When Riders Organized

Trace how collective action changes rules and public attention.

S.5.2 "Describe how social movements can influence and change society."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two collective actions and circle two effects of the boycott. Write matching numbers beside each action and its effect to show how the movement influenced society.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott

1 In 1955, city buses in Montgomery, Alabama, enforced racial segregation. Black riders had to sit apart from white riders and could be ordered to give up their seats. On December 1, police arrested Rosa Parks after she refused to surrender her seat to a white passenger. Local Black organizers, including the Women's Political Council, called for a one-day bus boycott on December 5. Their leaflets asked people to stay off the buses. The response showed that a shared injustice could become organized public action: thousands of Black residents chose other ways to travel instead of riding the bus.

2 The one-day protest grew into a sustained boycott led by the Montgomery Improvement Association, with Martin Luther King Jr. as its president. For more than a year, participants walked, shared rides, and operated carpools to reach work, school, and other places. Staying off buses reduced fare revenue and made the protest difficult for city leaders to ignore. Participants also faced arrests and threats, yet many continued. The boycott made segregation visible to people across the country, drawing national attention and support. Its strength came from repeated choices by many residents, not from one speech or one dramatic day.

3 Meanwhile, Black women challenged bus segregation in a federal lawsuit, Browder v. Gayle. In 1956, a federal court ruled that segregation on Montgomery buses violated the Constitution, and the U.S. Supreme Court let that decision stand. After the ruling took effect in December, the boycott ended, and Black passengers could legally sit without the old segregation rules. The court issued the order, but the movement had sustained pressure and kept the injustice in public view. Legal change did not erase racism or guarantee equal treatment everywhere. Still, the boycott showed how organized people could change a local practice and help build momentum for a wider civil rights movement.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did organizers turn Parks's arrest into collective action, and what did the turnout show?

2. Explain two ways staying off the buses increased the movement's influence.

3. How did the court and the boycott play different roles in changing Montgomery's bus rules?

4. Describe one change the movement achieved and one limit of that change.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine students in your town want the city to add safer crosswalks near a busy road. In four to five sentences, describe a collective action they could take, how it could influence a decision-maker, one change they seek, and one limit of that change.

ANSWER KEY

When Riders Organized

HIGH SCHOOL · S.5.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two collective actions and circle two effects of the boycott. Write matching numbers beside each action and its effect to show how the movement influenced society. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did organizers turn Parks's arrest into collective action, and what did the turnout show?	**Organizers called for a one-day boycott through leaflets, and thousands of Black residents stayed off the buses. The turnout showed that many people could act together against a shared injustice.**
2	Explain two ways staying off the buses increased the movement's influence.	**It reduced bus fare revenue, making the protest hard for city leaders to ignore, and drew national attention and support.**
3	How did the court and the boycott play different roles in changing Montgomery's bus rules?	**The court ruled bus segregation unconstitutional. The boycott kept pressure on the city and the injustice in public view.**
4	Describe one change the movement achieved and one limit of that change.	**Black passengers could legally sit without the old segregation rules, but the ruling did not erase racism or guarantee equal treatment everywhere.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Students and families could collect reports of near misses and bring a joint petition to a city council meeting. A large turnout could show council members that many residents need safer routes and encourage them to fund a crosswalk. The city could install a marked crossing and a pedestrian signal near the school. That change would not remove every traffic danger, so drivers would still need to follow traffic rules.

Accept other passage-supported action-effect pairs and explanations that distinguish the boycott's influence from the court's legal authority. For Your Turn, accept plausible collective actions that identify a decision-maker, a possible change, and a realistic limit.