

Lesson One: Separate but Equal?

Objective

Students will understand the history of segregation laws and practices that lead to the Freedom Rides and the Civil Rights Movement.

Materials: *Separate but Equal? Segregation in the South* Power Point; *Breaking the Law?* historic images; *Breaking the Law?* worksheet; and (*Level 1 – grades 4-8 & Level 2 – grades 9-12*)

Procedures

Activity One: *Segregation in the South*

1. Discuss the power point presentation at <http://mdah.state.ms.us/freedom> under “Resources.” Choose presentation that is grade-level, appropriate. **NOTE:** *There are teacher notes on each slide of the presentation. Click “Notes Pages” under “View” to read them.*

Activity Two: *Breaking the Law?*

1. Print up images 1 & 2 and show/handout the Breaking the Law images to the students.
2. Have the students analyze what they think is happening in the historic images.
3. Point out these features in the images:
 - a. Breaking the Law #1 Lady and the Restroom
 - i. Sign in the background – *White Women*
 - ii. Police guarding the restroom – *During the Freedom Rides people tried to integrate facilities*
 - iii. Suitcase – Where do you think she might be? *Airport.*
 - iv. How is she breaking the law? - *Until the Boynton v. Virginia ruling, states had created laws that made it illegal for African Americans to use the same facilities and transportation as whites. At this time 1961, the ruling overturned the state laws, declaring them unconstitutional, so she was breaking no laws if she had been allowed to enter the restroom.*
 - b. Breaking the law #2 Library
 - i. Where are they? – *Library, Hinds County Library, Jackson*
 - ii. What people do you see in the image? – *Students, photographer, police, officials*
 - iii. What are/were they doing? – *Studying in the library but were kicked out.*
 - iv. How are they breaking the law? - *Until the Brown v. Board of Education ruling, states had created laws that made it illegal for African Americans to use the same schools or facilities as whites with the understanding that everything would be separate by equal. At this time 1963, the ruling overturned the state laws declaring them unconstitutional, so they were breaking no laws by studying in the library.*
4. Using the events and historic images, discuss the idea of “separate but equal” and the difference between then and today.

Extension Activities

Elementary: Have the students read the book *Richard Wright and the Library Card* by William Miller and discuss the following points:

1. How did Richard learn to read and what did he find to read?
2. Why couldn't he go to the library?
3. Why was he safe if he kept his head down and started every sentence with Sir?
4. Why did Jim not want anyone to know about the card?
5. What did the librarian say about him not being able to read?
6. Why was Jim brave to do what he did when Richard left?

Wrap-up 1. What would you do if someone told you that you were not allowed to read because of the way you looked? **2.** What do you think a librarian would say today if you told her you couldn't read?

High School: Research the places in your town or county that were the “colored” areas/districts or show evidence of segregated facilities.

1. Discuss their discoveries in the class.
2. Discuss how “Separate but Equal” had an effect on the community they live in.
3. Ask; How far do you think society has come in the last 50 years?



Courtesy Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Breaking the Law? #1



Courtesy Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Breaking the Law? #2