

Race relations in the US

1 Getting a basic historical overview

- a) Read the short texts below. (The texts are not in the correct order – yet!)
- b) Write down important pieces of information (in key words or short sentences) from each text next to the correct date in the timeline on p. 2. Also note down the number of the text passage you got the information from. Look up any words you don't know.



An icon of the American civil rights movement: Rosa Parks (center). In this post-segregation photo, blacks could sit wherever they wanted, e.g. in front of white passengers.

1. By about 1830, cotton was extremely important to the American industry. While in the North industrialization grew and demanded skilled workers, slaves worked on the plantations in the South.
2. By 1680, about 60,000 slaves were being imported each year. So by 1690, slaves could be found in all the British colonies. It was easy to have blacks as slaves as they were not protected by law.
3. Although the Civil War ended slavery, blacks and whites were not treated equally. Segregation was the new keyword, meaning that restaurants, buses, trains and schools were either for blacks or whites. In 1896, segregation in schools was in fact permitted by the Supreme Court. Finally, in 1954, the Supreme Court decided to stop segregation at schools after big protests by civil rights activists.
4. In 1808, after 13 British colonies had become the United States of America, the importation of more slaves was stopped by the American Congress.
5. In 1865, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution ended slavery in the United States. All slaves were now free and turned into American citizens by the 14th Amendment.
6. Slavery started in 1619, when 20 enslaved Africans were brought to the colony of Virginia (Jamestown) on a Dutch ship. They were traded for food and goods by the seamen.
7. Although in 1850 half of the 30 states in the United States permitted slavery, most people in the North were against slavery, which was regarded as economically backward and inconsistent with the ideals of freedom and equality.
8. In 1861, the American Civil War broke out. Difference of opinion on the subject of slavery was one of the main causes for that war. While the North was fighting for the unity of a still very young country, the South wanted independence to be able to save its way of life – and economy.

9. 1963 can be seen as a very important year for the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King, the famous leader of that movement, led 200,000 people – blacks and whites – to Washington to demonstrate for equality under the law. This event is known as the ‘March on Washington’. As a result of the protests, discriminating laws were changed.

10. The tension between blacks and the whites could be felt especially in the South. In 1955, Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, was on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. When asked, she refused to give her seat to a white person – and was arrested for it. This led to the boycott of the Montgomery public transit system by all the black citizens, who were its main customers because they did not have cars like the whites. The public transit system nearly went bankrupt. In 1956, the Supreme Court finally decided segregation on buses in Alabama was unconstitutional.

TIP

Remember: Use the **present tense** for timelines.

Timeline

	Text	Information
1619		
1680		
1808		
1850		
1861		
1865		
1896		
1954		
1955		
1956		
1963		

2 Class project

1. Copy (and enlarge) the texts above, cut them out and hang up on a washing line (use clothespins) in the correct historical order. Leave space between the texts.
2. Now add pictures and objects to each date which you think might help visualize the importance of each event.
3. Find more information you feel would be informative to the rest of the class, e.g. on the Civil Rights Movements or affirmative action laws. Add your information to the washing line.

Lösungen

- 1619: Text 6 → The first slaves are brought to America by Dutch sailors.
 1680: Text 2 → About 60,000 slaves are imported each year.
 1808: Text 4 → The importation of more slaves is stopped by the American Congress.
 1850: Text 7 → At this time, half of the thirty states permit slavery.
 1861: Text 8 → The Civil War breaks out. Slavery was one of the main causes of the war.
 1865: Text 3 → 13th/14th Amendment to Constitution
 1896: Text 3 → Segregation in schools is permitted by the Supreme Court.
 1954: Text 3 → Segregation in schools is stopped by the Supreme Court.
 1955: Text 10 → Montgomery bus boycott
 1956: Text 10 → Segregation on buses in Alabama is declared unconstitutional.
 1963: Text 9 → March on Washington