

# Lesson 1: Mary Church Terrell and Segregated Education

## Does hope triumph over despair?

<p><b>Objective/Rationale</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Examine</b> the history and context of segregated schools in the United States</li> <li>● <b>Evaluate</b> reasons for segregation and desegregation</li> <li>● <b>Identify</b> reasons Mary Church Terrell became an advocate for equity beyond education</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Materials</b></p> <p>Links and or printouts, paper &amp; pencil for students to take notes and or screens--depending on the classroom structure-online, hybrid or in person.</p> <p><b>Suggested biography</b>  <a href="https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/mary-church-terrell">https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/mary-church-terrell</a></p>	
<p><b>Resource Links</b>  <a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1M0frbuenLyusw0H8CsYq4StSp7gyGj8qTky69Rhrf9w/edit?usp=sharing">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1M0frbuenLyusw0H8CsYq4StSp7gyGj8qTky69Rhrf9w/edit?usp=sharing</a></p>	
<p><b>Essential Question:</b></p>	
<p>Is separate education ever equal?</p>	
<p><b>Teacher/Facilitator</b></p>	
<p><b>Directions:</b> Teacher, please <b>read and distribute</b> the bio on Mary Church Terrell (use active reading strategies in accordance with your students levels and needs).</p> <p><b>Discuss</b> that America has a long history of segregating education. Black and Indigenous children were frequently separated from white children by law in many aspects of life, but especially in the classroom. Therefore Black and other children of color in America received a different education in different schools, with different teachers, fewer resources and often with very different outcomes for children.</p> <p>Separation by race created segregation. And segregation was practiced in American classrooms. Segregation was enforced through taxation, school districts and social habits. Activists had to organize and work very hard to ensure that all people including children were afforded equal rights under the law.</p> <p><b>Explain</b> that Terrell was an activist who worked on several issues including desegregating education. Terrell worked to integrate schools and no matter how hard the fight she never gave up hope.</p>	

**The first primary document you will analyze** is a letter written by Terrell to the president of Oberlin College, her alma mater. Terrell is questioning the segregation of her daughters, now students at Oberlin themselves, into a separate on-campus housing.

### **Suggested Activities:**

Note: This is a suggested list of activities which students can complete to explore this issue.

1. **Interactive vocabulary** -To create shared language and basic understanding, students should work with the list of terms--read the definitions, use them in complete sentences, look up the definitions on their devices, learn them for spelling etc. the day before or right before the class starts.
2. **Compare and Contrast Images**-Using the photographs compare and contrast what you notice in the photos. Does this matter?

<https://americanhistory.si.edu/brown/history/2-battleground/detail/paxville-schools.html>

### **Questions:**

- What do you notice about these two schools?
  - Are they in the same state?
  - Who built these two schools?
  - How are they different?
  - How are they similar?
  - What do these differences mean?
  - Which school would you want to attend? Why?
  - What control did the students who went to those schools have over which school they attended?
3. **Watch the videos on school desegregation** and discuss.
    - Choose **one (1)** video to watch with your students from the list below.
    - **Discuss and or complete the suggested activity.**

**[PBS Video on Desegregation in California \[8:37 minutes\] \(middle to high school\)](https://wpsu.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/osi04.soc.ush.civil.mendez/mendez-v-westminster-desegregating-californias-schools/#.X4-iREJKhQJ)**

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**[PBS Digital Studios Video on the history of Desegregation in Education: \[5:23 minutes\] \(middle to high school\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2TG9n0vc-4)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2TG9n0vc-4>

**Questions:**

- Did you know the history of school desegregation before this movie?
  - How do you feel about what you have seen?
  - How brave did these students have to be to work for a better education? Are schools better just because of the color of the students?
  - What actually makes the difference?
4. **Read/listen** to the letter Terrell wrote. Students can listen or read or a combination of both to the letter. **Discuss.** What are some of the issues that Terrell raises to challenge segregation at Oberlin? What is the tone of her letter? Why? What do you think Terrell will do if the president of Oberlin will not integrate? Does this matter?
5. **Watch/log** into the site---to learn the difference between a primary and secondary source.

(Primary Source Link Below)

<https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/?&loclr=reclnk>

6. **Transcribe:** Students will transcribe primary documents from Terrell’s archives at the Library of Congress. Please walk students through the process of logging on to *We the People* and follow the directions to begin transcribing. (Link Below)

**After transcribing, discuss the experience.** What did you learn about segregation in education? What do you believe and why? Explain.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** How to transcribe

<https://crowd.loc.gov/help-center/how-to-transcribe/>

**Summative exercise/homework**

Students will **watch** an [eight minute documentary](#) that tells the story of how school districts are trying to desegregate schools or an [hour long documentary](#) that tells the story of white parents trying to establish a separate school district for white students.

**Write** a letter/send a voice note/make a Tiktok video where you explain to Mary Church Terrell what has happened to segregation and education since she died in 1953.

**Link to Post-Lesson Feedback Form**

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1PBkoZrVOBAi2uSX7WjlNo7RxiOdZ8skhuNwJtLj0Gz8/edit>

**Vocabulary/Terms**

1. **Segregation**--the act or practice of separating people, especially majority versus minority groups
2. **Integration**--the act or practice of combining/integrating groups together
3. **Plessy vs Ferguson**--1896 Supreme Court decision legalizing “separate but equal” in America
4. **Equality**--being equal in status, rights opportunities and state guaranteed privileges
5. **Prejudice**--negative opinions about people, places and or things not based on facts-often based on stereotypes.
6. **Racism**--a system of advantages based on race that privileges one race over another
7. **Protest**--statements or actions that expresses disagreement/disapproval of something
8. **Activism**--someone who does not let a situation or problems go without doing something to make it better
9. **Rights**--freedoms we have that are protected by laws
10. **Constitution**--a written set of rules that control how a country/organization is governed.