

The Supreme Court and Civil Rights: *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)

Focus Question: Compare and contrast the significance of the Supreme Court's decisions regarding the issue of segregation.

Directions: Fill in the appropriate information for each of the following elements of each case.

	<i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> (1896)	<i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> (1954)
1. State the issue before the Supreme Court in the case.		
2. What facts of the case were presented to the Court?		

	<i>Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)</i>	<i>Brown v. Board of Education (1954)</i>
<p>3. What was the decision of the Court? What was the rationale behind it?</p>		
<p>4. What was the effect of the decision?</p>		
<p>5. Discussion Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare the statements of Justices Brown and Harlan. With which did you agree? Explain • What do you think Justice Harlan meant when he said that Americans would find it difficult to boast about being the freest people on earth? Do you think this is still true today? • Do you think that the long acceptance of “separate but equal” promoted the development of a “class system” in this country? Was “separate” every really “equal”? Explain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you agree with the opinion of the Court in this case? Do you think it is possible to have segregated schools that can actually offer equal educational chances? Explain. • What effect do you think the <i>Brown</i> decision had on related issues such as women’s rights, equal opportunities for other minorities (such as Hispanics or Native Americans), and opportunities and access for the handicapped? Explain. • Imagine that you were given the task of planning the desegregation of a city school system that had always had dual schools for blacks and whites. How would you go about it? Outline the plan you would follow.