

Law and Life

Track how civil rights victories changed laws faster than economic conditions.

8.9a “The civil rights movement began in the postwar era in response to long-standing inequalities in American society, and eventually brought about equality under the law, but slower progress on economic improvements.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline phrases that name long-standing inequalities. Circle each legal victory, and put a star beside each sentence that shows economic progress was slower.

A Movement for Equal Rights

- ① After World War II, African Americans challenged inequalities that had lasted for generations. In much of the South, segregation separated Black and white people in schools, buses, and other public places. Literacy tests and intimidation blocked many Black citizens from voting. Activists used court cases, boycotts, marches, sit-ins, and voter-registration drives to challenge these barriers. They sought equal treatment under the law and a stronger voice in democracy.
- ② Thurgood Marshall and other NAACP lawyers challenged discrimination in court. Rosa Parks helped spark the Montgomery bus boycott after her arrest. Martin Luther King Jr. organized nonviolent protests, while Malcolm X emphasized Black pride and self-defense. Legal changes included Truman’s 1948 order ending segregation in the armed forces, the 1954 Brown ruling against public-school segregation, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- ③ These victories expanded legal protections, voting rights, and access to public life. They did not quickly create economic equality. Many African Americans still faced job discrimination, lower wages, inadequate housing, and unequal schooling. Civil rights laws provided tools to challenge discrimination, but poverty and wealth gaps remained. Legal change mattered greatly, while changing economic conditions required further action. Discrimination did not disappear when a law or ruling changed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 Name two long-standing inequalities that African Americans faced after World War II.

2 How did Thurgood Marshall's strategy differ from Rosa Parks's strategy?

3 What did Brown v. Board of Education rule, and why was that ruling an important legal victory?

4 Explain the contrast between the movement's legal gains and its economic gains.

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write four sentences that make a claim about the civil rights movement's success. Include one legal victory, one example of a continuing economic barrier, and an explanation of why the movement was both important and incomplete.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline phrases that name long-standing inequalities. Circle each legal victory, and put a star beside each sentence that shows economic progress was slower. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Name two long-standing inequalities that African Americans faced after World War II.	Any two: segregation in public places, barriers to voting such as literacy tests or intimidation, limited political power, or limited daily opportunities.
2	How did Thurgood Marshall's strategy differ from Rosa Parks's strategy?	Marshall used court cases as an NAACP lawyer. Parks helped spark the Montgomery bus boycott after her arrest.
3	What did Brown v. Board of Education rule, and why was that ruling an important legal victory?	It ruled racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional, rejecting unequal treatment under the law.
4	Explain the contrast between the movement's legal gains and its economic gains.	The movement won major legal protections and expanded access to public life and voting, but economic equality came more slowly because many African Americans still faced discrimination, lower wages, inadequate housing, and poverty and wealth gaps.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The movement won major legal protections but left economic barriers. Brown rejected segregation in public schools. Job discrimination and lower wages continued for many African Americans. These facts show major progress alongside unfinished work.

Accept accurate distinctions between legal protections and economic conditions. The four-sentence response needs a claim, a legal victory, a continuing economic barrier, and an explanation of progress and unfinished work.