Beyond One Flyer

Weigh sources from the Montgomery bus boycott

E.P.3.1 "Comprehend, evaluate, and synthesize textual sources to acquire and refine knowledge in the social studies. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, evaluating features such as author, date..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one fact each source can support, circle each source's date and author or issuing body, and number one limit on what each source can prove. These marks will help you compare the sources before drawing a conclusion.

What Can Three Sources Tell Us?

1. On December 1, 1955, police arrested Rosa Parks after she refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama, bus. A 1955 flyer from the Women's Political Council, a local Black women's organization, called for riders to stay off buses on Monday, December 5. The flyer was produced in Montgomery soon after the arrest, so it is a primary source for the boycott's early planning. Its purpose was to persuade people to act, not to count how many people took part. A call for a boycott shows an organized plan, but it does not prove the plan succeeded.

2. In her 2013 book *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks*, historian Jeanne Theoharis argues that Parks was an experienced activist, not simply a tired passenger acting on impulse. Theoharis wrote decades after the boycott and used earlier records to interpret its history. Her book is a secondary source: its distance in time allowed her to compare evidence, but readers still need to examine which records support each claim. Read beside the 1955 flyer, her account challenges the idea that the protest appeared overnight. The flyer documents coordinated action; the book places that action in a longer struggle.

3. A third source records a different kind of change. In 1956, a federal district court ruling in *Browder v. Gayle* found Alabama laws requiring segregated buses unconstitutional. The court opinion is a primary source for what that court decided, not a record of every rider's experience. Taken together, the flyer, the book, and the ruling support a careful conclusion: organizers planned collective action, and a legal victory followed. They do not show exactly how each resident responded or establish that the boycott alone caused the ruling. To investigate participation, a researcher could seek dated bus company ridership records or interviews with riders.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why is the Women's Political Council flyer strong evidence of early planning but weak evidence of how many people joined the boycott? Cite details from the passage.

2. How do the flyer and Theoharis's book together challenge the idea that the protest appeared overnight? Identify what each source contributes.

3. What conclusion can you draw from the flyer and the court ruling without claiming that the boycott alone caused the ruling? Cite one detail from each source.

4. How could dated bus company ridership records test a claim that the flyer cannot establish? Explain what the flyer was written to do.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Replace a museum caption that says, "One flyer tells the whole story of the Montgomery bus boycott," with an 80 to 110 word caption. Use dated evidence from all three sources, explain one source's limit, and identify a record that could help fill the gap.

Beyond One Flyer

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one fact each source can support, circle each source's date and author or issuing body, and number one limit on what each source can prove. These marks will help you compare the sources before drawing a conclusion. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why is the Women's Political Council flyer strong evidence of early planning but weak evidence of how many people joined the boycott? Cite details from the passage.	**The 1955 flyer called for riders to stay off buses on December 5, showing a plan. It was meant to persuade people, not count participants.**
2	How do the flyer and Theoharis's book together challenge the idea that the protest appeared overnight? Identify what each source contributes.	**The 1955 flyer documents a coordinated call to stay off buses. Theoharis's 2013 book describes Parks as an experienced activist and places the action in a longer struggle.**
3	What conclusion can you draw from the flyer and the court ruling without claiming that the boycott alone caused the ruling? Cite one detail from each source.	**The flyer called for collective action in 1955, and the federal district court found bus segregation laws unconstitutional in 1956. Together they show that planned action and a legal victory occurred, but not that the boycott alone caused the decision.**
4	How could dated bus company ridership records test a claim that the flyer cannot establish? Explain what the flyer was written to do.	**Ridership records could help show whether fewer people rode the buses during the boycott. The flyer urged people not to ride but did not count those who stayed away.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The 1955 Women's Political Council flyer urged Montgomery riders to stay off buses on December 5, showing that local organizers planned action after Rosa Parks's arrest. Historian Jeanne Theoharis's 2013 book describes Parks as an experienced activist, placing that call within a longer struggle. The 1956 federal district court ruling in *Browder v. Gayle* found bus segregation laws unconstitutional. However, the flyer was meant to persuade, so it cannot tell us how many people actually stayed off buses. Dated bus company ridership records could help answer that question.

Accept conclusions that distinguish what a source directly documents from what it cannot establish. The museum caption should use all three dated sources and propose a relevant record for investigating a stated gap.