From Protest to Movement

How events from 1945 to 1955 expanded the fight for civil rights

SS24.US2.10a "Identify and explain key events from 1945 to 1955 that brought about the emergence of a large-scale movement for civil rights."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline four events dated from 1945 to 1955. Number them in time order, then circle one phrase near each event that shows how it helped the civil rights movement grow.

How a Movement Grew

1. When Black veterans returned from World War II in 1945, many had fought for freedom abroad but still faced segregated schools, buses, and voting barriers at home. Their demands added urgency to civil rights groups already challenging discrimination. In 1948, President Harry Truman ordered the armed forces to end racial segregation. The order did not end discrimination nationwide, and change within the military took time. Yet it showed that the federal government could act against segregation. Veterans and other activists could point to that decision while pressing for equal treatment in civilian life.

2. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. The ruling grew from years of lawsuits brought by families and the NAACP, a civil rights organization. It gave activists a powerful legal argument, but many districts resisted integration. Then, in 1955, 14-year-old Emmett Till was murdered in Mississippi after being accused of offending a white woman. His mother insisted on a public funeral with an open casket, and photographs of his body spread widely. After an all-white jury acquitted two accused men, outrage brought new people, including young people, into civil rights activism.

3. In Montgomery, Alabama, Black residents had long protested unfair treatment on city buses. On December 1, 1955, police arrested Rosa Parks after she refused to give up her seat to a white passenger. Local organizers, including the Women's Political Council, called for a one-day bus boycott on December 5. Thousands participated, and residents formed the Montgomery Improvement Association to continue the protest. Churches, carpools, and neighborhood networks helped people avoid the buses. Unlike a single court case or executive order, this campaign depended on sustained participation by ordinary residents. By the end of 1955, the boycott showed how local organization could make a national demand visible.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the experiences of returning Black veterans add urgency to civil rights demands after 1945?

2. Why did the 1954 Brown ruling strengthen civil rights activism even though many school districts resisted integration?

3. How did the events following Emmett Till's murder draw more people into civil rights activism?

4. What turned the response to Rosa Parks's arrest into a sustained, large-scale protest?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 85- to 110-word museum label explaining how three events from 1945 to 1955 worked together to help a large-scale civil rights movement emerge. Include a government action, an event that drew public attention, and an organized community response, and explain how their effects connected.

ANSWER KEY

From Protest to Movement

GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.10a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four events dated from 1945 to 1955. Number them in time order, then circle one phrase near each event that shows how it helped the civil rights movement grow. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the experiences of returning Black veterans add urgency to civil rights demands after 1945?	**They had fought for freedom abroad but returned to segregation and voting barriers, making the gap between American ideals and their treatment harder to ignore.**
2	Why did the 1954 Brown ruling strengthen civil rights activism even though many school districts resisted integration?	**It ruled public school segregation unconstitutional and gave activists a powerful legal argument.**
3	How did the events following Emmett Till's murder draw more people into civil rights activism?	**Photographs from his public funeral spread widely, and the acquittal of two accused men sparked outrage that brought new people into activism.**
4	What turned the response to Rosa Parks's arrest into a sustained, large-scale protest?	**Organizers called a boycott that drew thousands. Residents formed the Montgomery Improvement Association, while churches, carpools, and neighborhood networks helped people keep avoiding the buses.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Between 1945 and 1955, civil rights activism moved from legal victories and public outrage to mass action. The 1954 Brown decision gave opponents of school segregation a constitutional argument, although many districts resisted. Photographs from Emmett Till's 1955 funeral and the acquittal of his accused killers exposed the violence that protected racial inequality. In Montgomery that December, thousands joined a bus boycott after Rosa Parks's arrest. Organizers used churches and carpools to sustain participation. Together, these events show that a ruling could establish a claim, public attention could broaden support, and local networks could turn concern into collective action.

Accept other supported explanations of how each event increased pressure, participation, or organizing capacity. For the museum label, accept either Truman's order or Brown as the government action, but look for a causal connection among all three selected events.