

NYSBA/LYC Brown v. Board of Education

M.S. Lesson Activity no. 5

Excerpts from Newspaper Editorials — May 18, 1954

Application

Students — Grade 7 and 8

Lesson Time

One class period

Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Explain different points of view of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.
2. Understand why these different points of view existed.

Materials

[Handout A: Excerpts from Newspaper Editorials — May 18, 1954](#)

Activity

1. Teachers may choose to ask the following questions prior to distributing the handout:
 - How is an editorial different from other pages in a newspaper?
 - What is the purpose of an editorial?
 - In 1954, what forms of media delivered news to Americans?
 - What forms of media deliver news to Americans today?
 - Do newspaper editorials have greater or less influence today?
2. Distribute [Handout A](#) and allow time for students to complete handout.
3. Class discussion of the material contained in the [handout](#).

New York State Standards

Students will understand that important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs and traditions from New York State and United States history illustrate the connections and interactions of people and events across time and from a variety of perspectives.

Students will identify cultural characteristics of different regions and people.

Format

This lesson is in constructed response question format which is used in New York State Assessments.

Web Site

<http://www.landmarkcases.org/brown/reaction.html>

Part II

Directions: Write your answers to the questions that follow in the spaces provided in this *simulated* test sheet.

Base your answers to questions 1 through 6 on the excerpts below and on your knowledge of social studies.

Excerpt From Newspaper Editorial A

Neither the atom bomb nor the hydrogen bomb will ever be as meaningful to our democracy as the unanimous decision of the Supreme Court of the United States that racial segregation violates the spirit and letter of our Constitution. This means the beginning of the end of the dual society in American life and the . . . segregation which supported it.

— *Defender*, Chicago, May 18, 1954

Excerpt From Newspaper Editorial B

It is too early to tell what effect the Supreme Court decision to abolish segregated schools will have on the South Although it is hard from a strict legal point of view to justify any action contrary to law, we feel that the people of the South are justified in their bitterness concerning this decision. To many people this decision is contrary to a way of life and violates the way in which they have thought since 1619.

— *Cavalier Daily* (University of Virginia), May 18, 1954

1 On what date were these two editorials printed in newspapers?

2 Which editorial does **not** support the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*?

3 Quote **one** phrase from this editorial to support your answer **on question 2**.

4 Which editorial supports the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*?

5 Quote **one** phrase from this editorial to support your answer **on question 4**.

6 Why is there a difference in opinion between these two editorials that were published on the same day?

Base your answers to questions 1 through 4 on the excerpt below and on your knowledge of social studies.

Excerpt From Newspaper Editorial C

. . . It is true, of course, that the (United States Supreme) court is . . . talking of a system of human rights which is foreshadowed in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, which stated “that all men are created equal.” Mr. Jefferson and the others who were responsible for the Declaration did not intend to say that all men are equally intelligent, equally good or equal in height or weight. They meant to say that all men were, and ought to be, equal before the law. If men are equal, children are equal, too. There is an even greater necessity in the case of children, whose opportunities to advance themselves and to be useful to the community may be lost if they do not have the right to be educated.

No one can deny that the mingling of the races in the schools of the seventeen states which have required segregation and the three states which have permitted it will create problems. The folkways [ways of thinking, feeling and acting] in southern communities will have to be adapted to new conditions if white and Negro children, together with white and Negro teachers, are to enjoy not only equal facilities but the same facilities in the same schools.

. . . The highest court in the land, the guardian of our national conscience, has reaffirmed its faith — and the undying American faith — in the equality of all men and all children before the law.

— *The New York Times*, May 18, 1954 (adapted)

1 At the time of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, how many states required segregation in public schools? _____

How many states permitted it? _____

2 According to this document, what does the phrase “that all men are created equal” in the Declaration of Independence mean?

3 According to this document, what will have to change in Southern states if the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision is implemented successfully?

4 Why is equality in education so important to encourage and maintain democracy in our country?
