Words That Moved

Use context clues to unpack the language of a historical protest.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4 "Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline five words or phrases that describe laws, community action, or money. Circle nearby words that help you infer each meaning, then number your five annotations.

Riding for Change

1 On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, after she refused a bus driver's order to surrender her seat to a white passenger. Her arrest challenged the city's segregation ordinance, a local law that required Black and white riders to sit in separate sections. Community leaders quickly proposed a bus boycott, asking Black residents not to ride city buses. The request was difficult because many residents depended on buses to reach jobs, schools, and stores. Yet the boycott turned one woman's arrest into a public challenge to an unjust system.

2 The boycott began on December 5, 1955, and thousands of Black riders stayed off the buses. The Montgomery Improvement Association, led by ministers and local organizers, coordinated the protest. It arranged a carpool system, in which volunteer drivers carried workers along planned routes. Black taxi drivers also lowered fares for a time. These efforts showed community solidarity, or people supporting one another around a shared goal. City officials tried to stop the carpools through legal action, but organizers adapted. By building another way to travel, participants made their refusal to ride buses possible day after day.

3 The boycott lasted 381 days. As buses carried fewer passengers, the bus company lost fare revenue, money collected from riders. This loss created economic pressure: the protest affected the company's finances rather than using violence. The campaign also faced opposition. In 1956, a state court issued an injunction, a legal order, against the carpool system. Meanwhile, the federal case Browder v. Gayle challenged bus segregation. On November 13, 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a ruling that Alabama's bus segregation laws were unconstitutional. Montgomery's buses were desegregated in December.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does the phrase "segregation ordinance" mean in paragraph 1? Which words in the paragraph support your meaning?

2. What does "fare revenue" mean in paragraph 3? Explain how the context helps you infer its meaning.

3. What does the phrase "community solidarity" mean as used in paragraph 2?

4. What is an "injunction" in paragraph 3, and what was its purpose in this situation?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In exactly two sentences, explain what "economic pressure" means in this passage and why it gave the boycott leverage. Use one detail from the passage in your explanation.

ANSWER KEY

Words That Moved

HIGH SCHOOL · RH.9-10.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline five words or phrases that describe laws, community action, or money. Circle nearby words that help you infer each meaning, then number your five annotations. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does the phrase "segregation ordinance" mean in paragraph 1? Which words in the paragraph support your meaning?	**It means a local law requiring racial separation on buses. The passage says it required Black and white riders to sit in separate sections.**
2	What does "fare revenue" mean in paragraph 3? Explain how the context helps you infer its meaning.	**It means money the bus company collected from riders. The appositive "money collected from riders" defines it.**
3	What does the phrase "community solidarity" mean as used in paragraph 2?	**It means people in the community supporting one another for a shared goal.**
4	What is an "injunction" in paragraph 3, and what was its purpose in this situation?	**An injunction is a legal court order. It was used against the carpool system to try to stop it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In this passage, economic pressure means harming the bus company's finances by keeping riders off its buses. Because fewer passengers paid fares, the company lost revenue, giving the boycott leverage without violence.

Accept accurate paraphrases supported by nearby context clues. For the open task, accept two sentences that define economic pressure as financial impact and connect it to lost fares or lost revenue.