Teaching American History Controversial Issue Lesson Plan Template

**Lesson Title:** Separate But Equal?

**Author Name:** Jamie Thomsen

**Contact Information:** jthomsen@washoeschools.net

**Appropriate for Grade Level(s):** 8th grade

**US History Standard(s):**

***H2.[6-8].21***Summarize the successes and failures of Reconstruction.

***H3.[6-8].9***Identify the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution and explain their impact on the expansion of human rights.

***H3.[6-8].10***Identify the Black Codes and Jim Crow Laws and explain how they reflected attitudes about race.

**Controversial Issue:** Constitutionality of Plessy v Ferguson and Separate but Equal

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

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to analyze the Supreme Court’s ruling in Plessy V Ferguson. Students will be able to write a letter to the editor supporting their given side in the case.

**This lesson will be part of a larger unit on Reconstruction and will be taught towards the end of the unit; after students have an understanding of Reconstruction, Jim Crow laws, and Plessy v Ferguson.**

**Rationale: Why Teach This Issue? (50-100 words)** Plessy V Ferguson is a landmark Supreme Court decision in which the high court ruled separate but equal facilities are constitutional. It is important to have students look at both opinions of the court so they have a better understanding of society during the late 1800s. In giving students the opportunity to analyze both sides of this case, students will have to take a closer look at both sides. By having students write a letter to an editor on their assigned side forces students to come up with arguments that support their side; the side they have been assigned may not be the side they agree with.

**Student Readings (list):**

Opinion of the Court:

<http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0163_0537_ZO.html>

Dissenting Opinion:

<http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0163_0537_ZD.html>

**Total Time Needed:** 1- 45 minute class period

**Historical Background & Context (+/- 250 words):**

Reconstruction isthe time period following the American Civil War; during this time, the US government worked to determine legislation and policies for readmitting the southern states into the Union in the attempt to rebuild the country. In addition to the controversy regarding the readmitting of the southern states, the government worked to solve the issues centered on the newly freed slaves. Although the 13th amendment abolished slavery, society struggled with the appropriate interaction between the two races. Emancipation altered the context for interaction between white and black people who had previously known each other only as masters and slaves, opening possibilities for new ideas about race to emerge (de Jong, 17). Despite the 14th and 15th amendments and the Civil Rights Act of 1866 attempts to provide equality, discrimination and racism encompassed not only the South but the entire country. Unfortunately, government and state sponsored discrimination existed in the country for nearly 100 years after the Civil War. By the mid 1900s, the Civil Rights Movement swept the country pushing for desegregation and equal rights. The movement started as a nonviolent revolution; however, throughout the years the movement became more radical as many felt that the nonviolent approach was not being successful. Brown v Board of Education overturned the earlier landmark case, Plessy v Ferguson in which the Supreme Court ruled that separate but equal facilities were constitutional. Not until the 1950s is Plessy V Ferguson challenged and separate but equal facilities deemed unconstitutional with public education under the ruling in Brown v Board of Education. Racial oppression in the mid-twentieth century United States was multi-faceted, encompassing both the overt discrimination of the southern Jim Crow system and the less visible racism built into government policies and private industry practices that enhanced white Americans’ fortunes while excluding large numbers of black people from opportunities for upward mobility (de Jong, 28).

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

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Time Frame**  **(e.g. 15 minutes)** | **What is the teacher doing?** | **What are students doing?** |
| 5 minutes | Teacher will divide the class in half for the activity following the opener. | For the class opener, students will respond to the following questions in their journal using what they know from prior lessons in this unit: How did the Supreme Court rule in Plessy v Ferguson? Were separate facilities equal? |
| 5 minutes | Teacher will lead student share out. | Students will share their responses with a partner and then with the whole class. |
| 15 minutes | Teacher will need to scaffold the opinions appropriately for each group of students. For 8th grade students, I would trim a lot from each reading. Other suggestions: provide students will list of vocabulary depending on what wording is cut from the opinion given to students. | Students will be given either the majority opinion or the dissenting opinion in Plessy v Ferguson to analyze. After reading their opinion, students will answer the questions attached. |
| 10 minutes | Teacher will answer any questions students have regarding their opinion. | Students will share their responses with other students who had the same opinion. |
| 10 minutes | Teacher will have students get with a person who had the opposite reading and students will share their answers and opinions. | Students will share their answers with a student who had the opposite opinion. |
|  | Pass out homework |  |

**How will students reflect on their learning & understanding?** Students will reflect on their learning throughout the lesson. The I Can for the lesson is Separate but Equal? so as they are working on the activity they will need to relate the concepts to the I Can.

**Description of Lesson Assessment Tied to Objective/Standards:** Students will write a letter to an editor that supports the side they were assigned. This will force students to possibly support the side they do not agree with. The letter must address separate but equal?

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

**Questions for Opinion of the Court:**

* Who is giving the opinion?
* What is your opinion of the reading? Do you agree or disagree with the reading?
* What is one question you would ask the Court based on this opinion?
* What line from the reading do you think is the most powerful? Why?
* List 3 arguments from the reading that supports the opinion.
* Summarize the opinion in your own words in 2 sentences.

**Questions for Dissenting Opinion:**

* Who is giving the dissenting opinion?
* What is meant by “our Constitution is color blind”?
* What is your opinion of the reading? Do you agree or disagree with the reading?
* What is one question you would ask the Court based on this opinion?
* What line from the reading do you think is the most powerful? Why?
* List 3 arguments from the reading that supports the dissenting opinion.
* Summarize the opinion in your own words in 2 sentences.

**Rubric for Letter to the Editor:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Requirements:** | **Points Possible:** | **Points Earned:** |
| Letter is at least 2 paragraphs | 5 points |  |
| Supports the opinion assigned | 10 points |  |
| Includes facts from the reading | 10 points |  |
| Few spelling and/or grammatical errors | 5 points |  |

Total points earned: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/ 30 points

**Letter to the Editor**

Write a letter to the editor trying to convince the public of your opinion. Remember, you are taking on the opinion you were assigned, even if you do not agree with it. Follow the rubric for the requirements.

Dear Editor,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_