

Name _____ Date _____

Loving v. Virginia

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b'

For centuries, laws throughout the United States prohibited miscegenation, a derogatory and pseudoscientific term to describe the marriage of people of different races. These prohibitions originated in the colonial era of the US. They were one type of many laws that promoted racial segregation and the systemic separation of Black people from White society.

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The criminalization of interracial marriage existed in the United States as late as 1967, when the Supreme Court declared such laws unconstitutional in Loving v. Virginia.

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It is easy in modern times to look back on this practice with disbelief, but the persistence of anti-marriage laws for couples of different races highlights the underlying racism in American society throughout the 20th century.

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Notes

2. b'

Notes

Richard and Mildred Loving were a married couple who lived in Virginia. The couple had known each other for a long time and decided to marry in June 1958. Richard was White, and Mildred was of Black and Native American heritage. They traveled from Virginia to Washington, DC, where interracial marriage was legal, for their wedding.

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The Lovings returned to Virginia but were met with serious backlash. On July 11, 1958, they were arrested at home in the middle of the night. The charge was violating a law that prohibited people of different races from marrying one another in Virginia.

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In order to avoid prison, the Lovings moved to Washington, DC, where they started a family. Five years later, they wished to return to Virginia. Mildred decided to write then-Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy to seek advice. This set off a series of events where the Lovings became unlikely figures in American history.

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The Lovings' marriage eventually led to one of the most important Supreme Court rulings of the 20th century.

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On Robert Kennedy's recommendation, the Lovings contacted the American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU helped push the case of *Loving v. Virginia* all the way to the Supreme Court, the highest court of law in the United States. The Court found in favor of the Lovings, agreeing with their lawyers that restricting marriage on the basis of race violated the Fourteenth Amendment.

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Loving v. Virginia led to the repeal of laws against marriage between people of different races in Virginia and 15 other US states. As a major court ruling in favor of the desegregation movement, it was also a significant victory for civil rights in the United States.

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Loving v. Virginia was also cited in the Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which legalized same-sex marriage in the US.

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