



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2014 Volume III: Race and American Law, 1850-Present

The Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and the Dred Scott Decision: An Unlikely Stop on the Path to Citizenship

Guide for Curriculum Unit 14.03.07

by J. Robert Osborne

This curriculum unit is designed for teachers and students to learn about the role of the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* decision's majority opinion issued before the Civil War in the establishment of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments after the Civil War. The overt denial of all rights of citizenship to freemen and slaves of African descent expressed by Chief Justice Roger Taney's opinion galvanized the opposition to slavery in the United States because it linked the absence of rights for African Americans directly to the U.S. Constitution. Many Americans then concluded that the most effective possibility for establishing the missing rights of African Americans lay in amending the Constitution.

This five-lesson unit is for tenth-grade students on the block schedule of eighty-two minute classes. It should be taught at the end of the U.S. History I course. This curriculum unit links the study of the causes of the Civil War and Reconstruction. The Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments are essential in understanding the history of America's granting of citizenship in general and the struggle for the civil rights of African Americans.

(Recommended for U.S. History, grade 10)

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