# Rules and Resistance

How law and violence shaped the New South

**SS24.US1.19a** "Explain how Jim Crow laws, Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), and violence shaped the economic, political, and social structure of the New South after Reconstruction."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Write 1 beside a Jim Crow rule, 2 beside the Plessy ruling, and 3 beside an act of violence; underline the effect each had on economic, political, or social life.

### Life Under Jim Crow

(1) In 1905, a Black farmer in Mississippi could face barriers far beyond a difficult harvest. After Reconstruction ended in 1877, white lawmakers across the South built a system of state and local rules known as Jim Crow laws. These rules separated Black and white residents in public places, including schools and train cars. Other state rules, such as poll taxes and literacy tests, blocked many Black citizens from voting, though some poor white citizens were also affected. With fewer Black voters able to challenge officials, lawmakers had less pressure to fund Black schools fairly or protect Black workers' interests.

(2) A train trip showed how law and courts reinforced this system. In 1892, Homer Plessy challenged a Louisiana law requiring separate railway cars for Black and white passengers. In Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), the Supreme Court upheld the law, saying separate public facilities could be constitutional if they were equal. The decision did not require segregation, but it gave Southern officials legal support for it. In practice, facilities for Black residents were often inferior. Unequal schools offered fewer resources, limiting education and future job opportunities. Separate cars and waiting rooms also made racial rank visible in everyday social life.

(3) Violence backed these rules even where no written law demanded a person's obedience. White mobs lynched Black people, and threats drove some from polling places or from efforts to demand fair treatment. Local officials often failed to stop attackers or punish them. Fear made it harder to organize for political change or bargain for better work. Many Black families also farmed as sharecroppers, giving a portion of crops to landowners and often falling into debt. Sharecropping was not itself a Jim Crow law, but limited political power and weak legal protection made it harder for workers to challenge unfair contracts.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could voting restrictions help maintain unequal funding for Black schools?

2. How did the Plessy ruling support segregation, and what effect did segregation have on everyday social life?

3. How could mob violence affect both voting and work for Black residents?

4. Why is it inaccurate to call sharecropping a Jim Crow law? How could limited political power affect sharecroppers?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five- or six-sentence editor's note for a 1905 newspaper explaining how laws, the Plessy ruling, and violence worked together to shape at least two parts of life: economic, political, or social. Use at least three specific details from the passage and explain how one condition led to another.

ANSWER KEY

# Rules and Resistance

GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.19a

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Write 1 beside a Jim Crow rule, 2 beside the Plessy ruling, and 3 beside an act of violence; underline the effect each had on economic, political, or social life. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How could voting restrictions help maintain unequal funding for Black schools? | **By blocking many Black citizens from voting, the restrictions reduced pressure on officials to fund Black schools fairly.** |
| 2 | How did the Plessy ruling support segregation, and what effect did segregation have on everyday social life? | **The ruling gave officials legal support for separate facilities. Separate cars and waiting rooms made racial rank visible in daily life.** |
| 3 | How could mob violence affect both voting and work for Black residents? | **Threats kept some people from polling places, while fear made it harder to bargain for better work.** |
| 4 | Why is it inaccurate to call sharecropping a Jim Crow law? How could limited political power affect sharecroppers? | **Sharecropping was a farming arrangement, not a Jim Crow law. Limited political power and weak legal protection made unfair contracts harder to challenge.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Readers in 1905 should see that the South's rules do more than separate people on trains. Voting restrictions keep many Black citizens from choosing officials who might fund their schools fairly. The Supreme Court's Plessy decision gives officials legal support for separate facilities, even though Black schools often have fewer resources. Those unequal schools can narrow future job choices. When mobs threaten people who try to vote or demand fair treatment, fear makes resistance and bargaining harder. Together, these forces keep power with white officials and landowners while limiting Black families' social freedom and economic opportunities.

Accept answers that explain supported cause-and-effect links rather than simply naming laws or events. Students may address any two of economic, political, and social life in the editor's note.