

Name: _____

Getting to the Heart of Brown v. Board of Education

On May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the opinion of the Court in the case Brown v. Board of Education. Five excerpts of Warren’s decision are printed in the following text boxes. Use the Visual Thesaurus to define the words in **bold** print and answer the related questions to learn more about the legal justification for the Supreme Court’s decision.

1.

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. **Compulsory** school attendance laws and the great **expenditures** for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good **citizenship**. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment.

compulsory: _____

expenditures: _____

citizenship: _____

What “proof” does Warren give for America’s dedication to education? Why does he believe that education is the “foundation of good citizenship”?

2.

In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the **opportunity** of an education. Such an **opportunity**, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

opportunity: _____

What does Warren see as a right that should be available to all?

3.

We come then to the question presented: Does **segregation** of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does.

segregation: _____

How does Warren indirectly define "equal educational opportunities" in this passage?

4.

We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are **inherently** unequal.

inherently: _____

How does Warren explain why "separate but equal" can not apply to the topic of public education?

5.

Therefore, we hold that the **plaintiffs** and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, **deprived** of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the **Fourteenth Amendment**.

plaintiffs: _____

deprived: _____

Fourteenth Amendment: _____

According to Warren, how does the Fourteenth Amendment apply to the topic of school segregation?

