

INTRODUCTION

Speech of Governor Orval E. Faubus, September 18, 1958

In 1954 the United States Supreme Court ruled that segregated schools violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. In the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, it proclaimed that segregated schools could not be equal, and mandated that the practice of educating white and African American students in separate schools must be ended. Whites across the South reacted to the decision with dismay, and racist politicians and citizens sought to delay or altogether prevent the integration of public schools.

In Arkansas, Governor Orval Faubus, previously a progressive on social issues, emerged as the leader of forces seeking to prevent the integration of the state's public schools. While the Fayetteville, Charleston, and Hoxie school districts integrated without incident, the attempt to desegregate Little Rock Central High School in the fall of 1957 led to a crisis, as Faubus tried to block the attempt to integrate the school by nine black students (the "Little Rock Nine"). The local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) president, Daisy Bates of Little Rock, coordinated the desegregation process. Claiming concerns of possible mob violence, the governor mobilized the Arkansas National Guard, whose soldiers surrounded the high school and prevented the black students from entering the school. To overturn Faubus's actions, President Dwight D. Eisenhower dispatched the 101st Army Airborne Division to Little Rock, and under its protection the Little Rock Nine entered the school. Despite a turbulent school year in which one black and over 100 white students were expelled or suspended because of racially charged incidents, the first round of the conflict was won by those who supported integration. On May 27, 1958, Ernest Green became the first African American student to graduate from Central High School.

However, segregationist sentiment remained strong among many of Arkansas's white citizens. The politically astute Faubus believed his continued tenure as governor of Arkansas depended upon his appeasement of the segregationists. Therefore, after securing the Democratic nomination for governor in the primary election in 1958, he called a special session of the Arkansas General Assembly. White state legislators responded to the governor, authorizing him to close Little Rock's public schools. With the school property thus "unused," Faubus intended to lease the school facilities to private parties, which would operate private segregated schools. To legitimate his actions, Faubus arranged for the citizens of Little Rock to vote at a special election on September 27, 1958, with the choice of either the total integration or closing of the city's public schools. Little Rock's white majority voted to close the schools.

This document is an excerpt of a speech made by Gov. Faubus on the eve of the September 27 vote. In it he appeals to states' rights--the idea that individual states are granted certain prerogatives concerning local matters that are off-limits to the federal government--to support his actions. The appeal to states' rights had previously been used by racist politicians to justify slavery, segregation measures, and laws banning interracial marriage. In addition, Faubus used the speech to explain his plan to turn the public schools over to private parties. With Little Rock voters overwhelmingly approving the ballot, the segregationists had won the second round

of the integration crisis. Little Rock schools would remain closed for the 1958-1959 school year, bringing an abrupt end to the experiment of the previous year. But this would not be the last act of the crisis.

LESSON

Excerpts from the

Speech of Governor Orval E. Faubus, September 18, 1958

(For release to the press: 7:30 P.M.)

From the Orval Eugene Faubus Papers, Special Collections, University of Arkansas

Those who would integrate our schools at any price are still among us. They have seized upon the present situation to promote and foment concern and discontent, because of the temporary closing of the schools. They have spread wild rumors and attempted to organize demonstrations. These are the same people and the same forces who have all along been opposed to the majority will of the people of Little Rock and Arkansas....

Last year, I stated during the September crisis that I was not elected Governor of Arkansas to surrender all our rights as citizens to an all-powerful federal autocracy.... It is my responsibility, and it is my purpose and determination, to defend the constitutional rights of the people of Arkansas to the full extent of my ability....

I am fully aware of the deep concern of the parents for the continued proper education of their children, and I am fully aware of the inconvenience to the students in the interruption of the proper educational processes. To them, both parents and students, I express my sympathy and understanding.

To the students who are concerned, I say that in the years to follow, when you have come to realize the importance of maintaining our form of government, and the importance of preserving the great freedoms and privileges which we have known, you will be happy and proud to remember that you suffered inconvenience and personal sacrifice, and thereby made a worthwhile contribution to the maintenance of our dual system of government.... In this dual system of government, with its checks and balances, lies the strength of the United States of America....

To you people in this struggle who seek to preserve our form of government, I am proud of my role as a leader in the fight. I did not seek this role. It was thrust upon me in the course of events. I did not, nor do I now, shrink from my responsibilities in what is perhaps the greatest struggle for constitutional government during this century.

To you who oppose the great majority of Arkansas people in this fight, I urge you to think—lest in your consuming desire to gain your ends, among them the destruction of Orval Faubus, you destroy also the very principles of government that enable you and all others to live as a free people, and to rear your children under the high standards of living and freedom which prevail in this state and nation.

It was with a heavy heart that I found it necessary to sign the bills of the Extraordinary Session of the General Assembly and to close the High Schools in the City of Little Rock. I took this action only after the last hope of relief from an intolerable situation had been exhausted.

The Supreme Court shut its eyes to all the facts, and in essence said—integration at any price, even if it means the destruction of our school system, our educational processes, and the risk of disorder and violence that could result in the loss of life—perhaps yours.

This price, you as a people are unwilling to pay. This price I could not see you pay without first offering to you a legal plan whereby a catastrophe can be avoided, and still provide the opportunity of an education of our children.

This plan I now explain to you in detail. This plan is within the law. Even the Supreme Court, in the so-called school integration cases, has not ruled to the contrary. This plan is based upon our own State Constitution, written and adopted in 1874, and Arkansas Statutes enacted in 1875.

First. The federal government has no authority to require any state to operate public schools.

Second. The federal government has no authority to tell a state government for what purposes it may levy taxes, or how the tax money may be expended.

Third. In all the cases involving the public schools and integration, the federal courts have said only that an agency of the state cannot maintain segregated schools. This ruling does not apply in any way to private schools. Private schools are not affected by these decisions, even though the schools receive aid from state and federal sources.

In 1875, the General Assembly enacted two laws which give us a legal way to maintain a private system of education, at a time when a part of our public educational system cannot be maintained in a suitable and efficient manner.

Our own educational people have testified that a suitable educational system at Little Rock cannot be maintained on an integrated basis. Why, then, should we even attempt to keep these schools open as public schools when, based upon this sworn testimony, they clearly do not meet our constitutional provisions for a suitable and efficient system of education? We have a perfect right to close these schools as public institutions, and once closed and found to be not needed for public purposes, the school board has the right and the authority under a law that has been on our statute books for 83 years, to lease these buildings and facilities to a bona fide private agency.... [convert the high schools to private segregated schools].

Now, it is crystal-clear that if the voters of the Little Rock School District vote against integration on September 27th, these facilities will become surplus and not needed for public school purposes.... In this connection ... I received [a letter] from the School Board.... I accept this letter as having been written in good faith by immediately offering to a private group these unoccupied school buildings after the election. I say immediately after the election, because I

have no doubt that the people of this school district will never voluntarily integrate their schools. I am confident that the vote on September 27th will be against integration. I say a private group, because I understand that others may be formed.

Once again I am compelled to point out to the people of this city, this state, this nation, and the world, if you please, that our objective has been to maintain the peace and good order of the community. As long as there is a legal way, as I have outlined, to maintain the peace and good order and a suitable educational system. I will not shirk from my duty and responsibility....

Under Act 5 of the Second Extraordinary Session of the 61st General Assembly, a student seeking an education in another school, either private or public, because of a situation such as exists here now, will have the benefit of all funds to be expended for his education. The funds follow him to the school of his choice anywhere within the state.

The plan is sound and workable. It is all legal. To this the advocates of the so-called "law of the land" can have no objection....

There are many things in this [the] report ["Investigation of Public School Conditions" by the Committee on District of Columbia, House of Representatives, 84th Congress] which I cannot, in good taste, mention on this television program. Write to your Congressman and secure a copy of this report and read for yourself the revolting and shocking developments in the Washington, D.C., schools, following integration.

Now, what will you be voting on at the Special Election, September 27th?

It will not be just to open the school or keep it closed, although that is a part of it....

It will not be deciding the question of segregation versus limited integration. In the ultimate, there can be no such thing as limited integration, so far as the public schools of Little Rock are concerned.

The choice you make on Saturday, September 27th, is whether to continue to fight for our constitutional rights, and the opportunity to find an acceptable solution to this problem, or you vote for the beginning of complete and total integration. And if the latter be your decision, it will come sooner than you think....

Some people dread, shrink from, and grow weary of the struggle in which we are now engaged. I grow weary, also, but is there any choice? Once integration is effected totally and completely, will the peace and harmony you desire be attained? If we are to judge by the results elsewhere, anywhere, once total, or near total integration is effected, the peace, the quiet, the harmony, the pride in our schools, and even the good relations that existed heretofore between the races here, will be gone forever....

In conclusion, to you citizens of Little Rock, I must warn that you will be subjected to a terrific propaganda campaign from now until September 27th. This barrage of slanted, distorted,

and even false versions, will emanate—yes, is already emanating, from the same sources as before—both inside and outside the city and the state. I know you, the people, will understand.

This issue is now where all public issues belong—in your hands, the hands of the people. The decision is yours to make. Your decision will be my decision, as I am your public servant.

Public sentiment is with you in this struggle to preserve our legal and time-honored rights.

If you stand fast, we can win!

Please note:

The lesson plan is suggestive of a beginning point for teachers. Teachers are advised to modify to meet their specific classroom needs.

LESSON PLAN

Lesson: Speech of Governor Orval E. Faubus, September 18, 1958

Recommended grade levels: 9-10

Time required: 2-3 class periods of 50 minutes duration

Curriculum fit: Arkansas History

Arkansas History Curriculum Frameworks: WWP.9.AH.9-12.4; WWP.9.AH.9-12.5

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- demonstrate comprehension of the racial attitudes that prevailed during the mid-twentieth century in Arkansas in the form of a writing activity.
- demonstrate comprehension of the plans of Governor Orval Faubus against school integration in the form of a writing activity.

Procedure:

- 1) Divide the class into four or five groups.
- 2) Instruct (and assist) students to read the lesson, *Speech of Governor Orval E. Faubus, September 18, 1958*.
- 3) Instruct student-groups to complete the provided Activity Sheet.
- 4) Call upon groups to present their responses on the Activity Sheet to the class and provide oral feedback.
- 5) Write the correct responses on the blackboard or transparencies for students to note down.

ACTIVITY SHEET

Propaganda is a deliberate and systematic way to shape the opinions and behavior of a group of people.

According to some scholars, there are various ways to analyze propaganda. Take into account:

- 1) The purpose of the propaganda campaign
- 2) The context in which the propaganda occurs
- 3) Identification of the propagandist
- 4) The structure of the propaganda organization
- 5) The target audience
- 6) Media utilization techniques
- 7) Techniques used by the propagandist to exploit the past behavior patterns of the target audience
- 8) Audience reaction to various techniques
- 9) Counterpropaganda, if present
- 10) Effects of the propaganda campaign on the target audience

Source: Jowett, Garth S. and Victoria O'Donnell. *Propaganda and Persuasion*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999.

Analyze the September 18, 1958, propaganda speech of Governor Faubus, using the following questions:

- 1) What was the purpose of the propaganda campaign of Governor Faubus?
- 2) What was the context in which he made the propaganda?
- 3) Which propaganda organization did he use to make his speech?
- 4) Who was his target audience?
- 5) Which news media did he use?
- 6) In your opinion, which passages in the speech make it propaganda?
- 7) As a result of the propaganda speech, what reaction do you expect from the target audience?

Speech of Governor Orval E. Faubus, September 18, 1958

ASSESSMENT

The questions are based on both the “Introduction to Orval Faubus Speech of September 18, 1958” and the “Speech of Governor Orval E. Faubus, September 18, 1958.”

1. The U.S. Supreme Court based its <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> decision on which U.S. Constitutional Amendment?
A. First
B. Fourth
C. Fifth
D. Fourteenth
2. Which court case proclaimed that segregated schools could not be equal?
A. <i>Aaron v. Cooper</i>
B. <i>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka</i>
C. <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i>
D. None of the above
3. Who was the governor of Arkansas when Little Rock Central High School integrated in 1957?
A. Junius M. Futrell
B. George W. Hays
C. Orval E. Faubus
D. Thomas C. McRae
4. Who was the president of the NAACP when Little Rock Central High School integrated in 1954?
A. L. C. Bates
B. Daisy Bates
C. Adolphine Fletcher Terry
D. David Terry
5. Who was the president of the United States when Little Rock Central High School integrated in 1957?
A. Dwight D. Eisenhower
B. Harry Truman
C. John F. Kennedy
D. Lyndon Johnson

6. In 1957, the “Little Rock Nine” entered Central High School protected by the:
A. Arkansas National Guard
B. Little Rock Police
C. 101 st Army Airborne Division
D. All of the above
7. The first African American student to graduate from Little Rock Central High School was:
A. Minnijean Brown
B. Elizabeth Eckford
C. Ernest Green
D. Thelma Mothershed
8. As used in the lesson, what does the word “slanted” mean?
A. sloping
B. angled position
C. one-sided and partial
D. running play

READING OPEN-RESPONSE ITEM

Propaganda is a deliberate and systematic way to shape the opinions and behavior of a group of people. Explain the statement providing two examples from the lesson.

RUBRIC FOR READING OPEN-RESPONSE ITEM

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
4	The response clearly explains the statement providing two examples from the lesson.
3	The response explains the statement providing two examples from the lesson, but one of the examples is unclear.
2	The response explains the statement providing only one example from the lesson.
1	The response may explain the statement. OR The response may cite details that illustrate some aspect of the question.
0	The response is incorrect or irrelevant.
B	Blank – No Response. A score of “B” will be reported as “NA” (No Attempt – Zero Score).

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Integration of Little Rock Central High School, 1957.

<<http://libinfo.uark.edu/SpecialCollections/manuscripts/integration1957.asp>>

Speech of Governor Orval E. Faubus, September 18, 1958

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Appeasement	a policy of accepting a solution to a dispute in hopes it will prevent further disagreement. It usually involves the sacrifice of principles.
Autocracy	rule with absolute authority; dictatorial; administration imposing will on others
Barrage	attack
Catastrophe	tragedy; misfortune
Dismay	shock; unhappy
Emanate	start off; give off
Foment	create; produce
In essence	in summary; basically
Intolerable	unbearable
Legitimate	justify; explain actions
Levy	charge; collect
Prerogative	power; privilege
Propaganda	spreading false and misleading information to the public
Segregate	to keep one group of people apart from another and treat them differently, especially because of race or cultural differences
Sentiment	feeling; emotion
Slanted	one-sided; unfair; partial
Turbulent	confused; disorderly
Ultimate	final