

Civil Rights

Postwar United States
(1945–1975)



Challenging segregation

A national movement

Equal rights

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

Icons: For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will know about the following aspects of the Civil Rights Movement:

- Disenfranchisement of black Americans
- Segregation in the United States
- *Brown v. Board of Education*
- The Civil Rights Act of 1957.



Looking back timeline



Use this timeline to recap key historical events and contextualize the Civil Rights era. Either press on a date, or drag the pointer along the timeline to read about what happened in each year. Press **start** to begin.

start





Reconstruction legislation



During Reconstruction, Congress passed several laws to expand civil rights. Can you match these key pieces of legislation with their descriptions?

Press **start** to begin.

start



Do these laws have anything in common?



In some Southern counties, blacks outnumbered whites. If whites were to maintain political power, they had to find ways to **disenfranchise** blacks.

The **Ku Klux Klan** and other terrorist organizations threatened, attacked and **lynched** black people who tried to exercise their rights and any whites who supported them.



In some states black people were kept away from the polls by not only the fear of violence, but also by legal barriers.





Some Southern states required voters to pass a **literacy test** to prove they were intelligent enough to vote. Such requirements often had a “**grandfather clause**,” which meant you did not have to pass the test if your grandfather could vote. Can you pass the test? Use the pen tool to write your answers.

Press **start** to begin.

start



How did these questions make you feel?



Plessy v. Ferguson had legalized segregation in 1896.

In the 20th century, the NAACP set to work attacking segregation in the courts.

Thurgood Marshall became the NAACP's chief legal officer in 1940. He went on to win 29 out of 32 desegregation cases before the Supreme Court.



Among other things, these cases prohibited segregation on interstate buses and required state graduate schools to admit black applicants.





Brown v. Board of Education



Press on the folder tabs to learn more about the historic Supreme Court decision in the case of **Brown v. Board of Education.**

Press **start** to begin.

start





In the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court voted unanimously to end segregation in public schools. This decision marked the beginning of the end of **de jure segregation**, or segregation by law.

Read the following excerpts from the ruling. Then press on the highlighted text to explain the Court's argument in your own words.

Press **start** to begin.

start





The “Little Rock Nine”

When nine black students enrolled at Arkansas’s Little Rock Central High School, Governor Orval Faubus sent the National Guard to prevent them from entering the school.

President **Eisenhower** had said he would not enforce integration. However, he could not ignore a direct challenge to federal authority.



In 1957, Eisenhower sent federal troops to ensure the “**Little Rock Nine**” were able to attend class.





Civil Rights Act of 1957

Black students at integrating schools across the country faced angry mobs, verbal abuse, threats and death.

Federal troops repeatedly had to intervene to protect these students' rights.



Soon after Little Rock, the government passed the **Civil Rights Act of 1957**. It permitted the Department of Justice to intervene on behalf of individuals whose civil rights were being violated. This included the right to go to an integrated school, and the right to vote.





In the North, segregation was often “**de facto**”: caused by prejudice or custom rather than law.



Because blacks and whites lived in different areas, they attended different schools. To integrate these schools, local governments introduced **busing**.

Students were bused to schools outside their neighborhoods. This angered many students and parents, and contributed to racial tensions in Northern cities.





Montgomery Bus Boycott



Although segregation had been banned in schools, it was still legal in public facilities like restaurants and transportation.

In 1955, **Rosa Parks** refused to give her seat to a white man on a Montgomery city bus. The driver had her arrested.



The local NAACP formed the **Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)** to organize a boycott.

For over a year, Montgomery's black citizens refused to ride the buses. Finally, in 1956, the Supreme Court banned segregation on public buses.

