Beyond One Moment

How organizing changes the meaning of an event

6-12.HT2.3 "Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two actions by Robinson or the Women's Political Council, circle a condition that shaped their choices, and number three clues showing how their work looked different in 1954, 1955, and later years.

The Work Behind a Boycott

1. In 1950s Montgomery, Alabama, city buses enforced racial segregation. Black riders often had to surrender seats to white riders, even though Black residents made up many bus passengers. Jo Ann Robinson, a professor, helped lead the Women's Political Council, a group of Black women who challenged unfair treatment on buses. In 1954, the council warned city leaders that Black residents might stop riding if conditions did not improve. At the time, this warning could look like one more complaint to officials. Yet the women were building contacts and plans that could turn anger into organized action.

2. On December 1, 1955, police arrested Rosa Parks after she refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger. That night, Robinson and other council members printed thousands of leaflets calling for a one-day bus boycott. Volunteers spread the leaflets through Black neighborhoods. On December 5, many Black residents stayed off city buses. Local leaders then formed the Montgomery Improvement Association to continue the boycott, which lasted more than a year. Robinson's leaflets mattered because the council already knew how to reach neighbors quickly. Without that earlier organizing, a single day's protest might not have grown into a sustained campaign.

3. In 1956, a federal court ruled that segregation on Montgomery buses was unconstitutional, and the Supreme Court upheld that ruling. When the boycott ended in December, Black riders could sit without the city's segregation rules. Newspapers often highlighted Parks and the boycott's famous male leaders. For years, Robinson and the council received less attention, although their planning had helped launch the protest. Today, asking who prepared the boycott changes how we judge its history. Robinson's work was important in 1955 because it brought people together. Looking back, it also shows that lasting change depends on groups, not only famous individuals.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What question could you ask about the council's 1954 warning to judge its importance in 1955? Answer your question using the passage.

2. How did segregation and the council's earlier work make its leaflets more significant than a one-day notice?

3. What question about who received attention after the boycott could help you judge the council's significance? Answer it using the passage.

4. What question could you ask about the 1956 court ruling to test whether the council's work mattered beyond December 5, 1955? Answer it using the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a new historical question about how Rosa Parks's action and the Women's Political Council's work fit together. In four or five sentences, answer it with passage details, explain why the 1955 setting mattered, and show how looking back changes whose contributions you notice.

ANSWER KEY

Beyond One Moment

GRADES 6-12 · 6-12.HT2.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two actions by Robinson or the Women's Political Council, circle a condition that shaped their choices, and number three clues showing how their work looked different in 1954, 1955, and later years. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What question could you ask about the council's 1954 warning to judge its importance in 1955? Answer your question using the passage.	**Why did the 1954 warning matter when the boycott began? The council had built contacts and plans that helped it spread the call for a boycott in 1955.**
2	How did segregation and the council's earlier work make its leaflets more significant than a one-day notice?	**Segregation gave Black riders a shared reason to protest. The council's contacts helped spread the leaflets quickly and turn a one-day protest into a sustained campaign.**
3	What question about who received attention after the boycott could help you judge the council's significance? Answer it using the passage.	**Did Robinson and the council receive as much attention as famous leaders? No. They received less attention for years, even though their planning helped launch the protest.**
4	What question could you ask about the 1956 court ruling to test whether the council's work mattered beyond December 5, 1955? Answer it using the passage.	**Did the protest the council helped launch continue until bus rules changed? Yes. The boycott lasted more than a year and ended after courts ruled bus segregation unconstitutional.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

How did Rosa Parks's arrest and the council's organizing work together to make change? In segregated Montgomery in 1955, Parks's arrest gave residents a reason to protest. Robinson and other council members quickly spread leaflets. Their earlier contacts helped turn a one-day boycott into a longer campaign. Looking back, the council's less famous work appears essential alongside Parks's decision.

Accept other passage-supported questions and answers that connect an action to its historical setting and explain its importance over time. For Part 3, look for a new question followed by four or five answer sentences.