Choices That Changed Alabama

Leadership and resistance in the Civil Rights Movement

SS24.US2.10e "Describe how key Alabamians provided leadership, generated change, or demonstrated resistance to the Civil Rights Movement."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one action each by Parks, Nixon, Shuttlesworth, and Lewis that advanced civil rights, then circle one action each by Connor and Wallace that resisted the movement. Use your marks to compare how their choices shaped change.

Alabamians on Both Sides of Change

1. On December 1, 1955, Montgomery police arrested Rosa Parks after she refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger. Parks, a longtime NAACP worker, had challenged segregation before that day. E. D. Nixon, a Montgomery labor leader and NAACP organizer, helped turn her arrest into a citywide bus boycott. He worked with other local leaders to organize support and helped recruit minister Martin Luther King Jr. to lead the Montgomery Improvement Association. Black residents walked, shared rides, and stayed off city buses for more than a year. Their sustained action helped end bus segregation in Montgomery.

2. In Birmingham, minister Fred Shuttlesworth faced a different battleground. After Alabama officials forced the state NAACP to stop operating in 1956, he helped found the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Its members challenged segregation through lawsuits, boycotts, and public protests. Shuttlesworth invited national civil rights leaders to join a major Birmingham campaign in 1963. City public safety commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor resisted the campaign: police under his authority used dogs and powerful water hoses against protesters, including children. Images of that violence reached people across the country, increasing pressure for federal civil rights legislation.

3. Alabama governor George Wallace also used his office to resist integration. In June 1963, he stood at a University of Alabama doorway to block two Black students from registering; federal intervention forced him to step aside. Two years later, John Lewis, who grew up near Troy, Alabama, led marchers seeking voting rights across Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge. State troopers attacked them on March 7, 1965, a day remembered as Bloody Sunday. Lewis's courage and the televised violence helped build national support for the Voting Rights Act of 1965. These stories show that Alabama leaders made choices that either challenged injustice or defended it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Parks and Nixon contribute in different ways to the Montgomery bus boycott?

2. How did Shuttlesworth's leadership and Connor's response each affect the Birmingham campaign?

3. What different goals did Wallace and Lewis pursue through their actions in Alabama?

4. How did events in both Birmingham and Selma help generate support for change beyond Alabama?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 95 word museum label explaining how a choice by one Alabama civil rights leader and a choice by one Alabama official produced different consequences. Include a claim about what their choices reveal about the power of local actions to shape national change.

ANSWER KEY

Choices That Changed Alabama

GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.10e

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one action each by Parks, Nixon, Shuttlesworth, and Lewis that advanced civil rights, then circle one action each by Connor and Wallace that resisted the movement. Use your marks to compare how their choices shaped change. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Parks and Nixon contribute in different ways to the Montgomery bus boycott?	**Parks refused to give up her seat, and her arrest became a focus for protest. Nixon helped organize the boycott and recruit King to lead the Montgomery Improvement Association.**
2	How did Shuttlesworth's leadership and Connor's response each affect the Birmingham campaign?	**Shuttlesworth helped build a local organization and brought national leaders into the campaign. Police under Connor's authority attacked protesters, and images of the violence increased pressure for federal legislation.**
3	What different goals did Wallace and Lewis pursue through their actions in Alabama?	**Wallace tried to prevent two Black students from registering at the University of Alabama. Lewis led marchers seeking voting rights.**
4	How did events in both Birmingham and Selma help generate support for change beyond Alabama?	**Images of police violence in Birmingham increased pressure for federal civil rights legislation. Televised violence against Selma marchers helped build support for the Voting Rights Act of 1965.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A Birmingham minister and Alabama's governor used their influence in opposite ways. Fred Shuttlesworth helped organize protests against segregation and invited national leaders into the 1963 Birmingham campaign. When police attacked protesters, images of the violence increased pressure for federal civil rights laws. Governor George Wallace instead stood in a university doorway to block two Black students from registering. Federal intervention made him step aside. Together, their choices show that local leaders could force a national debate, while officials who defended segregation could be challenged by federal authority.

Accept other accurate distinctions supported by the passage. For the museum label, look for a specific action and consequence for each person, plus a claim connecting local choices to national change.