

## Brown V. Board of Education – Vocabulary in Context

**Instructions:** Read the passage, then define and apply vocabulary words based on how they appear in the text.

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In the early 1950s, several legal cases challenging school segregation were combined into one major Supreme Court case known as *Brown v. Board of Education*. These cases were brought forward by the **plaintiffs**—African American families who believed that segregated schools were a violation of their constitutional rights. Their argument centered on the **Equal Protection Clause** of the **14th Amendment**, which requires that all citizens be treated equally under the law.

At the time, the precedent established by the 1896 case *Plessy v. Ferguson* allowed “separate but equal” public facilities. This **precedent** meant that segregation was considered legal as long as the separate facilities were of supposedly equal quality. However, in reality, schools for Black children were consistently underfunded and poorly equipped.

Thurgood Marshall, a prominent **civil rights attorney**, argued before the Court that separate was inherently unequal. He and his legal team used sociological studies to show the harmful effects of segregation on children's development and self-esteem.

In 1954, the Supreme Court issued a unanimous decision declaring school segregation **unconstitutional**. This historic ruling overturned the previous precedent and served as a **turning point** in the civil rights movement. Although the Court did not provide a clear timeline for integration, the ruling opened the door to future legal actions and increased pressure on lawmakers.

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**Define the Terms** - Using the context of the passage, write a definition for each of the following vocabulary terms:

1. Plaintiff
2. Equal Protection Clause
3. Precedent
4. Civil rights attorney
5. Unconstitutional
6. Turning point

