

Video Guide for “Thurgood”

1. “The law is a weapon if you know how to use it.” Think about this Thurgood Marshall quote as you watch the film “Thurgood.” What does it mean in relation to Marshall’s life and career? What are some examples illustrating this quote?
2. What is the NAACP? Why was it formed?
3. Who was Homer Adolph Plessy? What Louisiana law was he protesting? What constitutional amendment did he cite in his lawsuit?
4. How did the Supreme Court decide *Plessy v. Ferguson*? What was its reasoning? What were the national implications of the ruling?

“Today’s Constitution is a realistic document of freedom only because of several corrective amendments. Those amendments speak to a sense of decency and fairness that I and other Blacks cherish.”

– Thurgood Marshall

5. What does the 14th Amendment say? What does the clause “equal protection under the laws” mean?
6. What were some of Marshall’s experiences with discrimination during his childhood and his work experiences and how did they affect him? How did he get interested in the Constitution?

“I swear to the Lord
I still can’t see
Why Democracy means
Everybody but me.”

– Langston Hughes, *The Black Man Speaks*

7. What were some important moments for Marshall in college? Who influenced him?
8. What was the NAACP’s legal strategy for ending racial segregation in schools?

“Without the ballot, a man is not a citizen.” – Thurgood Marshall

9. Why did Marshall and his mentor, Charles Houston, decide to focus on voting rights in Texas as important step for the NAACP in the civil rights movement?
10. What was the NAACP’s challenge in Texas and what was the outcome?

11. The NAACP would have to prove that segregation harmed its clients. Its lawyers brought in social psychologist Kenneth Clark. Can you describe his experiment with children? What did his results show?
12. Five cases from Kansas, South Carolina, Delaware, Virginia and Washington, D.C., were combined by the Supreme Court after each case had been decided in favor of segregation in the lower courts. These combined cases would eventually become *Brown v. Board of Education*. What were the NAACP's arguments on school segregation laws in *Brown v. Board of Education* before the Supreme Court? What were the state government's arguments?
13. Why didn't the Supreme Court order to desegregate schools take effect immediately?
14. Explain Marshall's disagreement with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. about civil disobedience.

"We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."
- Majority Opinion of the Supreme Court, *Brown v. Board of Education*
15. How does the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) show the power and the limitations of the Supreme Court?
16. How was the ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* the beginning of the end for the segregated South?
17. Why was Marshall's nomination to the Supreme Court a milestone in the civil rights movement?

"In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute."
- Thurgood Marshall
18. What was Marshall's position on the death penalty?
19. What was Marshall's position on gun control?
20. What was Marshall's view of the First Amendment regarding obscenities?
21. How do lifetime appointments for Supreme Court justices help remove politics from judicial review?