Who Opened Doors?

Assessing Governor Gary's role in school integration

OKH.C.8.1.C "Assess the leadership of Governor Raymond Gary in the integration of the public common and higher education systems."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Gary's position or influence, circle an integration gain that came before his term, and write 1 beside a limit on how much change he could claim.

Integration and the Governor's Role

1. In 1955, a Black student in Oklahoma might face two different doors: the door to a neighborhood public school and the door to a state university. Both had been shaped by segregation, but they did not open at the same time. Federal court decisions had already forced changes in higher education. Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher entered the University of Oklahoma law school in 1949 after a legal fight. Then the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional. Raymond Gary became governor in 1955, when Oklahoma had to put that ruling into practice.

2. Gary said Oklahoma should obey the Supreme Court rather than fight school integration. His position mattered because a governor's words could signal whether state officials should cooperate or resist. During his term, public school districts began enrolling Black and white students together. The shift was not the work of one person: federal rulings set legal requirements, and local school boards made enrollment decisions. Nor did a legal change erase unequal treatment overnight. Some communities moved more slowly than others, and families had to navigate the changes in their own schools. Gary's leadership can be judged by both his support for compliance and those limits.

3. At state colleges and universities, the timeline complicates any claim that Gary started integration. Black students had won admission before he took office, and court rulings had challenged unequal treatment after admission. During Gary's governorship, higher education continued to operate under those legal demands. He did not create the earlier court victories, but his support for following federal law helped set a statewide climate for compliance. A fair assessment separates what Gary controlled from what judges, college officials, and students accomplished. It also asks whether opening doors was the same as giving every student an equal experience. Those are related goals, not identical ones.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the timing of integration in higher education affect the credit Gary should receive for it?

2. Why was Gary's position on the Supreme Court's school ruling a form of leadership?

3. Why would it be inaccurate to credit Gary alone for integrating Oklahoma's public schools?

4. What evidence in the passage limits a claim that integration was fully achieved during Gary's term?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 55 to 75 word museum label assessing Gary's leadership in integrating both public schools and higher education. Use at least two details from the passage, give credit to someone besides Gary, and explain one limit of his influence.

ANSWER KEY

Who Opened Doors?

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.8.1.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline Gary's position or influence, circle an integration gain that came before his term, and write 1 beside a limit on how much change he could claim. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the timing of integration in higher education affect the credit Gary should receive for it?	**Black students had won admission to state higher education before Gary took office, so he should not receive credit for starting that change.**
2	Why was Gary's position on the Supreme Court's school ruling a form of leadership?	**He urged Oklahoma to obey the ruling rather than resist it, signaling to state officials that they should cooperate.**
3	Why would it be inaccurate to credit Gary alone for integrating Oklahoma's public schools?	**Federal rulings required change, and local school boards made enrollment decisions. Gary supported compliance but did not act alone.**
4	What evidence in the passage limits a claim that integration was fully achieved during Gary's term?	**Some communities moved more slowly, and legal access did not necessarily mean students received equal treatment.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Governor Raymond Gary supported obeying the Supreme Court as Oklahoma public schools began enrolling Black and white students together. His stance encouraged compliance, but federal rulings and local school boards also shaped what happened. In higher education, Black students had won admission before Gary took office, including Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher in 1949. Gary helped set a tone for compliance, yet opening schools did not guarantee equal treatment.

Accept judgments that distinguish Gary's support for compliance from court decisions, local action, and higher education gains that preceded his term. Students may describe unequal treatment or uneven local progress as a limit.