Who Opens the Doors?

State and federal power in the Little Rock school crisis

9-12.GOV.15 "Evaluate the roles of the federal and state governments in the Civil Rights Movement."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline actions by state officials, circle actions by federal officials, and number two places where their actions conflict or where control changes hands.

The Doors at Central High

1. In September 1957, nine Black teenagers tried to enter Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Three years earlier, the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled in Brown v. Board of Education that racial segregation in public schools violated the Constitution. Local school officials had prepared a plan to integrate Central High, but Arkansas governor Orval Faubus sent the state's National Guard to the school. Guardsmen blocked the students' entrance, while crowds threatened them. The governor said he was preventing violence. His decision instead used state power to obstruct a federal constitutional ruling and the local plan for change.

2. The federal government did not control the daily operation of Central High, but it had a duty to enforce federal court orders. A federal judge ordered Faubus to remove the Guardsmen, and he complied. When the students returned, an angry crowd made entry unsafe; police escorted them out. President Dwight D. Eisenhower then placed the Arkansas National Guard under federal command and sent soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division to protect the students. Under federal orders, Guardsmen who had blocked entry now helped secure it. The students entered on September 25 and attended classes under military protection.

3. Federal troops could open the school doors, but they could not make classmates welcome the nine students. The teenagers faced harassment throughout the school year. State and local officials still made choices about schooling, and resistance continued: in 1958, Governor Faubus closed Little Rock's public high schools rather than allow integration. Federal authority set a constitutional limit and could back it with court orders and troops; state authority shaped how schools operated and could either carry out or resist that limit. The crisis shows why a federal ruling alone did not produce equal access. Enforcement and decisions by state and local leaders mattered too.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Governor Faubus's use of state power conflict with the federal government's position on school integration? Use one detail about each government.

2. How did the Arkansas National Guard's role change, and which federal action caused the change?

3. Evaluate the federal intervention in September 1957: What did it accomplish, and what could it not accomplish?

4. How did the 1958 school closure show that state officials could still affect access after the federal intervention? Use details from both years.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a governor orders public libraries to deny entry to a group of residents despite a federal court order requiring equal access. Write five or six sentences evaluating how state officials could correct the denial, how federal officials could respond, and which response would best protect lasting access; use Little Rock as evidence without retelling the whole event.

ANSWER KEY

Who Opens the Doors?

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.GOV.15

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline actions by state officials, circle actions by federal officials, and number two places where their actions conflict or where control changes hands. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Governor Faubus's use of state power conflict with the federal government's position on school integration? Use one detail about each government.	**Faubus sent the state National Guard to block the students, while the Supreme Court had ruled that segregation in public schools violated the Constitution.**
2	How did the Arkansas National Guard's role change, and which federal action caused the change?	**The Guardsmen first blocked the students. After Eisenhower placed the Guard under federal command, Guardsmen helped secure the students' entry.**
3	Evaluate the federal intervention in September 1957: What did it accomplish, and what could it not accomplish?	**Federal action helped the students enter Central High and attend classes under military protection, but it did not stop the harassment they faced during the school year.**
4	How did the 1958 school closure show that state officials could still affect access after the federal intervention? Use details from both years.	**Federal troops helped the students enter Central High in 1957, but Faubus closed Little Rock's public high schools in 1958 rather than allow integration.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

State officials could cancel the governor's order and direct every library to admit the residents. Federal officials could seek enforcement of the court order if the state refused. In Little Rock, federal action protected the students' entry when state power had blocked it. But the students still faced harassment, and the governor later closed the high schools. State compliance, backed by continued federal oversight, would best protect lasting access because it would change daily practice while preserving a way to challenge new violations.

Accept answers that distinguish federal authority to enforce constitutional requirements from state authority over daily operations. For the open task, students may favor either level's response if they explain how it would protect access over time and support their judgment with passage evidence.