

# Study Guide for Brown v. Board of Education Mural

## U.S. Supreme Court decision ended segregation in 1954.

In 2018, Kansas artist **Michael Young** created the Brown v. Board of Education mural, which is located on the third floor of the Kansas Capitol. The painting depicts the legacy of the 1954 landmark U.S. Supreme Court desegregation case that had its roots in Topeka.



In 2025 The **Kansas Oral History Project** interviewed **Michael Young** in front of a live audience at the Statehouse. This study guide was a suggestion of the audience. Many of the materials for students are found under Resources for Educators/History which is one of the five areas designated by the state Board of Education.

Students should watch the full **Kansas Oral History interview** of the artist by **Linda Jeffrey** which is available [here](#).

In addition, two other interviews in the **Diversity** collection (**Ben Scott and Carolyn Wims Campbell**) deal with segregation of schools and similar topics.)

## ‘Thrilled’: Brown v. Board mural-ist shares his story at the State-house

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*Michael Young, left, speaks with Linda Jeffrey in front of his Brown v. Board mural Feb. 28, 2025, during a live interview for the Kansas Oral History Project. (Credit: Bryan Richardson)*

The Brown v. Board mural on the Statehouse’s third floor was the hangout spot for lunch hour Friday as Kansas City artist Michael Young spoke about his life and the creative process.

Retired attorney Linda Jeffrey conducted the Kansas Oral History Project’s first live interview with Young, whose mural has graced the wall outside the Old Supreme Court Room since 2018.

Afterward, Young told State Affairs it felt “really good” that his words will be preserved along with his art for future generations.

“I didn’t really expect this, but I’m glad it happened,” he said. “Just thrilled by it actually.”

**Use this student Study Guide to explore these Compelling Questions and learn more about the artist and his work.**

## **Compelling Questions**

1. What do these terms mean: Segregation? Separate but Equal? How do they impact government? People?
2. What is the greatest impact of the Kansas Legislature on my community?
3. Why is diversity important in Government? In Schools?
4. Which level of government (City, County, State, Tribal, Federal) impacts my community the most?

## *Additional Questions to Explore about the Artist and his Work*

1. Who was Linda Brown, and why would Michael Young want to tell her story to others?
2. What do you know about this historic case? What was the issue?
3. What technique did Michael Young use to increase his painting design to a larger scale instead of a projector? Explain how this process works.
4. What did Michael Young study at the Salina Vocational Technical School that allowed him to get his first job as an architectural illustrator? Explain this type of art.
5. Why did Michael Young not use real models for his characters in the painting?
6. How did Michael Young prepare for the muralist competition?
7. Young created several different designs before he selected the one with a teacher reading to a mixed group of students. What did he change about the teacher from his original design, and why do you think this was recommended?
8. Why did Michael Young think he had the “right frame of mind” to do this painting? Had he been aware of any incidents of racism when he was in school?
9. What aspect of the painting catches Michael Young’s attention the most?
10. What qualities are needed to be a good teacher?
11. Michael Young deliberately placed several items in the painting that are typical objects with which children would be familiar. Name at least five of those items.

12. Why are there protestors on the left side of the painting? Why did he feel it was necessary to include the protestors.
13. Why did Michael Young say the right side of the painting was the most important part to him?
14. There is a saying on the Supreme Court building where they held the trial which Michael White included in the painting? Why? What does this phrase mean to you?
15. Why are Sumner Elementary and Monroe Elementary schools in the painting?
16. What happened to the teachers at Monroe Elementary after the decision?
17. What do the five flags on the right side of the painting represent? Explain.

If students view both **Michael Young and Phyllis Garibay Coons's** Oral Histories, you may want them to **compare the artists' backgrounds and how they prepared for the competition.**

- Neither of them started as trained painters.
- Both artists share that their families and other individuals encouraged their creativity and interest in art.
- Both mention other experiences that helped to develop their creativity: Michael's was when his teacher shared with him her appreciation of his short story in second grade, and Phyllis mentions the importance of 4-H and her experience on high school newspaper and yearbook staff.
- Michael's degree was in commercial art, and Phyllis had a varied background in fine arts.
- They both shared that the first thing they did when they heard about the mural competitions was to research and try to learn as much as possible about the subject. They both originally came up with several project ideas before deciding on one.

