A Seat for Change

How Oklahoma City sit-ins challenged segregation

OKH.C.8.1.D "Explain the strategy and effectiveness of nonviolent lunch-counter sit-ins, such as those organized by Clara Luper, local churches, and the NAACP."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two actions the protesters used, circle two ways supporters helped, and number two results or limits of the sit-ins. Use your marks to explain how the strategy worked.

At the Lunch Counter

1 On August 19, 1958, Clara Luper led members of the Oklahoma City NAACP Youth Council into the Katz Drug Store. The young people sat at the lunch counter and asked to be served. Black customers could buy items in the store but were refused service at the counter. The students stayed seated rather than shouting or striking back. Their quiet request made the store's unequal rule visible to everyone nearby. Sitting in a place reserved for white customers challenged segregation directly while showing that the students wanted the same ordinary service as anyone else.

2 A sit-in was planned, not simply a moment of courage. Luper and the Youth Council prepared young participants to remain calm even if people insulted them. Local churches offered meeting spaces and a network of adults who could support the students. The NAACP helped organize the campaign and connect the local protest to a wider fight for civil rights. Groups returned to counters instead of making a single visit. By staying until they were turned away and returning again, they kept pressure on store managers without using violence. Adult support helped young protesters sustain that pressure.

3 The protest worked through both business pressure and public attention. A manager faced repeated requests for service, while other customers could see the unfair policy in action. News about peaceful students being refused food could also make segregation harder to defend. Katz eventually began serving Black customers at its lunch counter, an early victory for the Oklahoma City campaign. Sit-ins continued at other businesses, where change did not happen all at once. The tactic helped open counters and draw support, but each victory required organized effort, and it did not end discrimination everywhere.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did sitting at the lunch counter challenge segregation more directly than shopping elsewhere in the store?

2. How did preparing students to stay calm strengthen the sit-in strategy?

3. How did local churches and the NAACP help protesters keep pressure on businesses?

4. What does the passage show about both the effectiveness and the limits of the sit-ins?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a lunch counter in another Oklahoma town in 1959 that refuses to serve Black customers. Write 5 to 6 sentences proposing a nonviolent sit-in. Explain one preparation, how you would gain support, why the tactic might change the policy, and how you would judge its success and limits.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two actions the protesters used, circle two ways supporters helped, and number two results or limits of the sit-ins. Use your marks to explain how the strategy worked. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did sitting at the lunch counter challenge segregation more directly than shopping elsewhere in the store?	**Black customers could shop in the store but could not be served at the counter. Sitting there directly challenged that unequal rule.**
2	How did preparing students to stay calm strengthen the sit-in strategy?	**It helped students continue their peaceful request for service even when people insulted them, keeping attention on the unfair policy.**
3	How did local churches and the NAACP help protesters keep pressure on businesses?	**Churches provided meeting spaces and adult support. The NAACP helped organize the campaign and connect it to a wider civil rights effort, supporting repeated protests.**
4	What does the passage show about both the effectiveness and the limits of the sit-ins?	**Katz began serving Black customers, and the sit-ins drew attention to segregation. Change at other businesses took longer, and the protests did not end discrimination everywhere.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would invite Black and white students to request service together at the counter. Before the action, we would practice staying calm if staff refused us. A local church could host planning meetings, and an NAACP chapter could help us reach supporters. We would return on several days so customers and managers could see the unfair rule. I would count the action as a success if the counter began serving Black customers. I would also check whether other counters still refused service, because one changed policy would not end segregation.

Accept other plausible nonviolent plans if they explain how organization and public pressure could change a policy. Responses should distinguish a change at one counter from an end to segregation.