

Grades 9-12

Future of America's Past, "School Interrupted"

In THE FUTURE OF AMERICA'S PAST, notable scholar Ed Ayers takes viewers to the sites of complex and evocative chapters in American history. Throughout the series, Ayers meets with public historians working to preserve the past, from National Park Service rangers to curators and community activists. He visits the sites - both familiar and unknown - of monumental events, and brings on guests who offer a range of perspectives.

The Supreme Court decision outlawing school segregation began with a student strike in Prince Edward County, Virginia. Justice didn't follow that ruling — white officials in Prince Edward County closed public schools rather than integrate. Host Ed Ayers learns about the drama that unfolded through conversations with two of the student strikers. He discovers how black women activists defied the school closures by starting grassroots schools, and he meets an author whose grandfather helped start a whites-only "segregation academy." In a museum at the school that started it all, Ed talks with a descendant of strikers who inspires students today to take up the fight for justice.

After watching this episode, choose from the following questions and/or tasks to extend your learning

Question Box 1

- What evidence does "Future of America's Past "School Interrupted" director give to support his or her central idea?
- What is this program "saying"? Cite several pieces evidence to support your analysis.
- What is your opinion about the program? What evidence do you have to support your opinion?
- What evidence does Ed Ayers give to support his main idea? Provide text evidence.
- Using evidence from "Future of America's Past "School Interrupted" explain why this is a good title for this TV program.
- What caused the decision outlawing school segregation?
- What happened after that ruling? Why do you think officials in Prince Edward County decided to close schools?
- What were the students striking for or against?
- What were statements made by the students that were impactful and resonated with you? Explain why?
- What were the opposing positions of those for and against segregation?
- What is a "grassroots" school?
- Who started these schools and why?

Question Box 2

- What were some of the most interesting parts to this program? Explain.
- What were some of my most powerful learning moments and what made them so? Explain.
- Do you believe in a free and public education?
- Do you think that all students deserve the same education regardless of where they live?
- Do you think that segregation is justifiable?
- Can you come up with a solution to this controversy that others haven't?
- Do you think this would have been an issue if students were distance learning as you are today?

Box 3 (Tasks)

- Barbara Johns and the students of her school went on strike for equal rights in school. What is Barbara Johns story? Why do we not know their story?
- The NAACP tried to discourage the students from going on strike. Why?
- Research the life of Flossie White Hudson. Tell her story.
- Walk in Their Shoes: Think of a cause you are passionate about? What is it? Why does it inspire you? Would you strike for it? What else could you do to fight for this cause?

Box 4 (Enrichment)

- Barbara Johns is not the only person to encourage the walkouts of a school. Research the Chicano blowouts of 1968. Tell that story
- Before there was Brown vs the board of education, there was Sylvia Mendez. Who was Sylvia Mendez? What's her story? How is she connected to Japanese Internment?
- It wasn't that long ago that another school made national attention. Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School was the epicenter of a school shooting on Valentine's Day in 2018. Since then it's sparked a national movement. What happened with that movement? Where is it now?
- Listen to the story of Ruby Bridges online:
[The Story of Ruby Bridges ~ READ ALOUD | Story time with Ann Marie](#)
compare and contrast this story to the episode you just watched.

Box 5 (Extend/Real-Life)

- With a friend or family member watch this short video about segregation in the schools of today. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2TG9n0vc-4>
- With your friend or family member discuss whether you agree or disagree with the information presented in the video. Be sure to provide an explanation of your opinion.
- Do you feel your school is segregated? Why or why not?
- If you feel it is segregated, brainstorm a list of possible reasons for this segregation.
- Brainstorm a list of actions that you can take to decrease segregation and/or increase inclusivity at your school.



- Discuss your ideas with your friend or family member.