

Week Two

Day 1

At the end of Reconstruction, the federal troops left the South in 1877. The Southern plantation owners took this opportunity to seize power, since the blacks no longer had the immediate backing of the troops. One of the main ways they took control was in what they called the “**Jim Crow**” laws.

Jim Crow had been a minstrel character in 1832. It was actually a white man with his face painted black, but he was basically a silly character with no sense. How this name became associated with the **segregation** (or separation) laws is unclear, but the Jim Crow laws became a series of local codes designed to keep the blacks “in their place”—away from the whites. These went far beyond the Black Codes of Reconstruction, creating two separate societies that were totally unequal. Some of these laws were written in the state governments, but some were unwritten and at the discretion of the person in charge.



Picture of separate white and colored entrances. Photo is public domain, used by permission with Wikimedia Commons.

Soon, there were separate train stations, restrooms, water fountains, libraries, parks, pools, and even cemeteries. Later, one of the largest and most protested places of segregation became the public schools. Everywhere there were signs posted: “Whites only” and “Colored.”

Blacks were expected to be respectful of whites. If a black man had a new car or nice clothing, he was not to show off in front of white men. Blacks would sometimes have a nice home inside, but the outside would look run down like a shack, so as not to attract attention. Black men had to call whites “Sir” and “Ma’am” but in return were often called “boy” or not talked to at all. The

consequences of disrespecting a white man could be a beating or a fine.

Define: Jim Crow laws, segregation

1. How did the whites gain power after Reconstruction?
2. What were some of the places where segregation took place?
3. Why do you think whites demanded respect from blacks? What would you do if you were an adult black man and were called “boy”?
4. Why would it be hard to obey all of the Jim Crow laws?

Be sure to continue your timeline.

SAMPLE

Day 2

Sometime in 1856 or 1857, a slave called Booker was born in Virginia. He didn't have a last name, and he never knew his father or the exact date of his birth. Many years later, he gave himself the last name of Washington in honor of America's first president.

Washington especially wanted to go to school, but because he was a slave, it was against the law. After Lincoln freed him and the other slaves, he learned how to read and write. At age 16, he enrolled in the Hampton Institute, which was a private school for African Americans and later became one of its teachers.

Although Washington treasured his education, he firmly believed that the way blacks would get along in white society was to learn a trade, such as printing, carpentry, bricklaying, etc. These were jobs that blacks could reasonably hope to obtain, improving their lives while still maintaining the status quo and pleasing the whites. Washington did not challenge the Jim Crow laws or fight politically, all in hopes of improving the economic future of the blacks.



Booker T. Washington at his desk. Photo public domain from Wikimedia Commons.

Washington founded the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama. He desired a place for young African Americans to come and learn a trade. Hundreds of young black men learned how to make a living at the institute. The school is now called Tuskegee University.

In a speech in 1895 (later known as the Atlanta Compromise), he states that “The masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands . . . we shall prosper . . . as we learn to dignify and glorify common labor, and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life.” In other words, he thought it was possible to live with the limitations put on by the white people and even make a good life doing so.

1. Describe Booker’s early childhood. Why do you think he didn’t have a last name? Why did he choose the name he did?
2. What was his desire? How did he accomplish it?
3. What school did he found, and why did it focus on learning trades? What were Washington’s views on blacks living in society with whites?

High school option: Do you think that Booker T. Washington had the right idea? Write a two-page paper either defending or refuting his belief.

SAMPLE

Day 3

In 1892, Homer Plessy decided to challenge the Jim Crow law in the railroad system. Although he was African American, he had very light skin. He bought a ticket on a train from New Orleans to Covington, Louisiana, and proceeded to sit in the whites-only car. He refused to move to the black section and was arrested. He was found guilty by the New Orleans court and sentenced to 20 days in jail with a \$25 fine.

Plessy appealed to the Louisiana state Supreme Court and then to the US Supreme Court. His reasoning was that the 14th Amendment gave him the right to equality. In 1896, the Supreme Court ruled against him in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. They stated that just because places were separate, it did not make them unequal. And so the phrase “**separate but equal**” was born and became the cornerstone for future events in the South.

With the separation of the two races came misunderstanding, confusion, and hatred. The unknown bred fear and loathing. There were riots in Wilmington, North Carolina, in 1898; New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1900; Brownsville, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia, in 1906; and Springfield, Illinois, in 1908. Many people were killed.



Wilmington, NC, race riot, 1898: The wrecked *Record* building and group of vigilantes. Photo used by permission from Wikimedia Commons

If a black man was accused of a crime and the courts were taking too long, the fastest form of retribution was lynchings. Black men would be accused (often falsely) and “tried” by the mob the next day. Victims of lynchings were beaten, shot, burned, or hanged from trees. In the early 1900s, there were about 90 black men lynched in the South each year. And since the verdict was carried out by a mob, there was usually no one to prosecute for the deaths. These events would attract curious onlookers, but later no one would claim to have seen anything.

Define: *Plessy v. Ferguson*, “separate but equal”

1. Who was Homer Plessy, and what did he try to do?
2. What did the Supreme Court rule in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*? How did that set the standard for the treatment of blacks?
3. Why does the unknown breed fear and misunderstanding?
4. What would sometimes happen to a black man accused of a crime in the South?

High school option: Research deeper into the events or people involved in *Plessy v. Ferguson* and write a paper about what you find.

SAMPLE

Day 4

Watch the following video. Write down ten facts about the Atlanta riot. Be sure to include contributing factors and outcomes.

<http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/bf09.socst.us.prog.atlriot/the-atlanta-riot/>

**This video discusses some difficult themes. Parents are encouraged to view it before sharing it with their students.*

High school option: Instead, write a one-page description of the riot with the above inclusions.

SAMPLE

Day 5

W.E.B. Du Bois was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, on February 23, 1868. He was born after the Civil War and, therefore, was never a slave. He was the only African American in his town's one-room schoolhouse where he was known to be a great student. He graduated from Fisk University, a school for African Americans, and later became the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

When he became a professor at Atlanta University, he was pulled into the struggle for the rights of the black people. As opposed to Booker T. Washington, he did not think that the black man should accept his role as a laborer to keep the peace in a white society.

In 1905, he and a group of other African Americans (with some white supporters), went to Niagara Falls, Canada, to form a new organization. Du Bois helped write the "Declaration of Principles," vowing to achieve justice and equality for African Americans. It stated that African Americans were not inferior to whites and that they would never cease to give up until they gained equality.



Leaders of the Niagara Movement. W.E.B. Du Bois is seated. Photo used by public domain by Wikimedia Commons.

This "**Niagara Movement**," as it was called, did not last long. The members quarreled among themselves, as they could not agree on their exact course of action. Whites thought that it would be the start of military action. By 1909, even Du Bois had to admit that it was a failure.

Define: Niagara Movement