CHAPTER 28
1945–1975

The Civil Rights Movement

What You Will Learn...
In this chapter you will learn about the efforts of African Americans and others to gain civil rights protections in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

SECTION 1: The Civil Rights Movement Takes Shape........................................ 870
The Big Idea Civil rights activists used legal challenges and public protests to confront segregation.

SECTION 2: Kennedy, Johnson, and Civil Rights ... 876
The Big Idea The civil rights movement made major advances during the presidencies of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

SECTION 3: Rights for Other Americans .............. 882
The Big Idea Encouraged by the success of the civil rights movement, many groups worked for equal rights in the 1960s.

Focus on Writing

A Civil Rights Bill In the 1950s and 1960s, African Americans began successfully to challenge the discrimination they had faced for so many years. In this chapter, you will read about the civil rights movement and about the passage of new civil rights laws. Imagine that you are a member of Congress at this time. You will write a new civil rights bill to help people gain fair treatment under the law.
African Americans launched a major civil rights movement in the years following World War II. Members of the movement organized demonstrations to protest unfair treatment, like the March on Washington shown here.
Focus on Themes  In this chapter, you will read about the important changes in American society during the period called the civil rights era. You will learn about how many people came to see politics as a way to correct social inequalities that existed for minority groups in the United States, such as African Americans, women, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and people with disabilities. You will also read about life in the 1960s.

Using Context Clues: Synonyms

Focus on Reading  Some words mean almost the same thing. Understanding the similarities can help you understand words whose meaning you may not know.

Understanding Synonyms  Words that have similar meanings are called synonyms. Often, a synonym is given as a definition. The synonym will probably be a word you already understand. This will help you learn the new word through context clues.

Notice how one reader uses synonyms to understand words she does not understand.

An AIM leader described the group’s goals, saying, “We don’t want civil rights in the white man’s society—we want our own sovereign [self-governing] rights.”

This is a word I don’t know the meaning of.

These brackets mean that the word inside is a synonym of the word or phrase that comes before. The word inside is a synonym of sovereign.

The word sovereign must mean to govern on one’s own.
You Try It!

The following passage is from the chapter you are getting ready to read. As you read the passage, look for synonyms in the definitions of unfamiliar words.

On February 1, 1960, the students went into Woolworth and staged a sit-in—a demonstration in which protesters sit down and refuse to leave. They sat in the “whites-only” section of the lunch counter and ordered coffee. They were not served, but they stayed until the store closed. The next day, they returned with dozens more students to continue the sit-in. Soon, another sit-in began at the lunch counter of a nearby store.

After you read the passage, answer the following questions.

1. What word is a synonym of sit-in that is given in that word’s definition?

2. What clue is given that helps you find the synonym in the above passage?

3. Can you think of another synonym for sit-in that might have been used?

Key Terms and People

Chapter 28

Section 1
- Thurgood Marshall (p. 871)
- Brown v. Board of Education (p. 871)
- Little Rock Nine (p. 871)
- Rosa Parks (p. 872)
- Montgomery bus boycott (p. 873)
- Martin Luther King Jr. (p. 873)
- sit-in (p. 874)
- Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (p. 874)

Section 2
- John F. Kennedy (p. 876)
- Freedom Rides (p. 877)
- March on Washington (p. 878)
- Lyndon B. Johnson (p. 879)
- Civil Rights Act of 1964 (p. 879)
- Voting Rights Act of 1965 (p. 879)
- Great Society (p. 880)
- Black Power (p. 880)
- Malcolm X (p. 880)

Section 3
- Cesar Chavez (p. 882)
- United Farm Workers (p. 882)
- Betty Friedan (p. 883)
- National Organization for Women (p. 883)
- Shirley Chisholm (p. 883)
- Equal Rights Amendment (p. 883)
- Phyllis Schlafly (p. 883)
- American Indian Movement (p. 885)
- Disabled in Action (p. 885)

Academic Vocabulary

In this chapter, you will learn the following academic words:
- implement (p. 871)
- consequences (p. 883)
The Civil Rights Movement Takes Shape

If YOU were there...

You are an African American student in the 1950s. You get up early every day and take a long bus ride across the city to an African American public school. There is another school just three blocks from your home, but only white students are welcome there. You have heard, however, that this school will soon be opening its doors to black students as well.

Would you want to be one of the first African Americans to attend this school? Why or why not?

Battling School Segregation

The 1896 Supreme Court case Plessy v. Ferguson established the “separate-but-equal” doctrine. This doctrine stated that federal, state, and local governments could allow segregation as long as separate facilities were equal. One result of this ruling was that states in both the North and South maintained separate schools for white and black students. Government officials often insisted that though these schools were separate, they were equal in quality.

In fact, however, schools for black children typically received far less funding. Early civil rights leaders, led by members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), focused on ending segregation in America’s public schools.
**Brown v. Board of Education**

The NAACP’s strategy was to show that separate schools were unequal. The NAACP attorneys Thurgood Marshall, who went on to become Supreme Court justice, and Jack Greenberg led the courtroom battles against segregation. In the early 1950s, five school segregation cases from Delaware, Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., came together under the title of Brown v. Board of Education. The “Brown” in the case title was a seven-year-old African American girl from Topeka, Kansas, named Linda Brown. Though she lived near a school for white children, Linda Brown had to travel across town to a school for black children. Linda’s father and the NAACP sued to allow Linda to attend the school closer to her home.

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court issued a unanimous ruling on Brown v. Board of Education. Segregation in schools and other public facilities was illegal.

The next year, the Court ordered public schools to desegregate, or integrate, “with all deliberate speed.” These rulings would prove difficult to enforce.

**Little Rock Nine**

In the entire South, only three school districts began desegregating in 1954. Most others implemented gradual integration plans. In Little Rock, Arkansas, the school board started by integrating one high school. It allowed nine outstanding black students to attend Central High School. These students became known as the Little Rock Nine. Arkansas governor Orval Faubus worked to prevent desegregation at Central High School, however. He used National Guard troops to block the Little Rock Nine from entering the school.

On the morning of September 4, 1957, eight of the nine students arrived at the school together and were turned away by the National Guard. Then the ninth student, 15-year-old Elizabeth Eckford, arrived at the school by herself. She found the entrance blocked by the National Guard. Turning around, she faced a screaming mob. Someone began yelling, “Lynch her! Lynch her!” Finally, a white man and woman guided Eckford to safety.

Elizabeth Eckford and the rest of the Little Rock Nine went home. For weeks, Governor

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**The Court’s Ruling**

The Supreme Court overturned the Plessy doctrine of “separate–but–equal.” It ruled that racially segregated schools were not equal and were therefore unconstitutional. All of the justices agreed to the ruling, making it unanimous.

**The Court’s Reasoning**

The Supreme Court decided that segregation violated the Fourteenth Amendment’s guarantee of “equal protection of the laws.” Its opinion stated, “We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of ‘separate–but–equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently [naturally] unequal.”

**Why It Matters**

The ruling in Brown v. Board of Education led to integrated public schools. It also opened the door to other successful challenges to segregation in public places.
Faubus refused to allow them to attend the school. The tense situation lasted until President Eisenhower sent federal troops to escort the students into the school.

The Little Rock Nine began attending classes, but resistance to integration continued. Some white students insulted, harassed, and attacked the black students. In spite of these obstacles, eight of the nine remained at the school. In May 1958 Ernest Green became the first African American student to graduate from Central High. When Green’s name was called at the graduation ceremony, no one clapped. “But I figured they didn’t have to,” he later said. “After I got that diploma, that was it. I had accomplished what I had come there for.”

**Reading Check**

**Summarizing** What obstacles faced supporters of desegregation?

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### Montgomery Bus Boycott

The victory in *Brown v. Board of Education* was part of a larger struggle against segregation. Most facilities in the South, including public transportation, remained segregated.

The NAACP decided to continue the battle against segregation in Montgomery, Alabama. Black passengers there were required to sit in the back of city buses. If the whites-only front section filled up, black passengers had to give up their seats.

On December 1, 1955, a seamstress and NAACP worker named Rosa Parks boarded a bus and sat in the front row of the section reserved for black passengers. When the bus became full, the driver told Parks and three others to give their seats to white passengers. Parks refused. The bus driver called the police, and Parks was taken to jail.
To protest Parks’s arrest, African American professor Jo Ann Robinson organized a boycott of Montgomery buses. Local leaders formed the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) to help strengthen the boycott. In the Montgomery bus boycott, thousands of African Americans stopped riding the buses. Some white residents supported the boycott as well. Bus ridership fell by 70 percent.

To lead the MIA, African American leaders turned to Martin Luther King Jr., a young Baptist minister. The 26-year-old King already had a reputation as a powerful speaker whose words could motivate and inspire listeners.

As the boycott continued, bus drivers guided nearly empty buses down the city streets. Leaders planned a carpool system that helped people find rides at more than 40 locations throughout Montgomery. For 381 days, boycotters carpooled, took taxis, rode bicycles, and walked. Still, Montgomery’s leaders refused to integrate the bus system.

As in Little Rock during the school segregation fight, many white residents were angry about the attempt to end segregation. Some people resorted to violence. King’s home was bombed, and he received hate mail and phone calls threatening him and his family. The police also harassed and arrested carpool drivers. In spite of this intimidation, the boycott gained national attention, sparking similar protests in other cities.

Finally, in November 1956 the Supreme Court ruled that segregation on public transportation was illegal. The next month, King joined other black and white ministers to ride the first integrated bus in Montgomery. “It . . . makes you feel that America is a great country and we’re going to do more to make it greater,” remembered Jo Ann Robinson.

The Montgomery bus boycott helped make Martin Luther King Jr. a nationally known civil rights leader. He formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), which led campaigns for civil rights throughout the South.
**Sit-ins and the SNCC**

Like public schools and buses, many private businesses in the South were segregated. In Greensboro, North Carolina, four students decided to challenge this form of segregation. They targeted a lunch counter at Woolworth, a popular department store. Black customers were supposed to eat standing up at one end of the counter. White customers sat down to eat at the other end.

On February 1, 1960, the students went into Woolworth and staged a **sit-in**—a demonstration in which protesters sit down and refuse to leave. They sat in the whites-only section of the lunch counter and ordered coffee. They were not served, but they stayed until the store closed. The next day, they returned with dozens more students to continue the sit-in. Soon, another sit-in began at the lunch counter of a nearby store.

People across the country read newspaper stories about the Greensboro sit-ins. Other black students in the South began to hold similar protests. The student protesters practiced the strategy of nonviolent resistance. No matter how much they were insulted or threatened, they refused to respond with violence. They were inspired by Martin Luther King Jr., who was a strong supporter of nonviolent action.

Over time, some restaurants and businesses, including Woolworth, began the process of integration. To continue the struggle for civil rights, the leaders of the student protests formed the **Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)** in the spring of 1960. The SNCC activists trained protesters and organized civil rights demonstrations. Bob Moses, a leader of the SNCC, helped organize sit-ins and voter registration drives.

**READING CHECK**

Comparing How were sit-ins similar to other civil rights protests?

**Section 1 Assessment**

**Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People**

1. **a. Summarize** How did the Supreme Court impact the desegregation of public schools?
   **b. Identify** Who were the **Little Rock Nine**?

2. **a. Recall** What was the purpose of the **Montgomery bus boycott**?
   **b. Analyze** Why was the arrest of **Rosa Parks** a turning point in the civil rights movement?
   **c. Elaborate** Why do you think the bus boycott lasted so long?

3. **a. Identify** What means did the **Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee** use to protest segregation?
   **b. Make Inferences** What might have inspired the Greensboro students to stage a **sit-in**?
   **c. Evaluate** Do you think nonviolent resistance is an effective form of protest? Why or why not?

**Critical Thinking**

4. **Sequencing** Review your notes on events that challenged segregation. Then copy the graphic organizer below and use it to show the sequence of major events in the civil rights movement described in this section.

   ![Graphic Organizer]

5. **Explaining Major Issues** Take notes on the major issues behind the civil rights movement. What were these issues? Why were they important to African Americans? What changes did the movement try to make?
Martin Luther King Jr.

How would you help lead a national movement?

When did he live? 1929–1968

Where did he live? King grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, where his father was a pastor. He studied to become a minister in Pennsylvania. He received his doctorate in Massachusetts, then became pastor of a church in Alabama. He traveled throughout the country as a civil rights leader.

What did he do? As a powerful and moving speaker, King became one of the leading voices of the civil rights movement. He was committed to achieving equality through nonviolent protest. He led a series of successful marches and protests, including the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott and the 1963 March on Washington.

Why is he so important? His leadership helped make the civil rights movement a success. His belief in and passion for nonviolence led to the boycotts, sit-ins, and marches that helped African Americans gain equal treatment. King’s work helped bring an end to legal segregation and led to new laws guaranteeing equal rights for all Americans.

Evaluating Which of Martin Luther King Jr.’s contributions to the civil rights movement was most important? Why?

“I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

—Martin Luther King Jr., speech at March on Washington