

Teaching American History Grant: Learning Experience 2005

(Michelle Jackson: Arlington High School)

Topic Title: Prior Knowledge: *The Color of Water* by James McBride

Date: July 2005

Grade Level: Grade 11

Overview of the Learning Experience:

- This lesson will be used prior to reading *The Color of Water* by James McBride.
- Students will use the internet to select and research a federal court case dealing with race relations and equality.
- Students will take notes and develop a thorough discussion of the court case.
- Students will summarize the main details of the selected case to include answers to "who, what, when, where, why, and how," the final ruling, any dissenting opinions, and their own opinions.
- Students will present their findings orally to the class.
- Students will be performing NYS Standard #1 (History of the United States and New York), Performance Indicator #1 (students will describe the evolution of American democratic values and beliefs as expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the New York State Constitution, the United States Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and other important historical documents), Commencement level.
- Students will be performing NYS Standard #5 (Civics, Citizenship, and Government), Key Idea #2 (The state and federal governments established by the Constitutions of the United States and the State of New York embody basic civic values (such as justice, honesty, self-discipline, due process, equality, majority rule with respect for minority rights, and respect for self, others, and property), principles, and practices and establish a system of shared and limited government), Commencement level.

Essential Question:

- How do these decisions affect people's daily life?

Time Allotment (classroom time): 4-45 minute class period(s).

Vocabulary (key terms):

Students will be researching various cases and will be referred to landmarkcases.org and dictionary.com to define unknown vocabulary. The following vocabulary will be discussed prior to research.

Dissent

Equality

Due Process

Civil Liberties

Materials/Resources:

- **What materials/resources are needed by students?**

- Access to a computer with internet access for research.
- Worksheet #1: Project Rubric
- Worksheet #2: Essential Questions
- **What materials/resources are needed by teachers?**
 - Access to a computer with a projector or SmartBoard
 - A copy of *The Color of Water* by James McBride
 - James McBride grew up one of twelve siblings in the all-black housing projects of Red Hook, Brooklyn, the son of a black minister and a woman who would not admit she was white. The object of McBride's constant embarrassment, and his continuous fear for her safety, his mother was an inspiring figure, who through sheer force of will saw her dozen children through college, and many through graduate school. McBride was an adult before he discovered the truth about his mother: the daughter of a failed itinerant Orthodox rabbi in rural Virginia, she had run away to Harlem, married a black man, and founded an all-black Baptist church in her living room in Red Hook. In this remarkable memoir, she tells in her own words the story of her past. Around her narrative, James McBride has written a powerful portrait of growing up, a meditation on race and identity, and a poignant, beautifully crafted hymn from a son to his mother.

Procedure:

Day 1

- Lead a discussion of the role and function of the Supreme Court with the students. Explain that students will research a specific federal court case dealing with race relations and equality, and present their findings to the class at the end of the unit.
- Introduce the following websites to the class as a whole:
 - www.landmarkcases.org
 - www.dictionary.com
 - <http://www.answers.com/Korematsu%20v.%20United%20States>
 - <http://www.answers.com/Dred%20Scott%20v.%20Sanford>
 - <http://www.answers.com/Brown%20v.%20Board%20of%20Education>
- Prepare students for the project by explaining each requirement as outlined in **Worksheet #1**. Explain to students that they must use Supreme Court Cases that deal with race relations and equality.
- After a thorough explanation of the requirements, make sure that each student has an appropriate court case for the project. Students may be interested in researching the following cases:
 - Scott v. Sanford (1857)
 - Civil Rights Cases (1883)
 - Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)

- Brown v. The Board of Education (1954)
- Heart of Atlanta Motel v. United States (1964)

Day 2-3

- **Review Worksheet #2: Essential Questions.**
- Provide time for each student to find information on their court cases. Students should use the Internet to research the answers to the questions on Worksheet # 2.
- Have students summarize the court's opinions and compare them to their thoughts and opinions on the court case.
 - Do they agree or disagree with the decision?
 - Why or why not?
- Have each student create an informational project presentation on their case by presenting the most important information from the case. This portion of the project should be creative and thorough. The following information should be included:
 - Cover page (name, class, section, court case title)
 - Facts of the case (who, what, where, why, and how)
 - Court and student's opinion, including any dissention
 - Bibliography

Day 4

- Students will present their creative presentations.
- Students will lead a class discussion on the court decision.
 - What do other students think of the case and its final verdict?
 - How does the case relate other student's cases?
 - How has the case impacted their lives?

To Differentiate Instruction:

This lesson could be done in small groups to differentiate instruction. This would allow you to pair a less able student to work with a more able student. For more motivated students, they can create a PowerPoint presentation presenting their findings and an essay follow-up on the impact of the cases outcome in their lives.

Assessment:

- Students will be scored on their presentation using the rubric noted in Worksheet #1.



Worksheet #1 Project Rubric

Directions: You will independently research U.S Supreme Court Cases dealing with race relations and equality. After thoroughly researching your selected case, you will develop a creative presentation to share information with the other members of your class. This worksheet provides you with the way in which you will be graded for this project.

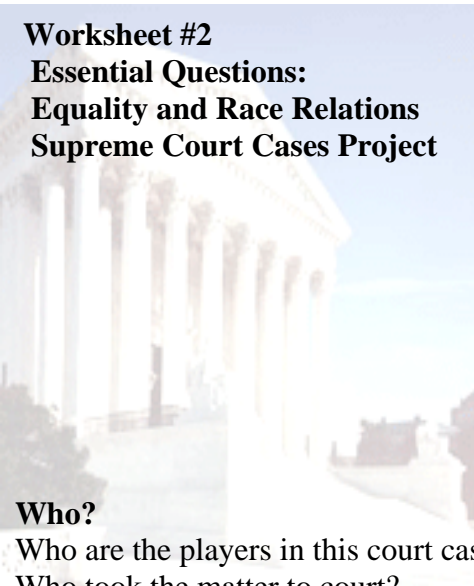
Part I: Essential Questions (worksheet #2) *(20 Points)*

Part II: One page of handwritten and paraphrased notes that cites a minimum of two websites, books or articles used while researching. *(20 points)*

Part III: Create an informational project presentation of your case by presenting the most important information from the case. This portion of the project should be creative and thorough. The following information should be included: *(60 points)*

1. Cover page (name, class, section, court case title)
2. Facts of the case (who, what, where, why, and how)
3. Court and student's opinion, including any dissention
4. Bibliography

Worksheet #2
Essential Questions:
Equality and Race Relations
Supreme Court Cases Project



Who?

Who are the players in this court case?
Who took the matter to court?

Who is the plaintiff? _____

Who is the defendant?

What?

What did the key players in this case actually do?

When?

When did the key players do what they did and when was the court case heard?

Where?

Where did the event happen? Where did the court case take place?

Why?

Can you identify why the key players did what they did?

How?

How did the court come to its verdict? Were there other court cases involved?

The Essential Questions Worksheet

Who?

Who are the players in this court case? Who took the matter to court?

Who is the plaintiff? _____

Who is the defendant? _____

What?

What did the key players in this case actually do?

When?

When did the key players do what they did and when was the court case heard?

Where?

Where did the event happen? Where did the court case take place?

Why?

Can you identify why the key players did what they did?

How?

How did the court come to its verdict? Were there other court cases involved?