



# CIVIL DISCOURSE

*An American Legacy Toolkit*

## ■ Module: Civil Rights

# Session Plan

### Engage: Activate Prior Knowledge

1. Begin by asking participants to think of an example of unequal rights or treatment that has impacted their lives somehow. What made the circumstances unequal? Was the situation corrected?
2. Allow them to consider this for 2-3 minutes.
3. Pair or ask participants to find a partner and share their responses to the prompt.
4. After five minutes of paired sharing, ask the participants to share what they heard and/or shared with their partners.
5. Introduce the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision excerpt. This Supreme Court decision explores an aspect of the ongoing struggle to recognize the rights of Americans during the history of the country.

### Supporting Resources

- Chart Paper (1 sheet/group)
- Markers
- Sticky Notes

### Explore: Guided/Open Inquiry

Tell participants: Today we will be focusing on some of the big issues and ideas America has struggled with in civil rights since the early days of the United States of America.

#### Option 1: Whole Class Exploration

1. Share the first podcast, *Civil Rights at the Founding*, with your students.
  - a. While they view/listen to the recording, ask students to pay attention to references being made to civil rights at the nation's founding.

### Supporting Resources

- *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* (1954)
- *Civil Rights in America* 60-Second Civics Podcast
- *Beyond the Legacy Video: Civil Rights in American History*
- *Beyond the Legacy Video Guide: Civil Rights*



## Explore: Guided/Open Inquiry

2. After watching/listening to the podcast, ask one student to share a summary of the ideas and topics discussed. Prompt other additional students to correct or expand upon the shared summary.
3. Repeat this process for the remaining four podcasts, adding questions and wonderings to fuel reflection and inquiry based on each of the 60-second podcasts.

## Supporting Resources

- Chart Paper
- Markers
- Sticky Notes
- Interactive Whiteboard
- Digital Collaboration Space

## Option 2: Small Group Activity

1. Divide the class into small groups (4-5 students each). Before the activity, set up stations, with each station set up with one of the [four remaining podcasts](#). Assign each group to a specific station.
  - a. Podcast episodes can be cued up with a link or QR code on the paper. Students can use phones or devices, or tablets can be set at each station.
2. Tell each group they will have five minutes at each station until they are prompted to rotate.
3. When they arrive, they will have one minute to actively listen to the podcast (taking notes on key points, interesting facts, or any thoughts that arise). At the end of the podcast, students will have four minutes to write down their reaction questions and thoughts on that station's chart paper.
4. After five minutes, students will be prompted to rotate counterclockwise to the next station.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 until each of the groups has visited each of the stations.
6. Each group will have five minutes to review the reflection notes on the chart paper at their final station.
  - a. Prompt groups to identify trends or common reactions on their chart paper.
  - b. Ask each group to share their findings at the end of the five minutes.



## Explore: Guided/Open Inquiry

## Supporting Resources

### Extension Opportunity: *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)

1. Provide participants with the text of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) referenced in the [third podcast](#).
  - a. Explore more deeply this court case and how it created the separate but equal doctrine.
  - b. What language from this decision impacted state policies regarding segregation?

### Extension Opportunity: “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (1852)

1. Provide participants with the text “[What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?](#)” (1852) referenced in the [second podcast](#).
  - a. Explore Douglass’ perspective more deeply on African Americans’ condition in America and his hope for America’s government to overcome its history.

### Extension Opportunity: Beyond the Legacy Video Guide

1. After discussing the [60-Second Civics podcasts](#), share the [Beyond the Legacy Video: Civil Rights in American History](#). Use any or all of the questions noted below and additional questions in the resource [Beyond the Legacy Video Guide: Civil Rights in American History](#).
  - a. How do the principles of the Declaration of Independence give rise to ideals of civil rights?
  - b. What was Frederick Douglass’ role in the abolitionist movement?
  - c. What is his message in his speech, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”
  - d. Post-Civil War, what did the 13th Amendment attempt to do? Was it enough to move civil rights forward?
  - e. What was the Civil Rights Act of 1866, and why was it needed?
  - f. How did the 14th Amendment strengthen civil rights? What clauses were particularly important?



## Explore: Guided/Open Inquiry

## Supporting Resources

- g. What was the 15th Amendment, and what were some challenges to securing civil rights?
- h. What were some of the tactics used to prevent full civil rights/voting for free Black men?
- i. What was Ida B. Wells' role in the Civil Rights Movement?
- j. How does the NAACP work towards the ideal of the "more perfect union?"
- k. What was the connection between the 14th Amendment and its Equal Protection Clause and the *Brown v. Board of Education* case?
- l. What were some of the cases leading to the *Brown v. Board of Education* case? How did they lay the groundwork for a challenge to the separate but equal doctrine established by *Plessy v. Ferguson*?
- m. What was Rosa Parks' role in the Civil Rights Movement?
- n. What was Joanna Robinson's role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott?
- o. What was Ella Baker's role in the SCLC?
- p. What did Martin Luther King Jr. have to say about nonviolent protest?
- q. What was Fred Shuttlesworth's role in the Civil Rights Movement?
- r. What are some of the different fronts on which the struggle for civil rights were fought?

Now that participants have been exposed to references to *Brown v. Board of Education*, transition to a review of that text to deepen their understanding of civil rights in American history.



## Explain: Discuss & Share Knowledge From Text

### Discourse Launch Activity

*Note: The following steps are the beginning of the Paideia seminar process, which entails taking a deep dive into the text. Whether doing the Paideia or the Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) as the discourse model (or both), these steps provide the opportunity to access the text for use in either discourse activity.*

1. Begin by asking participants to jot down and discuss the answers to the following questions:
  - a. Consider your home community. Are the schools segregated?
  - b. By what metric(s)?
  - c. Why do you think that is?
2. Have a brief class discussion to explore their understanding and examples of school segregation in their communities.
3. Introduce the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision excerpt. This Supreme Court decision explores an aspect of the ongoing struggle to recognize the rights of Americans during the history of the country.
4. **Text Support Option:** Teachers can use the [Close Reading Template](#) to add the text, providing a strong framework for analyzing and understanding complex text. In using this template, teachers will need to develop text-dependent questions to support students' comprehension. This is a powerful tool to support literacy in all learners in addition to scaffolding in preparation for the civil discourse.

### Primary Text Inspectional Read

1. Distribute the text, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Discuss with participants what they anticipate the text is about.
2. Have them number the paragraphs in the text. Then ask participants to read the text while highlighting unfamiliar words and phrases.

## Supporting Resources

- Chart Paper (1 sheet/group)
- Timer (optional)
- Sticky Notes
- Markers
- *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* (1954)
  - Highlighters
- [Close Reading Template](#)



## Explain: Discuss & Share Knowledge From Text

## Supporting Resources

### Vocabulary

1. Have participants share the words and phrases they found unfamiliar while a volunteer lists them on the (interactive) whiteboard. Be sure to include:
  - 14th Amendment
  - “compulsory school attendance”
  - equal protection
  - jurisdiction
  - ratification
  - rudimentary
  - “separate but equal”
  - state-imposed discrimination
2. Use your preferred practices for front-loading vocabulary comprehension in a complex text.
  - a. Alternatively, assign the words and phrases to groups of participants to research and define.
  - b. Have the groups share with the entire class and discuss until all participants are comfortable with the surface meaning of the text.

### Analytical Read

1. Have participants read the text selection again, slowly highlighting the three most impactful lines or sentences.
2. Then, in the margins of the selections, ask students to write notes on what makes those lines or sentences so compelling.



## Elaborate: Apply New Learning to Civil Discourse

## Supporting Resources

*Note: Choose one or both of the discourse models below.*

### Civil Discourse Model #1

- **Paideia Seminar:** A Paideia Seminar is a collaborative, thought-provoking dialogue about a text selection, facilitated with open-ended questions. The seminar's main purpose is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas, values, and of ourselves and each other. The discussion will be on the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Participants will make active connections between the ideas present in the document and the impact of these ideas on our lives today.

### Civil Discourse Model #2

- **Structured Academic Controversy (SAC):** In the structured academic controversy, participants are assigned a stance on a question and work to reach a consensus on a contentious issue. The strategy reinforces the idea that before people commit to a side, they should seek to understand the argument of the other side. The goal of a SAC is not to win; rather, SACs should give participants adequate time to present content knowledge and diverse perspectives as well as time for clarification questions, small group discussion, large group discussion, and consensus building. The predetermined format allows for structure and support for multiple viewpoints to be heard, understood, and validated while informing everyone's views on how the Civil War amendments impacted the Jim Crow response to the end of slavery.

- [Paideia Seminar Plan – Brown v. Board of Education](#)
  - **OPTION:** Use the Paideia Plan template and engage with a different text, such as Frederick Douglass' July 4th speech, or combine the use of two texts.
- [Structured Academic Controversy Plan – Civil Rights](#)



## Evaluate: Assess & Authentically Engage

1. Highlight some of the ideas discussed during the previous day's discourse model(s). Be specific and explicitly connect comments and ideas to the participants who shared them.
2. Return to the Inquiry question:
  - a. Was [Brown v. Board of Education](#) successful?
3. As a pre-writing exercise, participants should be encouraged to revisit notes they captured on the margins of their text selection, personal recording space, etc., and during the Launch Activity to refresh their memories of earlier discussions on this topic.
4. Select one or both activities below to assess and authentically engage participants as you conclude this discourse.

## Supporting Resources

- [Paideia Texts](#)
- [Structured Academic Controversy Texts](#)
- [American Legacy: The United States Constitution and Other Essential Documents of American Democracy](#)
- [SAC Note-Taking Graphic Organizer](#)

## Writing Task

- Pick a school entity that you have a personal connection with (higher education institution, current school district, home school district, etc.). Write an opinion essay to the leadership of the entity in response to the following prompt: How have the lasting effects of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision impacted this body? Consider the included text, issues raised in related readings, and your background knowledge of your chosen entity.

Or

- While the 13th Amendment ended slavery, two additional amendments (the 14th and 15th) were passed to protect the rights of African Americans throughout the United States. How much did the addition of the 14th and 15th Amendments add to the reaction that eventually became known as Jim Crow? Write an argumentative essay (or other form of expressive work like a PowerPoint presentation or a Public Service Announcement video) that provides the key reasons why (or why not) you believe that the 14th





## Evaluate: Assess & Authentically Engage

## Supporting Resources

and 15th Amendment significantly increased the backlash to the ending of slavery in the United States and how those amendments would strengthen American democracy. Focus on the included texts and podcasts, issues raised in related readings and during the SAC, and your background knowledge on your stance.

### Extension Task

- Design a Public Education “Bill of Rights” intended to account for the challenges that emerged in the aftermath or were left unaddressed by the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Include a list of affirmative statements that capture the ideas and reflections of the participants who joined you during your cohort’s Paideia Seminar.

Or

- Examine the debate between W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington over how early 20th century African Americans needed to approach the struggle for civil rights in the United States. Compare and contrast their viewpoints and share your thoughts about the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, as well as how they were both shaped by the Jim Crow era and Reconstruction.