

Using Essex History Lesson Plan

UEH Seminar Topic

The Culture of Jim Crow
(October 29, 2008)

Title

Dred Scott, Plessey, and Jim Crow in Massachusetts

Author

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Grade Level

Grade 11

Time Frame

Two 55-minute lessons

Links to MA History and Social Studies Frameworks

USI.40 Explain the policies and consequences of Reconstruction.

G. the rise of Jim Crow laws

H. the Supreme Court case, *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896)

Essential Objectives

- Describe segregated schools in Massachusetts during the Antebellum and post-Reconstruction era.
- Explain the ruling in the *Dred Scott* case.
- Discuss the significance of this ruling in *Dred Scott*.
- Explain what was decided in *Plessey v. Ferguson*?
- Explain the significance of *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896) both on national and on local levels.
- Describe some of the reactions to the Court's decision in *Plessey*.

Essential Questions

- To what extent was Jim Crow prevalent in Massachusetts?
- How did decisions made at the Supreme Court impact local people in Boston?
- What varied reactions did African Americans have toward the Plessey decision and toward Jim Crow laws? Why would some have suggested leaving America altogether?
- Why were men and women adamant about maintaining segregated schools?
- What rhetoric did certain African American voices employ in their assessment of Jim Crow?

Primary Sources

Two for Day One

- **“Report of a Special Committee of the Grammar School Board Presented August 29, 1849, on the Petition of Sundry Colored Persons Praying for the Abolition of the Smith School, With an Appendix.” Boston: J.H. Eastburn, 1849. Call #: 6357.50, Courtesy of Boston Public Library Rare Books and Manuscripts**
- **“Bay State Jim Crow School” *New York Times* January 6, 1904**

Two for Day Two

- “Heated Hot. Supreme Court Decision is Denounced” *Boston Daily Globe* May 20, 1896
- “Negroes Protest on Interstate Commerce Commission” *Boston Daily Globe* July 10, 1907

Supplies & Equipment

- Copies of all primary sources for students (listed above)
- Copies of the Discussion Questions (See Appendix A & B)

Procedure

First Lesson

- 1.) (25 minutes) Diving into Primary Source – Segregated Schools in Massachusetts
 - (A.) Distribute first two primary sources about all-black schools in Massachusetts. Tell students they will read two primary documents:
 - o 1.) a report of a petition in 1849 to a Boston School Committee about an all-black school in Boston, MA
 - o 2.) a news article appearing in the New York Times in 1904 about an all-black school in Sheffield, MA
 - Students read the sources and complete the discussion questions with a partner. Discussion questions need to be distributed to students. They are 8 questions (see Appendix A).
- 2.) (10 minutes) Discuss their responses to questions.
 - o Be sure to emphasize the Antebellum petition vs. the post-Reconstruction news about Sheffield. Culminate with highlights of this crucial court case – *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896.
- 3.) (20minutes) – mini-lecture on crucial court cases –
 - *Dred Scott – 1857*
 - **Born a slave in VA about 1795**
 - **Original owner died; was sold to an army surgeon**
 - **1843 – Emerson died; all property left to his wife Eliza**
 - **He is entrusted to Eliza’s brother – a New Yorker named John Sanford**
 - **His argument?**
 - **Claimed that he had become a free person by living in free territory**
 - **Verdict?**
 - o **Supreme Court ruled against him; he and his family were sold back to a son of his original owner and then they were freed**
 - **Scott died 1858 of TB**
 - **Roger Tanney - the decision - Slaves did not have the right of citizens**
 - **Scott had no case b/c he was living in MO when he began his suit**
 - **Missouri Compromise is unconstitutional – WHY?**
 - **b/c forbidding slavery interferes with 5th Amendment (!!)**
 - *Williams v. Mississippi (1898)*
 - o **Court upheld state literacy requirement for voting that kept African Americans from polls**
 - *Cumming v. Board of Education of Richmond County (1899)*

- Court ruled that federal government cannot prevent segregation in local school facilities because education is a local, not a federal issue
- *Plessy v. Ferguson* - 1896
- Homer Plessy took seat on ‘Whites Only’ car of train and refused to move
- Arrested, tried, convicted for breaking Louisiana’s segregation law
- Plessy appealed, claiming he was denied equal protection
- Court ruled that separate-but-equal facilities for blacks and whites did not violate the Constitution
- Established the doctrine of separate-but-equal; sanctioned segregation laws

- Connect these court decisions to segregated schools in Massachusetts which students read about in the primary sources.

Second Lesson

- 1.) (5 minutes) Yesterday we learned about crucial court cases pertaining to segregation and you read primary sources about segregated schools in Massachusetts. Review –
 - a. What key issues were raised in the petition by African Americans to the School Committee in Boston?
 - b. What plans were announced in the NYT article about the school in Sheffield, MA?
 - c. How did the Supreme Court decisions support the authority of these local bodies?
- 2.) (20 minutes) Today we are turning our attention to two other primary sources – both of which come from the *Boston Daily Globe* and both of which describe responses to the Court decisions we discussed yesterday -
 - Distribute copies of the news articles (primary sources for Day Two) and given students time simply to read.
 - Ask students – what did you notice? Solicit feedback.
 - Try to get at why these primary sources are important in US History –
 - Discuss notion of giving a voice to the so-called ‘counter-narrative’
 - Is it important to know that there were meetings to condemn the court’s decision? - Giving ear to the otherwise voiceless minority?
- 3.) (10 minutes) Distribute Discussion Questions from Appendix B
 - Have students answer them on paper with a partner.
- 4.) (10 minutes) Discuss any Discussion Questions that did not come up in earlier observations.
- 5.) (10 minutes) Assign essay and brainstorm responses to it.

Assessment

Essay question:

- Choose EITHER *Dred Scott* OR *Plessy* and write an essay explaining what was decided and the impact of the decision. When discussing the impact, you must reference at least one of the local primary sources to support your argument.

Appendix A: Primary Sources – Segregated Schools in Massachusetts

- **“Report of a Special Committee of the Grammar School Board Presented August 29, 1849, on the Petition of Sundry Colored Persons Praying for the Abolition of the Smith School, With an Appendix.” Boston: J.H. Eastburn, 1849. Call #: 6357.50, Courtesy of Boston Public Library Rare Books and Manuscripts (pp. 4-5 only – just the “Petition of the Colored People to the School Committee of the City of Boston”)**
- **“Bay State Jim Crow School” *New York Times* January 6, 1904**

Discussion Questions on the Petition 1849:

1. When African American families asked that their children attend the common district school and were refused, what reason did the School Committee usually give?
2. List three of the reasons given for the opposition to the Smith School.
3. In your own words, explain why the petitioners think the teacher Mr. Wellington can not succeed even though he is “fully competent and able”.
4. Why do the petitioners reject the recommendation of an African-American principal for the school?

Discussion Questions on the *NYT* article 1904

5. List 5 major events / moments that have occurred in US History between the Petition of 1849 and this source from 1904.
6. What happened to the Jim Crow school in Sheffield, MA last Saturday?
7. What decision is being announced in this short news article?
8. What support might the town of Sheffield, MA gain from the Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*?

Appendix B:

- **“Heated Hot. Supreme Court Decision is Denounced”** *Boston Daily Globe*
May 20, 1896
- **“Negroes Protest on Interstate Commerce Commission”** *Boston Daily Globe*
July 10, 1907

Discussion Questions:

“Heated Hot” (1896 article)

1. The initial news is that there was a hot debate at the meeting. What was the evening supposed to commemorate?
2. Why does Rev. W.H. Scott tell the meeting he will teach his boys Spanish?
3. How does this spark a debate?
4. What criticisms of the republican party are raised?
5. How does Robert Teamoh defend the republican party and denounce the democrats?

“Negroes Protest” (1907 article)

6. Who is condemning the courts’ decisions?
7. To what portion of the Constitution are they appealing?
8. At the end of the article, there is mention of a local act of discrimination that the Suffrage League wants to condemn – what is this decision by Boston locals?
9. To what country does the league compare the US?
10. Why would they refer to segregation on interstate commerce as a ‘second Dred Scott’? Is this an effective rhetorical device? Explain.