Marches That Mattered

How Alabama campaigns helped change federal law

SS24.AS.16 "Explain how major Alabama civil rights campaigns brought about federal action and the resulting expansion of civil and human rights. 16a Describe how civil rights campaigns in Alabama were led by a coalition of local..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline local organizers and marchers, circle national partners, and put a star beside each example of official resistance. Use your marks to trace how people worked together to press for federal action.

From Alabama Streets to Federal Law

1. In Birmingham in 1963, the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, led by minister Fred Shuttlesworth, worked with Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Local residents organized boycotts and marches against segregated businesses and unfair hiring. Young people also marched. Police commissioner Bull Connor ordered arrests and used fire hoses and police dogs against demonstrators. Images of the attacks reached a national audience, adding pressure for federal civil rights legislation.

2. In Selma, local organizers had worked for years to register Black voters. Amelia Boynton Robinson and the Dallas County Voters League joined forces with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and King's SCLC. Officials used registration barriers and arrests to keep Black residents from voting. On March 7, 1965, state troopers attacked peaceful marchers, including SNCC leader John Lewis, on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. National television coverage stirred public outrage and increased demands for federal protection.

3. These campaigns depended on more than famous leaders. Birmingham's young marchers and Selma's local voters took risks that kept the campaigns moving. Birmingham's events, alongside protests elsewhere, helped build support for the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed segregation in public accommodations and discrimination in employment. After the Selma attacks, President Lyndon Johnson urged Congress to protect voting rights. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 blocked literacy tests in covered areas and authorized federal oversight of voter registration.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did a local group and a national organization work together in Birmingham?

2. Identify one way officials opposed each campaign. How did the opposition increase pressure for federal action?

3. How did Selma's local organizers and national partners help bring about a change in voting rights?

4. What different rights did the two federal laws in the passage protect?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a worn pair of shoes belonging to an unnamed marcher in Birmingham or Selma. Write a three-sentence museum label explaining the marcher's role, an obstacle faced, and how local action with national partners helped prompt a federal law.

ANSWER KEY

Marches That Mattered

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.AS.16

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline local organizers and marchers, circle national partners, and put a star beside each example of official resistance. Use your marks to trace how people worked together to press for federal action. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did a local group and a national organization work together in Birmingham?	**Fred Shuttlesworth's Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights worked with King's SCLC while local residents organized boycotts and marches.**
2	Identify one way officials opposed each campaign. How did the opposition increase pressure for federal action?	**In Birmingham, Bull Connor used arrests, fire hoses, and police dogs; images reached a national audience. In Selma, officials used registration barriers and arrests, and troopers attacked marchers; television coverage increased demands for federal protection.**
3	How did Selma's local organizers and national partners help bring about a change in voting rights?	**Amelia Boynton Robinson and the Dallas County Voters League worked with SNCC and SCLC. After troopers attacked marchers, demands for federal protection grew, and Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965.**
4	What different rights did the two federal laws in the passage protect?	**The Civil Rights Act of 1964 addressed segregation in public accommodations and employment discrimination. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 protected voting rights by blocking literacy tests in covered areas and authorizing federal oversight.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

These worn shoes represent an unnamed Selma marcher who joined local voting-rights organizers and national groups such as SNCC and SCLC. When state troopers attacked peaceful marchers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge, participants exposed the danger they faced. Their actions helped build demands for federal protection, and Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to strengthen voting rights.

Accept either campaign if the label connects a marcher's action, an obstacle described in the passage, local and national cooperation, and the appropriate federal law. Students need not name the imagined owner.