

Warm Up/Review Lesson Using First Day Covers ***Brown v Board of Education*** **Central High, Little Rock, Arkansas**

Show both **First Day Covers (Image A and B)** and ask students to identify the events and make connections between the events.

Image A depicts the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas*. Image B depicts the 1957 integration of Central High School, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Image A - 1954 *Brown v Board of Education*

- When did this event take place?
- What did the Supreme Court rule?
- Who represented the Brown family?
- What is segregation?
- How long had schools been segregated?
- Did the ruling mean that segregated schools did not meet the “separate but equal” ruling of *Plessy v Ferguson*, or that the schools were to integrate?
- How were segregated schools to be integrated?
- What must school boards do after the ruling?

Teacher Notes: Since 1896 with the ruling in *Plessy v Ferguson*, public schools operated under the directive of “separate but equal.” In 1954, with the help of the NAACP, *Oliver L. Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka* ended up in the Supreme Court where the Court ruled unanimously that it was unconstitutional to create separate schools for children on the basis of race. At the time of the decision, 17 southern states and the District of Columbia required all public schools be racially segregated. A few northern and western states, including Kansas, left the issue of segregation up to individual school districts. While most schools in Kansas were integrated in 1954, the elementary schools in Topeka were not.

- Is segregation/integration a federal issue or a states’ rights issue?
- Who has the power over schools?

Image B - 1957 The Little Rock Nine

The citizens of Little Rock, Arkansas believed that the state has the power over schools, not the federal government.

- Who were the Little Rock Nine?
- What were the Little Rock Nine doing?
- Were the soldiers there to protect the students or prevent them from entering the school?
- Who was the president in 1957?
- How did the executive branch intervene to enforce the Supreme Court decision?
- Was the violence at Little Rock a result of the 1954 Supreme Court ruling?
- What amendment was used to enforce integration of public schools?

Use the following five quotes to further discuss the crisis at Central High.

“Our objective is to secure the prompt and orderly end of segregation in the public schools. We want all children, regardless of race, to have the opportunity to go to the public schools nearest their homes.”

(J.C. Crenshaw, President, LR Chapter of the NAACP, February 8, 1956)

“I tried to see a friendly face somewhere in the mob - someone who maybe would help. I looked into the face of an old woman and it seemed a kind face, but when I looked at her again, she spat on me.”

(Elizabeth Eckford, one of the Little Rock Nine, Southern School News, Summer, 1979)

“Any time it takes eleven thousand five hundred soldiers to assure nine Negro children their constitutional rights in a democratic society, I can’t be happy.”

(Daisy Bates, mentor to the Little Rock Nine during the crisis of 1957)

“With all the kids that jumped out the window the day that the nine black students went into the school, why did they single me out? I wasn’t the only girl that jumped out of the window. I just happened to be the only girl that jumped from the second floor.”

(Sammie Dean Walker, student who jumped out of window at LRCHS to protest the Nine’s entrance into the school, 1957)

“The only assurance I can give you is that the federal constitution will be upheld by me by every legal means at my command.”

(President Dwight D. Eisenhower in a telegram to Governor Orval Faubus, September 7, 1957)

Conclusion: Write a letter to the *Little Rock Gazette* supporting President Eisenhower’s decision to enforce the *Brown v Board of Education* decision at Little Rock, Arkansas.

Image A

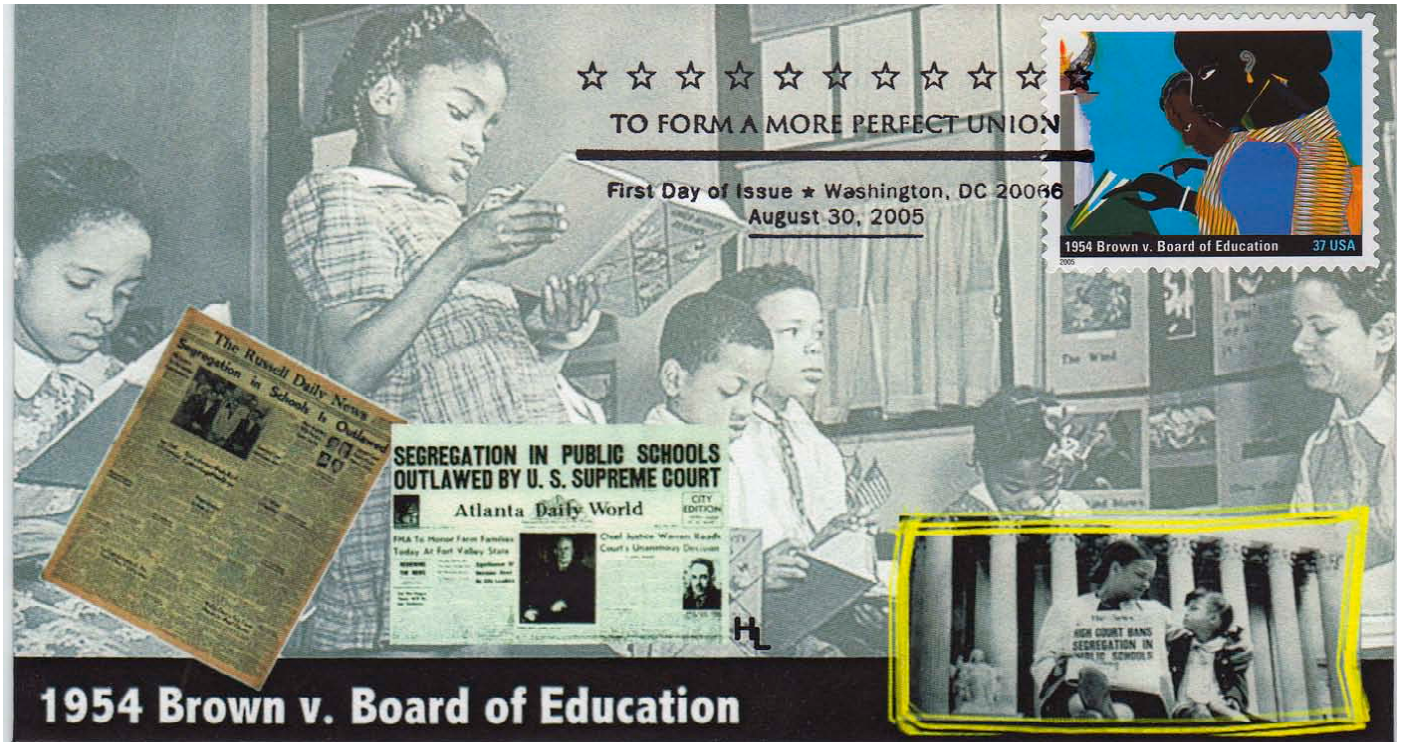


Image B

