

**TAH Project**  
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### **Brown v. Board of Education in the American Literature Classroom**

**Unit Rationale:** Analyzing the structure of a persuasive argument in an excerpt from Martin Luther King Jr.'s Stride Toward Freedom is a part of the existing English 11 American Literature curriculum. In addition, understanding an eyewitness report from Anne Moody's autobiography Coming of Age in Mississippi and identifying and appreciating the characteristics of a ballad using Dudley Randall's "Ballad of Birmingham" are also part of the English 11 curriculum.

Weaving the above readings together and expanding that curriculum to include background on the US Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* to provide more historical context of the civil rights movement in addition to evaluating recent MCAS data helps students gain perspective on the nature of progress in civil rights in America from the 1950s until 2010.

**Intended Audience:**

English 11 American Literature class.

## **Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks Standards:**

### **History and Social Science Standards:**

**USII.25** Analyze the origins, goals, and key events of the Civil Rights movement. (H)

**USII.26** Describe the accomplishments of the civil rights movement. (H, E)

### **English Language Arts Standards:**

**Standard 13:** Nonfiction: Students will identify, analyze and apply knowledge of the purposes, structure, and elements of nonfiction or informational materials and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

**Standard 18:** Dramatic Reading and Performance: Students will plan and present dramatic readings, recitations and performances that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience and purpose.

**Standard 24:** Research: Students will gather information from a variety of sources, analyze and evaluate the quality of the information they obtain, and use it to answer their own questions.

**Time Frame:** 5 Days of 60 minute class periods

### **Objectives:**

Gain appreciation for a landmark case of critical importance in US History.

Exposure to events of the Civil Rights Movement.

Practice analyzing a persuasive essay.

Write with sensory details.

Practice writing ballads and performing dramatic recitation.

Construct meaning by researching statistics and drawing conclusions from them.

### **Background:**

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) , a unanimous decision, continues to be one of the most important decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court affecting our racial transformation, mostly because of indirect results of the decision which sparked backlash and violence from white extremists and political action in responses to them. In addition Brown is significant because it challenges us to look carefully at how and why the Supreme Court operates as its individual members interact with their own beliefs, values, society and each other.

**Materials:**

Gmail Accounts for all students  
Data Projector and Screen  
School library/media center with Internet access  
Voicethreads.com  
Wordle.net

**Resources:**

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)  
<http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=347&invol=483>  
King, Martin Luther, Jr. "Stride Toward Freedom." *The Language of Literature: American Literature*. McDougal Littel, 2002.  
Klarman, Michael. *Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Movement*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2007.  
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Massachusetts. "Assessment and Accountability Profiles." <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/> 4 October 2010.  
Moody, Anne. "Coming of Age in Mississippi." *The Language of Literature: American Literature*. McDougal Littel, 2002.  
Randall, Dudley. "The Ballad of Birmingham."  
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=175900>  
X, Malcolm. "Necessary to Protect Ourselves." *The Language of Literature: American Literature*. McDougall Littel, 2002

## Day 1



### **Brown v. Board of Education**

- Activity 1** Show “Little Rock” footage from [Eyes on the Prize](#) DVD  
TKW with students about Civil Rights movement
- Activity 2** Mini-Lecture: Summarize Klarman Chapters 1-4 [Brown v. Board of Education](#)  
Direct Students to Think/Pair/Share to review new knowledge
- Activity 3** Direct Students to read Brown v. Board of Education together in small groups.  
Develop questions as reading. Discuss function of concurrent and dissenting opinions.
- Homework** Present a list of current controversial problems. Break students into groups of five. Ask students to choose one problem and come to consensus in groups to create a one-two page detailed written solution using Google Docs. Write a reflective paragraph on the process of consensus.

## Day 2



### MLK Jr. and Malcolm X

- Activity 1** Show footage of MLK Jr's "I Have a Dream" Speech.  
Discuss content and rhetorical devices used by King
- Activity 2** Read excerpt from MLK's *Stride Toward Freedom*.  
Guide students through King's persuasive argument to synthesize non-violent resistance as a solution.
- Activity 3** Show footage on Malcolm X interview from Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*.  
Read Malcolm X's interview excerpt "Necessary to Protect Ourselves."
- Homework** Write a 400 persuasive essay: Is Violence ever justified? Post essays on Class Blog.

## Day 3



### Lunch Counter Sit-Ins

- Activity 1** Show Lunch Counter Sit in from Eyes on the Prize DVD
- Activity 2** Eyewitness Accounts: Direct students to write an eyewitness account full of sensory details as if they had been at the lunch counter protest
- Activity 3** Read aloud Anne Moody's account from "Coming of Age in Mississippi." Chalk talk a response to the account.
- Homework** Write the letter that Anne Moody's mother sent to her. Then, write Anne's response back to her mother.

## Day 4



### Ballad of Birmingham

- Activity 1** Show excerpts from Spike Lee's 4 Little Girls.  
Process student response.
- Activity 2** Read aloud Dudley Randall's "Ballad of Birmingham"  
Watch Ballad of Birmingham: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kk7ghmoQ6s>  
Watch MLK Birmingham speech excerpt "What Murdered these 4 girls?"  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m66xzIG2q9w&feature=related>
- Activity 3** Outline elements of a ballad.
- Homework** Write your own ballad about a real event. Record your ballad onto Voicethreads.com. Respond to at least three other student's ballads on Voicethreads. Extra credit if performed to music!

## Day 5



### Progress Since Brown

- Activity 1** Looking at Data. Direct students the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website: [www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu). Direct students to examine and compare MCAS and AYP data by race for Boston and Wellesley using the Profiles option.
- Activity 2** In teams of two create 2 slides in Google Slideshow to reflect the most important results of your data analysis. Show the collected slideshow to the class.
- Activity 3** Reflection Chalk Talk. Conduct a silent chalk talk as a reflection. What have we learned about Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights movement? What progress has been made? What questions do we still have? Where do we go from here?
- Homework** Create a wordle using wordle.net of a 60 word response to the Brown unit. Post the wordles as a classroom quilt response.

