Rights in Motion

How Supreme Court rulings changed rights over time

USG.5.9 "Analyze and evaluate landmark Supreme Court opinions concerning civil rights and civil liberties, and explain their constitutional foundations, historical context, and development over time."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each constitutional protection and circle what the Court decided in each case. Number the sentences that show a change from an earlier rule or a barrier to putting a ruling into practice.

A Ruling Is Not the End

1. In 1896, Homer Plessy challenged a Louisiana law that separated railroad passengers by race. He argued that it violated the Fourteenth Amendment's promise of equal protection. In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court upheld the law, saying separate public facilities could be constitutional if they were equal. This "separate but equal" rule gave legal cover to segregation during the Jim Crow era. Although the case concerned train cars, courts later used its reasoning to allow separate public schools.

2. By 1954, Black families and civil rights lawyers had challenged school segregation across several states. In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court held that separating public school students by race violated the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. The justices ruled that separate schools were inherently unequal, even if buildings or supplies seemed comparable. Brown rejected the use of Plessy's rule in public education. Yet the ruling did not end segregation overnight. Some districts resisted, and the Court later told districts to integrate with "all deliberate speed."

3. Civil liberties changed through another case. In 1961, Clarence Gideon, charged with a felony in Florida, asked for a lawyer because he could not afford one. The court refused under state rules, and he defended himself. In *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963), the Supreme Court ruled that states must provide lawyers for defendants who cannot afford them in felony cases. The Sixth Amendment guarantees counsel, and the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause applies that protection to state courts. Gideon overturned an earlier, narrower rule.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Brown change the use of Plessy's rule in public schools? Explain the constitutional reason.

2. Why did equal buildings or supplies not settle the school segregation cases in Brown?

3. How did the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments work together in Gideon to change state court practice?

4. What does Brown show about the difference between a Court ruling and change in daily life?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a school board in 1955 proposes keeping students separated by race because both schools have equal books. Write a short response evaluating its plan. Explain the constitutional basis for your decision, how the law changed, and one challenge to carrying it out.

ANSWER KEY

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each constitutional protection and circle what the Court decided in each case. Number the sentences that show a change from an earlier rule or a barrier to putting a ruling into practice. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Brown change the use of Plessy's rule in public schools? Explain the constitutional reason.	**Brown rejected separate but equal in public schools because racial separation there violated the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause.**
2	Why did equal buildings or supplies not settle the school segregation cases in Brown?	**The Court held that separating students by race made public schools inherently unequal, regardless of comparable buildings or supplies.**
3	How did the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments work together in Gideon to change state court practice?	**The Sixth Amendment guarantees counsel. Through the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause, that protection requires states to provide lawyers to defendants who cannot afford them in felony cases.**
4	What does Brown show about the difference between a Court ruling and change in daily life?	**Brown ruled school segregation unconstitutional, but some districts resisted, so schools did not integrate overnight.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The board's plan violates the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. Equal books do not make separate schools constitutional because Brown ruled that separating students by race is inherently unequal. Brown rejected the use of Plessy's separate but equal rule in public education. The board must end its policy, though resistance by districts could delay changes in schools.

Accept responses that distinguish a constitutional ruling from its implementation. Students need not claim that Brown ended all school segregation immediately.