



CLASSROOM VIDEO • VIEWING GUIDE

SUPPORTING STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH JOURNALING

Overview

In this classroom video, social studies teacher Jenna Forton uses journaling to open a lesson on the *Plessy v. Ferguson* court case. A journal is an instrumental tool for helping students develop their ability to critically examine their surroundings from multiple perspectives and to make informed judgments about what they see and hear. Many students find that writing or drawing in a journal helps them process ideas, formulate questions, and retain information. Journals make learning visible by providing a safe, accessible space for students to share thoughts, feelings, and uncertainties. In this way,

journals are also a formative assessment tool: you can use them to better understand what your students know, what they are struggling to understand, and how their thinking has changed over time. Journals also help nurture classroom community and offer a way for you to build relationships with your students through reading and commenting on their journals. Frequent journal writing also helps students become more fluent in expressing their ideas when writing or speaking. In this viewing guide, we describe some of the many ways you can use journals as an effective learning tool in the classroom.

Questions to Consider

1. As the class period opens, students begin journaling in response to two prompts. At **1:41**, Ms. Forton says she wants to add “one more layer to [their] thinking” and encourages her students to consider some primary source documents they read for homework the night before. Students then resume journaling. How might you add additional layers to your students’ thinking as they journal?
2. At **2:13**, after having introduced two staggered layers of journal prompts, Ms. Forton asks her students to turn and talk with their tablemates about their journaling. What effect does this approach appear to have on student engagement?

Featured

Jenna Forton

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Video Goals

- **See** how a teacher is using journals to spark student thinking and discussion.
- **Consider** how you might use journals in your own classroom.
- **Determine** the multiple ways that journals might be accessed by your students.

Lesson Resources

- [Choices in Little Rock](#) (pages 35–36)
- [Teaching Strategy: Journals in a Facing History Classroom](#)