

# ***Brown v. the Board of Education: Success or Failure?***

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**Grade Level:** Middle/High

**Duration of lesson:** 1-2 periods

**Overview:**

Now fifty years old, the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision is commonly represented as the case that set racial integration in motion in the United States. But in the mid-1950s, actual student integration was in fact decades away in most states, and even today it remains an ongoing, complex process. This lesson illustrates, through six post-*Brown* court cases, the social and legal realities that greeted black students who attempted to enroll in traditionally all-white schools. From Charlottesville, Virginia, to Boston, Massachusetts, local politicians and parent groups fought the Supreme Court's injunction tooth and nail. Private schools (funded partially with public revenue) sprung up for the purpose of preserving an all-white student body. In South Boston, angry white students threw rocks at newly bussed black students who arrived from their neighborhood of Roxbury. Eventually, though, additional Supreme Court decisions, demanding the enforcement of a "unitary" system of public schooling under the terms of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, forced resistant communities to comply with the measures to desegregate America's students. By exploring the legal documents, press reports, and personal accounts of the era, students will discover the social conditions that made integration into perhaps the fiercest battle of the Civil Rights movement.

**Related [National History Standards:](#)**

**Content Standards:**

**Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)**

**Standard 4:** The struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil liberties

**Historical Thinking Standards:**

**Standard 2: Historical Comprehension**

- A. Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage.
- B. Identify the central question(s) the historical narrative addresses.

**Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation**

- B. Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions.
- D. Consider multiple perspectives.

**Standard 4: Historical Research Capabilities**

- A. Formulate historical questions.
- C. Interrogate historical data.

**Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making**

- A. Identify issues and problems in the past.

**B.** Marshal evidence of antecedent circumstances and contemporary factors contributing to problems and alternative courses of action.

**Lesson Objectives:**

- Students will identify reactions to *Brown v. Board of Education*.
- Students will evaluate the extent to which *Brown* was successful in desegregating American education.
- Students will evaluate the role of the judiciary in affecting societal change.

## Topic Background:

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States handed down a decision that would irrevocably change the nature of race relations in America. In *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, 349 U.S. 294, the Court ruled that the concept of “separate but equal” had “no place” in American life or jurisprudence, in effect, nullifying the legality of segregation that had been established in the 1896 decision *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Writing the unanimous opinion, Chief Justice Earl Warren cited that American’s system of segregated schools was “inherently unequal” under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment’s “Equal Protection Clause.” Many supporters and leaders of the Civil Rights movement, including the future Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King, praised the promise contained within *Brown*, calling it “simple, eloquent, and unequivocal” and a “joyous daybreak to end the long night of enforced segregation”(Orfield, 5). However, even as King lauded the achievement of *Brown* as one step closer to the creation of a truly color blind society, he recognized that the road ahead would be a long one, paved with resistance and even “open defiance” (Orfield, 5).

Today, at its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, *Brown* still holds a sacred place among America’s landmark Supreme Court cases. Historian Michael Klarman wrote, “Constitutional lawyers and historians generally deem *Brown v. Board of Education* to be the most important U.S. Supreme Court decision of the twentieth century, and possibly of all time” (Klarman, 81). As a result, *Brown* receives much attention in secondary social studies classrooms across the country. In 1999, scholars at the University of Wisconsin, Madison found that in the twenty states that contain Supreme Court cases in their social studies standards documents, *Brown* was the most commonly included (Hess 276). More interestingly, however, is the way in which *Brown* is presented to students. As one high school teacher explains, *Brown* is taught “because it is such a clear example of how a democracy, when it works the way it is supposed to, can make progress. It is obvious to my students that segregation was wrong and that the Court was right – few things in our history are just so manifestly good” (Cushman, 275). Although many scholars, historians, and educators alike affirm the essence of the teacher’s statement, they might also offer a reminder that the legacy and “iconization” of *Brown* is controversial and facing “academic assault.” King’s expectation and recognition of resistance to *Brown* should not be forgotten within the secondary social studies classroom, for we want to convey to our students a complete picture of the struggle for integration of American schools and the impact of integration today.

One way to remedy this misrepresentation of *Brown* as “a slam dunk” Supreme Court case is to provide students with conflicting evidence from the historical record, as well as current research on levels of integration, and pose “difficult and troubling questions about precisely how much impact *Brown* really had on American life” (Cushman, 275). These questions should include: How did geography, race, socio-economic status, gender, and political ideology influence reactions to *Brown*? What methods were utilized to resist *Brown*? How quickly did school systems move to desegregate following the *Brown* ruling? Was *Brown* the most effective means by which to integrate education and ultimately the American way of life? What role did the judiciary play in desegregation, and finally was *Brown* successful in achieving its goal of equal protection under the law for all Americans? A survey, spanning the last fifty

years, of six cases in the struggle for desegregation can enable students to begin asking these “difficult and troubling” questions and develop a more nuanced understanding of *Brown* and its legacy today.

Before students can examine *Brown*’s legacy they must first examine immediate reactions to *Brown* and the historical context for these reactions. Perhaps the most the infamous battle over the *Brown* ruling occurred in September of 1957 at Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas. Governor Orval Faubus, amid threats of violence and disorder among citizens, declared that he would block any attempts to “integrate” Central. True to his word, on September 2, Faubus ordered the Arkansas National Guard to Central High. His action initiated a “constitutional crisis over the extent of state power versus federal authority.” After three weeks of legal wrangling and an unsuccessful meeting with Eisenhower in Washington, Faubus replaced the Guard with local police, but on September 23 when nine black students attempted to enter the school amid an angry protest, rioting erupted. The nine black students were denied entrance and escorted home, according to the chief of police, “for their own safety.” Recognizing the severity of the explosive situation, Little Rock’s mayor petitioned Eisenhower to send federal troops “to restore order.” On September 25, with the arrival of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, Little Rock looked more like a city under siege than a quiet southern community. As armed troops secured Central High and military helicopters flew overhead, the nine black students, accompanied by military personnel, finally entered the school (Jacoway, 8).

While the remainder of the school year passed without violence, and Ernest Green quietly earned the distinction as the first black graduate of Central High on May 27, 1958, the struggle over integration continued in the courts. When the Supreme Court ruled, in *Cooper v. Aaron (1958)*, that Central had to desegregate according to the “Blossom Plan” (proposed by school Superintendent Virgil Blossom), Faubus ordered the school closed (11).

A battle for the continuance of public education in Little Rock ensued and divided the community across segregationist and moderate lines. The segregationists moved to establish a private system of segregated education, partially funded with public money. On the other hand, moderates, including several mothers and businessmen who feared the economic consequences of closing public schools, moved to support reopening public schools even if it meant accepting limited integration. When moderates gained control of Little Rock’s school board, they moved immediately to open the schools (13).

The crisis in Little Rock, in which ordinary, normally law-abiding citizens openly defied the highest court in the land was rooted in the political context of the day. In 1956, the congressional leaders of Arkansas signed the “Southern Manifesto,” declaring *Brown* a “clear abuse of judicial power” by which an activist judiciary in violation of the Constitution usurped powers held by Congress and the American people (Georgia Info, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia, <http://www.cviog.uga.edu/Projects/gainfo/manifesto.htm>). As one historian noted, “It was difficult to try and convince people that there was no alternative but to obey the law of the land, that they should accept the inevitable, when leading politicians in the state were proclaiming that there was an alternative, that desegregation could be avoided” (Jacoway, 97). The crisis at Little Rock, which occurred three years after *Brown*, clearly demonstrated the lengths to which white opponents of desegregation were willing to go, especially when their political leaders encouraged and even modeled the taking of such

drastic measures. Furthermore, Little Rock demonstrated that executive and perhaps legislative enforcement of *Brown* would be necessary. In the case of Central High School, Eisenhower responded immediately when asked to send federal troops, but no attempt by the federal government was made prior to the outbreak of violence to ensure that desegregation occurred peacefully and without delay.

The situation in Little Rock stands as a classic example of the violence associated with the movement called Massive Resistance. Virginia Senator Harry F. Byrd originally promoted Massive Resistance to unite white politicians against integration. Initially, Massive Resistance took the form of legislation, such as denying integrated schools state funds and providing vouchers for white students to receive private education. However, leaders throughout the South advocated the use of violent resistance as part of the massive resistance movement.

School integration in Prince Edward County, Virginia, one of the original cases included in the consolidated *Brown* decision, mirrors in many ways the crisis in Arkansas. Though accomplished without violence, the resistance to *Brown* took a more extreme form, with the cessation of public education for four years. Following the Supreme Court's 1955 enforcement decree, known as *Brown II*, which declared that schools must integrate "with all deliberate speed," the legislature of Virginia, supported by Gov. Lindsay Almond, adopted the doctrine of interposition, introducing Massive Resistance laws in the state. Under Massive Resistance, the state government of Virginia would "interpose" itself between the people of Virginia and the federal government to prevent enforcement of the Court's "unconstitutional" decision. The Massive Resistance legislation required "school closure and the termination of state funds to any locality where integration occurred" (VC Report, 9).

Segregationists of Prince Edward County took this as legal justification to fiercely oppose any attempts to integrate public schools, and they moved, as in Little Rock, to develop the Prince Edward School Foundation, a system of private education for white students. The presence and influence of political moderates in Prince Edward was virtually absent; as result, even when Virginia's Massive Resistance legislation was struck down and Almond called for laws allowing school boards to integrate, Prince Edward residents refused to comply and continued to seek remedy in the courts. In June of 1959, the school board rejected the proposed 1959-1960 school budget, resulting in the closure of all public schools.

On September 10, 1959, the Prince Edward School Foundation opened with an enrollment of 1,475 white students, denying 1,700 black children access to educational programs (VC 12). Several stop-gap measures were adopted by black parents, including sending some 583 children to live with relatives or friends in other counties when it became apparent that school closures might continue indefinitely. Other children attended "informal, morale-building centers" or the Prince Edward County Christian Association training centers. The American Friends Service Committee and the Virginia State Teachers Association were instrumental in developing, funding and implementing these programs. However, the training centers could not provide traditional, formal educational services, and unfortunately, many students received no training of any kind (VC 25).

For four years, black citizens and the NAACP fought a legal battle in the courts to restore access to public education. In 1963, the Supreme Court of Virginia agreed to

hear the case, with disappointing results for supporters of integration. Chief Justice Eddleston in his dissent wrote that the school closings had “brought to [Virginia] the shameful distinction of having within its border the only school district in the nation where free schools are not provided for its children.” The majority of the Court, however, disagreed, stating, “Our task is to construe a constitution, not to provide a remedy for a ‘shameful situation’. . . however regrettable the situation may be.” Finally, after twenty major court decisions handed down at all levels of the judicial system, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case in 1964. Justice Hugo Black, in his majority opinion wrote that the school closings and simultaneous establishment of private schools for whites “denied the Colored students and parents equal protection under the law guaranteed in the Constitution.” When classes resumed in Prince Edward County in the fall of 1964, some 2,100 black students enrolled (Foster 66). “Crash Programs” were provided through the preceding summer in an effort to remediate students, who had been deprived of formal education for four years (VC 26). Again, the success of the crusade for desegregation centered around the ability of the courts and government in general to enforce the parameters of *Brown* and *Brown II*.

Another community in Virginia faced the inevitability of desegregation without violence and without a lengthy closing of public schools, but resistance still had its day in the town of Charlottesville. When Governor Almond ordered public school closed in the fall of 1958, two groups promoting drastically different temporary education systems vied for student enrollment and community support. The Charlottesville Education Foundation (CEF) formed to replace public schools permanently with a segregated system of private education. In contrast, the Parents’ Committee for Emergency Schooling (PCES), a group of nine Charlottesville mothers, proposed a temporary educational system that would terminate when public schools reopened, even if schools were integrated.

Many whites in Charlottesville were ambivalent about openly defying *Brown*, but they were also concerned that supporting public education would be misinterpreted as supporting integration. As result the PCES sought to “redefine the school closing as an educational crisis instead of a race relations crisis.” This redefinition of the crisis was a “decisive” moment that would ultimately preserve Charlottesville’s public school system (Lassiter 73).

Both CEF and PCES operated during the first four months of the 1958-1959 academic year; interestingly, black families did not seek admittance to PCES, even though its members privately agree to accept black children should any apply. In January, two court decisions, one state and one federal, ruled that school closings violated the Constitution, especially the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment’s “Equal Protection” clause. Initially, the schools opened on a segregated basis as a stay was granted to develop a plan for desegregation. The following September, nine black elementary students and three high school students attended Venable and Lane respectively. The addition of black students at Lane High resulted in a 15% drop in attendance, but otherwise both schools opened, minus the violence that erupted in Little Rock two years prior (Lassiter 98).

That limited integration occurred in Charlottesville peacefully and without a relatively lengthy school closure can be explained by the existence of CEF. Students of the most ardent segregationists did not attend the public schools. This provided a “safety-valve”

that was not present in Little Rock nor Prince Edward County. In addition, on September 2, 1958, Mayor Thomas Michie encouraged respect for law and order and even expressed his support for public education, perhaps indicating a willingness to accept some integration, a position that unpopular Mayor Mann of Little Rock could not offer publicly (Lassiter, 83-100). As historian Andrew B. Lewis pointed out, "Just as ardent segregationists thwarted implementation of the *Brown* decision for several years, so did moderates halt the most extreme attempts to defy the Supreme Court" (103).

Indeed, from the outset PCES declared its willingness to accept limited integration following the school closings and abided by its promise; however, the fact remains that "token desegregation" continued in Charlottesville until 1965. At Lane High School, for example, an original enrollment of three black students in 1959 grew to just twenty-six by 1962." Substantial desegregation" came after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 when legislative and executive enforcement of judicial rulings required the city to develop a "comprehensive" desegregation plan (Lassiter, 101). As in the cases mentioned above, Charlottesville provides yet another example of white Southerners dragging their feet on the desegregation issue due to lack of enforcement by the courts. The case poses the question, "how far can courts move if they attempt to swim against the tide of majority opinion? Liberals. . .like Marshall insisted that the courts – and other agents of state authority – could change behavior: people who face a firmly enforced law will necessarily think and act differently" (Patterson, 183).

Similar to its Deep South counterparts, the state of Delaware followed the precedent of "separate but equal," as contained in the *Plessy* decision, in its public school system. However, when the Supreme Court struck down segregation in *Brown*, which included one case from Delaware, the state implemented a desegregation plan that would create racially balanced districts by consolidating formerly all-black and all-white districts. In the city of Wilmington, a slightly different approach to desegregation was adopted and achieved initial success. However, over the next twenty years, "a pattern of racial separation within the city schools" developed due to population increase and suburban growth (Green 39). In the mid-1970s, district courts ordered, in *Evans vs. Buchanan*, a consolidation of the city with all suburban districts. From the newly consolidated district, four racially balanced sub-districts were created (Lee 12). Initially, implementation of the plan received heavy resistance, accompanied by a two-year "white flight" enrollment decrease of 8% and 9% respectively. But while some conflict regarding disciplinary measures remains, "school officials note that the racial climate in the schools has improved over the years" (Green, 56-59). As result of *Evans*, Delaware became "one of the nation's most integrated states throughout the 1980s and 1990s, a record which . . . continued into the 2001-2002 school year" (Orfield,13). Unfortunately, the success achieved in Delaware with the development of unitary systems has not been mirrored in many other areas of the country, especially in Northern metropolitan areas such as Boston.

For Boston, court-ordered busing became the impetus for resistance to integration. In 1974, Federal District Judge Wendell Garrity, citing the *Keyes* precedent, ordered busing of students between the predominantly black neighborhood of Roxbury and white South Boston to eliminate "a dual system of secondary education." The city erupted in violent resistance to the busing initiatives. On September 12, when the first Roxbury bus arrived in South Boston, an angry crowd of white students screamed

obscenities and threw rocks and bottles. Of the 1,539 students enrolled at the high school only 196 students attended. At Roxbury High the day progressed peacefully; however, only ten of 525 whites assigned to the school actually enrolled. Over the next three years, the city would be plagued with episodic violence and racial tension, but by 1977, “remarkable changes had occurred in the Boston school system,” with citizens “accepting desegregation as a fact of life.” However, this seemingly positive outcome must be tempered by an examination of “white flight” statistics. Between 1973 and 1975, the enrollment of white students dropped from 55 to 42 percent, and of eight neighborhood districts six were more than 50 percent black and one was never integrated (Metcalf, 201-217).

Between 1968 and 1973, in a series of decisions, the Supreme Court specified several methods by which desegregation might be carried out. *Green v. New Kent County*, 391 U.S. 430 (1968) stated all aspects of the educational endeavor, including “facilities, staff, faculty, extra-curricular activities and transportation, must be equalized through desegregation policies.” In the unanimously decided *Alexander v. Holmes County [Mississippi] Board of Education*, 396 U.S. 19 (1969) the Court ordered that schools systems “operate now and hereafter only unitary schools.” *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenberg Board of Education*, 402 U.S. 1 (1971) declared that transportation might be used as a means to desegregate schools so as to achieve unitary systems “to the greatest extent possible.” Finally, in 1973, the Court took on *de facto* segregation in the North and West and held that if segregation existed in just one area of a district, the entire district would be violating the Constitution’s “equal protection” against segregation (Eaton, xxi). Orfield and Lee have argued that recent Supreme Court decisions overturning these cases has led to the resegregation of American schools (Orfield, 2). For example, the stipulations in *Green* that had once guided the development of desegregation plans, now serve to measure whether or not a school system has achieved unitary status. In *Board of Education of Oklahoma v. Dowell*, 498 U.S. 237 (1991), the court, in fact, ruled that once a system had been declared unitary, the school would be returned to local government control and desegregation plans could be abandoned (Eaton xxiii). In January 2004, on the eve of *Brown’s* 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee of the Harvard Civil Rights Project published a report entitled “*Brown at 50: King’s Dream or Plessy’s Nightmare.*” The report indicated that while some gains had been made towards development of unitary (racially balanced) school systems, in the 1990s an alarming trend of resegregation occurred.

This reversal and movement away from government enforced desegregation has had profound consequences for the nation’s schools and the thousands of students who attend them each year. Urban areas, especially those in the North, are the “epicenter of segregation.” These cities have been plagued by the flight of both the white and black middle class and residential segregation. Furthermore, in stark contrast to their suburban white counterparts, segregated minority students in these metropolitan areas live in poverty, resulting in loss of access to academic/extra-curricular opportunity, strong preschool experiences, qualified teachers, and stability of residence (Orfield, 21-25).

The reality of desegregation is more positive in the South, as the majority of blacks do not attend completely segregated schools. In addition, teacher salaries have been equalized, black history and culture has been added to curricula, and over all schools

are better funded and more equal in terms of facilities than in 1954. These racially balanced schools often boast higher achievement for minorities on standardized tests, and both white and black students who attend these schools, are more likely to live and work in integrated settings later on in life. So while there is a trend toward resegregation, it is “no where near the situation that existed in 17 of our states and nation’s capital 50 years before the civil rights revolution” (Orfield, 20). But, the story of desegregation continues to unfold. While clearly some movement toward King’s dream has been made, progress has been slow in coming and replete with setbacks. If King’s dream is ever to be realized, it is incumbent upon social studies educators to present the struggle for integration and the legacy of *Brown* as a complex and ongoing challenge.

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### **Annotated Bibliography:**

**Foster, Gerald Anthony and Vonita White Foster. *Silent Trumpets of Justice: Integration's Failure in Prince Edward County*. Hampton, Virginia: U.B. & U.S. Communication Systems, 1993.**

*Silent Trumpets* offers a thorough treatment of the events leading up to the closing of public schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia. The perspective provided is unique in that author Vonita White Foster experienced the crisis first-hand. After having obtained her doctorate from Virginia Commonwealth University, she returned to Prince Edward County to document the impact the closures had on black citizens of the county.

**Orfield, Gary and Chungmei Lee. *Brown at 50: King's Dream or Plessy's Nightmare*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, 2004.**

In *Brown at 50*, Orfield and Lee argue that American education is undergoing a "quiet reversal" of desegregation, due several Supreme Court rulings through the 1990s. First, the cases which comprised the original *Brown* decision are revisited and current integration levels are examined. Second, nation integration levels are compared over-time, region to region, state to state, and urban to rural. Although the amount of statistical information makes the report somewhat dense, the report is useful in providing current quantitative data regarding the impact of desegregation.

**Jacoway, Elizabeth and C. Fred Williams. *Understanding the Little Rock Crisis: An Exercise in Remembrance and Reconciliation*. Fayetteville, Arkansas: The University of Arkansas Press, 1999.**

At 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Little Rock crisis, several historians gathered at the University of Arkansas to host a conference, which shared the title of this text. Editor Elizabeth Jacoway offered both the text and the conference in an attempt to provide the political, social, economic and historical context for the crisis at Central High. *Understanding the Little Rock Crisis* contrasts white and black reactions to *Brown* and the role politics, through the Southern Manifesto and Governor Orval Faubus, played in bringing about the crisis.

## **Vocabulary**

**De Jure Segregation:** The spatial and social separation of populations that occurs without legal sanction.

## Teaching Procedures

### Materials Needed:

- Computer Lab with Internet Access

1. Ask students:

**Have they seen any rated-R movies lately?**

**Why do they go even though they know they are not legally permitted to view the film?** (This motivation encouraged students to consider why and how people resist changes, political decisions and laws)

2. Project a copy of Resource Sheet #1, "Brown in Cartoon." Challenge student responses to the previous questions by asking students to compare reactions to the *Brown* decision communicated in the two political cartoons. Ask about each cartoon:

**What is the meaning of the cartoon?**

**How does the cartoonist feel about the Brown decision?**

**How are the reactions to Brown similar or different?**

**Why do the reactions differ?**

**Which cartoon do you think will be a more accurate depiction of reactions to Brown?**

**What might be the consequences of these reactions?**

3. Introduce students to the controversy surrounding the successes and failures of *Brown* and invite students to participate in the historical debate over its legacy. Consult the topic background for context of the controversy. Explain that in order to participate in this debate they must engage in some research to determine how *Brown* should be remembered. How did Americans react to *Brown*? Was integration carried out successfully? How important was the Supreme Court in the process of integration? Was the *Brown* decision itself adequate to ameliorate the inequality produced by segregation?
4. Divide students into groups of six and explain that each student will be individually responsible for researching one issue related to integration from period of 1954-2004. Provide each student in the group with one of the following Resource Sheets:

Resource Sheet #2, "Integration Goes Forward at CHS"  
Resource Sheet #3, "Interview with Ruth Eggleston"  
Resource Sheet #4, "Interview with David F. Cooke"  
Resource Sheet #5, "Television Interviews"  
Resource Sheet #6, "Desegregation in Delaware"  
Resource Sheet #7, "Executive Summary"

Instruct students to examine their source and identify the following:

Author and date of source  
Reactions to desegregation by white and black Americans  
Whether reactions were favorable, unfavorable or indifferent, and success or failure of integration.

Students may record these responses on Resource Sheet #8, "Brown v. Board of Education: Success or Failure?"

5. Assemble groups and have students share with one another their responses to the above questions. Circulate to ensure that students are specific in their responses and make explicit reference to the primary source documents. After students exchanged research, instruct each group to reach a consensus regarding the success or failure of *Brown* based on the evidence they have examined. Students should record their thoughts on Resource Sheet #8.
6. Initiate a full class discussion, by once again projecting Resource Sheet #1 and posing the following questions:

**Which cartoon is more representative of the reactions to Brown?**

**What can we learn about the accuracy of political cartoons from this exercise?**

Transition to the issue of greater importance by asking representatives from various groups to share their consensus about the success or failure of *Brown*. Refer to Content Narrative and Primary Source Annotations as a guide to key points that should be covered during the course of the discussion. The following questions may be used to direct discussion:

**Did Brown accomplish its intended goal? Why/why not?** (Possible Responses: Brown did not accomplish its goal because large-scale integration truly occurred and any gains that have been made are currently reversing. Twenty years passed after Brown was handed down and still whites were fighting integrations. We still have segregated schools day and schools are becoming more segregated.)

**Which source was most convincing to you in the development of your consensus? Why?** (Possible responses: The document about the crisis in Boston because it showed how divisive integration was even twenty years after Brown was passed. The document about the closing of public schools in Prince Edward County shows the lengths whites would go to prevent integration.)

**Did the documents provide a complete picture of the process of integration? Why or why not? If the story is incomplete, what can we do to fill-in the holes?** (Documents don't give a picture of how integrated the specific schools districts mentioned in them are currently.)

**When was Brown most successful? Why? (Mention of the Civil Rights Act and executive enforcement of judicial decrees is most appropriate here.)** (Brown was most successful in Charlottesville because people focused on supporting public education rather than integration. In addition, Brown worked only when the federal government enforced the laws.)

**What can we learn about the role of the courts in changing society from our research?** (Courts can hand down a ruling but unless the other branches enforce their decision their rulings have little impact)

**Was Brown a good decision?**

**Was Brown the right decision?**

7. Project Resource 9, "Brown: The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary," and ask students to explain and react to the meaning of the cartoon.
8. Assess students' understanding of the reactions to *Brown* and its success and failures by distributing Resource Sheet #10, "*Brown* in Cartoon: Now It's Your Turn," and have students develop a political cartoon according to the instructions provided.
9. A possible extension activity includes having students research the process and success of integration within their own community. Discuss as a class whether or not *Brown* was successfully applied.

## Primary Source Annotation:

### Political Cartoons

The first of two political cartoons used in this lesson is entitled, “A Supreme Court Bomb!” This cartoon appeared in the Richmond *Afro-American* on May 22, 1954 and likens “the decision on segregated schools” to the explosion of a bomb. The second cartoon is untitled and appeared in the Chicago Defender on June 12, 1954. In contrast to the first, this cartoon portrays the Court’s decision as deliverance for African-Americans from their bondage of segregation. These cartoons should be used to introduce students to the controversy surrounding the immediate as well as long-term reception and success of *Brown*. Both cartoons may be found at <http://www.landmarkcases.org/brown/cartoons.html>.

### Integration Goes Forward at CHS

The front-page article from *The Tiger*, the student newspaper at Little Rock Central High School, appeared October 3, 1957. The article provides an overview, from a white student’s perspective, of the events surrounding the integration of Central in September of 1957. The article is located at Central High’s current website on its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary webpage ([http://www.centralhigh57.org/the\\_tiger.htm](http://www.centralhigh57.org/the_tiger.htm)).

### Interview of Ruth Eggleston

This interview completed by the Center for Digital History at the University of Virginia and is included in the Center’s “The Ground Beneath Our Feet” project on Massive Resistance. Ruth Eggleston’s son Carl was a middle school when Prince Edward County Public Schools closed in 1959 to avoid integration. She describes the difficulty that black families faced when public schools closed and white citizens of the county established a private system of education for their children. Ms. Eggleston’s interview is available in both audio-visual and printed forms at <http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/HIST604/people.html>.

### Interview with Dave Cooke

This interview was also completed by the Center for Digital History for the project mentioned above. Mr. Cooke coached basketball at Lane High School in Charlottesville, Virginia when the school was integrated in 1959. That the Charlottesville schools integrated peacefully, after being closed in 1958, provides students with a strong contrast to the violence which erupted at Central High in Little Rock and the extremes to which citizens in Prince Edward County went to resist desegregation. The oral history is available in both audio-visual and printed forms at <http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/HIST604/people.html>.

## News Footage

The video news clips utilized in this lesson were broadcast in Boston during the mid-1970s and detail the controversy surrounding court-ordered busing to force integration of city schools. Most of the footage appeared on *The Ten O'clock News*, *The Reporters* and *Evening Compass*. The clips may be found at [http://main.wgbh.org/ton/browse\\_subject.html](http://main.wgbh.org/ton/browse_subject.html). However, for the purposes of this lesson instructors might wish to direct students' attention to the *Evening Compass* broadcast from December 12, 1974, as it provides a good overview of the controversy.

## Desegregation in Delaware

This is an excerpt from a report published by *The Civil Rights Project* at Harvard University. Researchers Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee examined current data regarding the impact of *Brown*. One of the cases included in the *Brown* decision originated in Delaware, and the report describes the successes of integration in that state which are still present today. Interestingly enough, court enforced desegregation did not come to Wilmington, Delaware, until the late 1970s. The report is entitled, *Brown at 50: King's Dream or Plessy's Nightmare?* and is located at The Civil Rights Project website in PDF format.

(<http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/reseg04/resegregation04.php>.)

## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Cartoon

Finally, the cartoon by Matt Davies appeared in *The Journal News*, a regional newspaper for Westchester, Rockland, and Putnam, New York, on May 18, 2004 in recognition of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Brown v. Board*.