

# THE **GREAT DEBATES**<sup>TM</sup>

POWERED BY THE MUSEUM OF BROADCAST COMMUNICATIONS

**CURRICULUM & TOOLS**

**9<sup>TH</sup>-12<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**



**- RACE AND THE U.S. SUPREME COURT -**



## RACE AND THE U.S. SUPREME COURT

This high-school lesson plan has been developed to help students improve media literacy by guiding them through the history of how the U.S. Supreme Court has dealt with race relations in the United States over the years.

Students will use history articles giving an overview of the three most famous Supreme Court decisions affecting Black Americans to learn about the relationship between the country's highest court and racial laws: *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Students will be taken through the history of each U.S. Supreme Court case, and they will examine each using a graphic organizer.

The class will walk through and discuss the recent events surrounding the confirmation of the newest associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Amy Coney Barrett. Then, students will be asked to connect it back to lessons learned, drawing their own conclusions about the makeup of the federal courts today.

This lesson should be taught after students have some background knowledge on the U.S. Supreme Court and how it works. If they have not studied this section of the government, a lesson on the workings of the U.S. Supreme Court would be appropriate on the day before reaching this lesson. Students will be using prior knowledge, the links below, and resources on Museum of Broadcast Communications' website to complete this lesson.

# SUMMARY

In this lesson, students will examine the history behind the U.S. Supreme Court's rulings on matters dealing with race in United States history. Students will be guided through three important court cases, two that sided against Black Americans, one that sided with Black Americans. Through this lesson, students will gain a deeper understanding of how the U.S. Supreme Court affects policy, and how the future of the U.S. Supreme Court may be affected by President Donald Trump's appointment of Associate Justice Amy Coney Barrett.

# MATERIALS NEEDED

## Teacher

- Teacher computer/tablet
- Access to website
- Worksheets and answer key
- Handouts

## Student

- Computers/tablets for reading/viewing
- Access to website
- Headphones if choosing video research
- Worksheets/handouts
- Graphic organizers and pens/pencils
- Exit slip

# STANDARDS

D2.CIV.1.9-12.

DISTINGUISH THE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL, STATE, TRIBAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CIVIC AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS.

D2.CIV.8.9-12.

EVALUATE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS, TIMES AND PLACES, THAT PROMOTE CIVIC VIRTUES AND ENACT DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES.

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Given readings on three important court cases, the students will be able to evaluate how the U.S. Supreme Court has affected Black Americans over time by filling out a graphic organizer within class time.
- Given class readings, discussions and background knowledge, the students will be able to draw their own conclusions about the current court by writing or presenting on it as homework.

Teacher	Student	Minutes
<b>Day 1:</b> Introduce students to the topic by showing them the Sunday Today show video (in the Resource list) as a hook to the lesson. Then, ask students the following question: Why, as the reporter said, would a president want to nominate a justice to the U.S. Supreme Court that would be popular in the U.S. Senate? Why would a president pick someone who is not popular?	Students watching, discussing.	10 Minutes
Hand out graphic organizers. Read instructions with students on how to proceed with the lesson, and direct them to the website for links to the articles they'll need.	Students listening, collecting papers, navigating to the website.	5 Minutes
Instruct students to use their computers to complete the graphic organizer. They can do this on their own or with a partner or in teams, depending on your own preference.	Students working on graphic organizer: Reading, writing, and discussing in teams.	25 Minutes

Teacher	Student	Minutes
Then, direct students to: <i>Amy Coney Barrett and the Makeup of the Courts</i> . (See resource list.) Read through it as a class, then use this questions to start discussion: How do you think the federal courts and the Supreme Court will act on issues related to race, just given what we've read here in these charts?	Students reading together, discussing.	10 Minutes
Hand out the assignment sheets to the students and read over the assignment to the class. Have students choose which homework assignment they will complete.	Students listening, choosing an assignment.	3 Minutes
Five minutes before the end of class, hand students the exit slip and have them complete it using complete sentences.	Students writing, filling out exit slip.	5 Minutes
<b>Day 2:</b> Students hand in essays or turn in video assignments to you.	Students turning in homework assignments.	1 Minute

# ASSESSMENTS

<b>Graphic Organizer</b>	Students will use a graphic organizer to make their way through this lesson. By filling in for each U.S. Supreme Court decision: Who was involved, what did they want, how did the U.S. Supreme Court decide, and the reasoning behind each decision, students will get a better understanding of the relationship between racial laws and the High Court. This will lead them to the higher-level thinking needed for the assignment.
<b>Exit Slip</b>	Students will answer the following question in an exit slip: How has the U.S. Supreme Court affected Black Americans in history, and how was it accomplished without making laws?
<b>Option 1: Written Paper</b>	Students choosing this will write one-to-two pages (or longer) answering the following question: Given that the U.S. Congress has just confirmed a new associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, how would you say the court, as it stands now, will affect the future of different races of people in America?
<b>Option 2: Video Presentation</b>	Students choosing this option will use A/V skills to answer this question in a three-to-five minute video presentation that the teacher will grade: Given that the U.S. Congress has just confirmed a new associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, how would you say the court, as it stands now, will affect the future of different races of people in America?

## ADAPTATIONS OR ACCOMMODATIONS NEEDED

Learners	Adaptations/Accommodations
Highly Proficient	<p>Highly proficient students have the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in writing (the assignment is a minimum, not a maximum), and if they are highly proficient in A/V assignments, this lesson will allow them to shine as well.</p> <p>The ability to do group work will also allow highly proficient students to help others.</p>
ELL	<p>ELL Students should be able to complete the graphic organizer in his or her own language, as it is meant to help them complete the assignment. Group discussions will allow ELL students to practice their L2 and get help on difficult language.</p> <p>Choice in the assessments will allow ELLs to use whatever aspect of language is easiest for them: written or spoken.</p>
Struggling Learners	<p>Group discussions will allow struggling learners to get help on difficulties.</p> <p>Choice in the assessments will allow struggling learners to complete the assignment in whatever format they are most comfortable with.</p>

# RESOURCES

## **A Look Back At The History Of Supreme Court Nominations | Sunday TODAY**

<https://youtu.be/M-LBuGRNaAo>

## **Dred Scott Case (Dred Scott v. Sandford), 1857 decision**

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/dred-scott-case>

## **Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896 decision**

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/plessy-v-ferguson>

## **Brown v. Board of Education, 1954 decision**

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/brown-v-board-of-education-of-topeka>

## **Amy Coney Barrett and the make-up of the U.S. Supreme Court**

<https://www.usnews.com/news/elections/articles/2020-10-28/amy-coney-barrett-and-the-makeup-of-the-courts>



# THE GREAT DEBATES RACE AND THE U.S. SUPREME COURT EXIT SLIP

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## RACE AND THE U.S. SUPREME COURT EXIT SLIP

Please use your own brain to answer the question: How has the U.S. Supreme Court affected Black Americans in history, and how does the High Court accomplish this without making laws?  
Explain your answer in at least three full sentences.

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# THE GREAT DEBATES RACE AND THE U.S. SUPREME COURT HOMEWORK

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## RACE AND THE U.S. SUPREME COURT

Today, we will be examining the relationship between the United States' highest court and the way the issue of race has been treated in judicial history. Historically, the U.S. Supreme Court has a lot of bearing on how laws affect people of different races.

**Directions:** Read about all three of the court cases in the top row of the graphic organizer on the next page: *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Brown v. Board of Education*. Then, under each case, fill in the boxes for who was involved, what they wanted, what the U.S. Supreme Court decided and why the justices ruled as they did.

	Dred Scott v. Sanford	Plessy v. Ferguson	Brown v. Board of Education
Who was involved?			
What did they want?			
What was the U.S. Supreme Court's decision?			
Why did the U.S. Supreme Court decide the way it did?			

# THE GREAT DEBATES RACE AND THE U.S. SUPREME COURT HOMEWORK - PG.2

## RACE AND THE U.S. SUPREME COURT

**You are to choose one assignment to complete by the due date: \_\_\_\_\_**  
**You may use the articles used in class, your graphic organizer and any other research you do on your own to help you with this assignment.**

### **Option 1:**      **Written paper**

If you choose this option, you must turn in a paper of **one-to-two pages in length** (either typed in 12-point font or hand-written) in which you answer the following questions:

- Draw your own conclusions: Given that the U.S. Congress has recently confirmed a new associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, how would you say the court, as it stands now, will affect the future of people of different races in America?
- Be sure to remember how the U.S. Supreme Court affects the laws of the United States, and include that process in your answer. (Hint: How has the U.S. Supreme Court affected laws concerning Black Americans in history?)

### **Option 2:**      **Video presentation**

If you choose this option, you must present a three-to-five minute informational presentation via an electronic platform: In which you may either speak from notes, from memory or use a PowerPoint style presentation to guide your presentation.

- Draw your own conclusions: Given that the U.S. Congress has recently confirmed a new associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, how would you say the court, as it stands now, will affect the future of people of different races in America?
- Be sure to remember how the U.S. Supreme Court affects the laws of the United States, and include that process in your answer. (Hint: How has the U.S. Supreme Court affected laws concerning Black Americans in history?)