Violence and Resolve

Read how violence confronted the Civil Rights Movement.

USH.C.7.1.C "Describe violent responses to the Civil Rights Movement, including the Birmingham church bombing and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline descriptions of violent actions and circle the people or places targeted. Write 1 beside the Birmingham church bombing and 2 beside King's assassination so you can compare them.

Attacks on a Movement

1. In spring 1963, Black residents and their allies marched in Birmingham, Alabama, to challenge segregation in stores and public spaces. Many young people joined demonstrations organized by local leaders and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Police used high-pressure fire hoses and dogs against demonstrators, including children, while crowds and cameras watched. The force was meant to stop the protests, but news reports carried images of the attacks across the country. Birmingham became a vivid example of how people seeking equal rights could meet violence, even when they protested without weapons. The demonstrators' courage drew national attention to their demands.

2. On September 15, 1963, a bomb planted by white supremacists exploded at Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church. The church was a gathering place for civil rights organizing, but it was also a place where families worshipped. Four Black girls were killed while preparing for a church service, and others were injured. The attackers struck a community space, not a battlefield. The bombing spread grief and fear, yet community members kept calling for justice and an end to segregation. For many Americans, the deaths exposed the deadly hatred that stood behind resistance to the Civil Rights Movement.

3. Five years later, King traveled to Memphis, Tennessee, to support striking Black sanitation workers seeking better pay and safer working conditions. On April 4, 1968, an assassin shot him as he stood on a balcony at the Lorraine Motel. King died that evening. The killing removed a leading voice for nonviolent protest and shocked people around the world. Many gathered to mourn; anger also fueled unrest in cities across the United States. The assassination did not end the movement, but it showed that even its most visible leader faced deadly violence. Both attacks revealed the dangers faced by people connected to the struggle for civil rights.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Birmingham police use violence against demonstrators, and what were they trying to stop?

2. How did the church bombing strike both a place of worship and the Civil Rights Movement?

3. What happened to King in Memphis, and why was his death a blow to the movement?

4. How did people's responses after the church bombing differ from their responses after King's assassination?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word museum label for an exhibit called “When Violence Met Protest.” Explain how the church bombing and King's assassination threatened the movement in different ways, and why visitors should study both events together. Include at least two precise facts from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Violence and Resolve

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.7.1.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline descriptions of violent actions and circle the people or places targeted. Write 1 beside the Birmingham church bombing and 2 beside King's assassination so you can compare them. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Birmingham police use violence against demonstrators, and what were they trying to stop?	**Police used high-pressure fire hoses and dogs against demonstrators, including children, to stop protests against segregation.**
2	How did the church bombing strike both a place of worship and the Civil Rights Movement?	**White supremacists bombed a church where families worshipped and civil rights organizing took place. The explosion killed four Black girls and injured others.**
3	What happened to King in Memphis, and why was his death a blow to the movement?	**An assassin shot King at the Lorraine Motel. His death took away a leading voice for nonviolent protest.**
4	How did people's responses after the church bombing differ from their responses after King's assassination?	**After the bombing, community members continued calling for justice and an end to segregation. After King's assassination, many people mourned, while anger fueled unrest in cities.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A church can be both a place of worship and a center for change. In 1963, a bomb at Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church killed four Black girls. In 1968, King was shot while in Memphis to support striking sanitation workers. One attack struck a community gathering place; the other killed a nationally known leader. Seeing both events together reminds visitors that violence threatened people at many levels of the Civil Rights Movement. It also shows why the movement's work mattered even when those involved faced grave danger.

Accept answers that accurately describe the violence, its targets, and its effects using passage evidence. The museum label should distinguish an attack on a community gathering place from an attack on a movement leader.