they’ve learned about segregation in schools. They will express their opinions and reactions. At this point, students’ analysis of articles, integration of vocabulary, and evaluation of perspectives will come full circle. |
| 10 minutes | Teacher will inform students of a class vote-Does segregation still exist in schools and why? Teacher will say that this is an opportunity for students to reflect on what they’ve learned and why it matters. | Students will create a statement solidifying their opinion, and they will practice a real world skill: voting. Students will say: “I think that segregation in schools still exists/or does not exist because \_\_\_\_\_, and this is why we should care.” |
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**How will students reflect on their learning & understanding?** Following a full class discussion, final reflection will involve casting a vote regarding the current state of segregation in schools. Students will consider all of the information that they’ve acquired in the lesson before casting their votes, and integrate that knowledge into short responses supporting their votes.

**Description of Lesson Assessment Tied to Objective/Standards:** Students will have a thrash out, or class debate, regarding the current state of segregation, allowing them to appreciate that there are multiple perspectives surrounding school segregation, and the civil rights movement in general. The debate will require use of vocabulary, and students should cite the articles that they read or heard about in the group activity. Ultimately, students will understand that African Americans are being deprived of resources when schools are segregated, and that equality and full freedom are yet to be enjoyed by all Americans.

**Attached to the following pages are all readings, primary sources, guided questions, worksheets, assignment guidelines, rubrics, etc.**