**The Amendments**

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| Words to Define  **Amendment: a change or adjustment to the Constitution**  **Repeal: to take back, revoke**  Suffrage: the right to vote |

Since it was written, the Constitution has gone through MANY different interpretations. Below are two famous Supreme Court cases that offer different interpretations of the 14th amendment.

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)

In 1890, Louisiana passed a statute called the Separate Car Act declaring that all rail companies carrying passengers in Louisiana must provide separate but equal accommodations for white and non-white passengers. The penalty for sitting in the wrong compartment was a fine of $25 or 20 days in jail. A group of black citizens joined forces with the East Louisiana Railroad Company to fight the Act. In 1892, Homer Plessy, who was one-eighth black, purchased a first-class ticket and sat in the white-designated railroad car. Plessy was arrested for violating the Separate Car Act and argued in court that the Act violated the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution. After losing twice in the lower courts, Plessy took his case to the U.S. Supreme Court, which upheld the previous decisions that racial segregation is constitutional under the separate but equal doctrine.

Brown v. Board of Education (1954)

In Topeka, Kansas in the 1950s, schools were segregated by race. Each day, Linda Brown and her sister had to walk through a dangerous railroad switchyard to get to the bus stop for the ride to their all-black elementary school. There was a school closer to the Brown's house, but it was only for white students. Linda Brown and her family believed that the segregated school system violated the Fourteenth Amendment and took their case to court. Federal district court decided that segregation in public education was harmful to black children, but because all-black schools and all-white schools had similar buildings, transportation, curricula, and teachers, the segregation was legal. The Browns appealed their case to Supreme Court stating that even if the facilities were similar, segregated schools could never be equal to one another. The Court decided that state laws requiring separate but equal schools violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

*In the Plessy v. Ferguson decision, the Supreme Court said that providing separate but equal facilities did not violate the 14th amendment; however, 60 years later, the Supreme Court ruled that separate but equal facilities DID violate the 14th amendment to the Constitution*