Rights in Action

How Warren Court rulings changed schools, courts, and representation

USH.6.9 "Identify and analyze the significance of key decisions of the Warren Court."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each Court ruling, circle the people it affected, and number the effects described in the passage. Use your marks to explain why each decision mattered.

What Changed After the Rulings?

1 In 1954, the Supreme Court faced a question rooted in ordinary school mornings: Could a state send Black children to separate public schools? In Brown v. Board of Education, the Court ruled that state-required racial segregation in public schools violated the Constitution's promise of equal protection. The decision rejected the idea that schools separated by race could be equal. It gave families a powerful legal basis to challenge segregation across the country. Yet a ruling did not open every school door at once. Many districts resisted, and federal courts and officials had to push for compliance over the following years.

2 A person charged with a crime may not know how to defend against the government. In Gideon v. Wainwright (1963), the Court ruled that states must provide a lawyer to a defendant who cannot afford one in a felony case. This made legal help a required part of a fair state trial, not a privilege reserved for those with money. In Miranda v. Arizona (1966), the Court ruled that police must inform people in custody of key rights before questioning them, including the rights to remain silent and to have a lawyer. Both decisions placed new duties on state officials.

3 Political power, too, was unevenly distributed. By the 1960s, some state legislative districts held far more residents than others, yet each district elected the same number of lawmakers. A vote in a crowded district could carry less weight. In Reynolds v. Sims (1964), the Court ruled that both chambers of a state legislature must have districts with roughly equal populations. States had to redraw district lines, giving voters in crowded districts representation closer to that of other voters. The ruling did not grant anyone a new ballot. Instead, it changed how much influence an existing ballot could have, making equal representation more than a slogan.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did Brown matter beyond declaring a rule unconstitutional, and what limited its immediate effect?

2. How did Gideon change the fairness of state trials for defendants who could not afford a lawyer?

3. Why did Miranda change what police had to do before questioning a person in custody?

4. Why did Reynolds change political power even though it did not give anyone a new ballot?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 65 to 85 word museum exhibit label connecting two decisions in the passage to one shared change in American democracy. Explain one important difference in whom or what the decisions affected.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each Court ruling, circle the people it affected, and number the effects described in the passage. Use your marks to explain why each decision mattered. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did Brown matter beyond declaring a rule unconstitutional, and what limited its immediate effect?	**It gave families a legal basis to challenge school segregation, but many districts resisted, so federal courts and officials had to push for compliance.**
2	How did Gideon change the fairness of state trials for defendants who could not afford a lawyer?	**It required states to provide a lawyer in felony cases, making legal help available regardless of a defendant's ability to pay.**
3	Why did Miranda change what police had to do before questioning a person in custody?	**Police had to inform the person of key rights, including the rights to remain silent and to have a lawyer.**
4	Why did Reynolds change political power even though it did not give anyone a new ballot?	**It required state legislative districts to have roughly equal populations, so votes in crowded districts would carry weight closer to votes elsewhere.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Brown and Reynolds both challenged systems that treated people unequally, even when those systems were established by states. Brown gave families a way to contest racial separation in public schools. Reynolds required states to redraw legislative districts so residents of crowded districts had more equal representation. The decisions affected different parts of daily life: one addressed where children went to school, while the other addressed the weight of a person's vote. Together, they show how Court rulings could reshape state practices.

Accept accurate explanations of each decision's effects that use different wording. For the exhibit label, look for a defensible shared change and a specific difference between the two decisions.