

Sample Answers Landmark U.S. Supreme Court Case Study

Brown v. Board of Education | 1954 | Page Three – Student Activity Sheet

1. What is the essential question of this case?

Does the segregation of children in public schools only on the basis of race deny the minority children of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment?

2. Using the evidence you found during your reading, summarize the background of this case in three complete sentences.

In the early 1950s, many students went to different schools because of their race. In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court decided a case called *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In this case, the Court said that segregation was legal when the facilities for both races (trains, bathrooms, restaurants, etc.) were similar in quality. The Brown family sued the school system, Board of Education of Topeka, saying that segregation hurt black children.

3 What is the constitutional principle related to the case? List the principle and summarize the meaning below.

14th Amendment	SECTION. 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.
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4. How did the Court answer the essential question? What was the reason for their decision?

In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Brown. The Court noted that public education was central to American life. Calling it “the very foundation of good citizenship,” they acknowledged that public education was necessary to prepare children for their future professions.

5. What was the impact of this case on society?

Brown v. Board of Education reversed the decision made in *Plessy v. Ferguson* and had a large impact throughout the United States. It was no longer legal to have segregated schools and the decision led to ending the practice of “separate but equal” in other public places throughout the nation.

6. Why is this case considered a landmark?

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