The Civil Rights Movement

Section 1

MAIN IDEA
In the mid-1900s, the civil rights movement began to make major progress in correcting the national problem of racial segregation.

Key Terms and People

**CORE** Congress of Racial Equality; civil rights group devoted to nonviolent protest

**Jackie Robinson** first African American major league baseball player

**Thurgood Marshall** lead lawyer in landmark 1954 school desegregation case

**Little Rock Nine** the nine African American students blocked from entering school by the Arkansas National Guard in 1957

**Rosa Parks** NAACP member whose arrest for refusing to give up her seat on a bus launched the Montgomery bus boycott

**Montgomery bus boycott** boycott of the Montgomery, Alabama, bus system by African Americans to protest racial discrimination

**Martin Luther King Jr.** Baptist minister who became the leader of the SCLC

**SCLC** Southern Christian Leadership Conference; civil rights group committed to nonviolent protest

Section Summary

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT PRIOR TO 1954
The fight for equal rights for African Americans began with the struggle against slavery. Former slaves enjoyed some rights during Reconstruction. However, once Reconstruction was over legalized racism returned to the South. In 1896 the Supreme Court ruled that segregation was legal.

Some progress was made in the 1940s. Discrimination in defense-related work was banned. The Congress of Racial Equality, or CORE, was formed. It was dedicated to nonviolent protest. In 1947 **Jackie Robinson** became the first African American major league baseball player. In 1948 the armed forces were desegregated.

The NAACP began to work for civil rights through the courts. It fought the concept of “separate but equal.” **Thurgood Marshall** was a leader in court battles to end legalized racism.
BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION
Lower courts upheld segregation of the schools. Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP took a case known as Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, to the Supreme Court. The Court heard many arguments. It also used research that said that segregation made black children feel inferior. The Court ruled that segregation violated the Constitution’s guarantee of equal protection under the law. At the time, 21 states had segregated schools. In some of these there was strong resistance to integration. In Virginia officials practiced massive resistance. With this tactic, officials at all levels pledged to block integration. Schools that planned to integrate were closed. In Little Rock, Arkansas, the governor ordered the National Guard to keep African American students out of school. President Eisenhower sent federal troops to end the crisis. The students—the Little Rock Nine—had to put up with much abuse at school.

A BOYCOTT BEGINS IN MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA
In addition to schools, many other public places were segregated. In Montgomery, Alabama, African Americans could only ride in the back of buses. They had to give up their seats to white people. One day Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat. She was arrested. This led to the Montgomery bus boycott. Local Baptist minister Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the leaders. In the boycott, African Americans refused to ride Montgomery’s buses for a year. The boycott only ended when the Supreme Court ruled that segregated buses were unconstitutional. The success of the boycott led to the forming of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Martin Luther King Jr. was its leader. SCLC was committed to mass, nonviolent action.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY
Critical Thinking: Develop Develop a plan for using a boycott to make public your views on an issue of your choice. Consider what to boycott, how to mobilize protestors, and how to use the media.
**The Civil Rights Movement**

**Section 2**

**Main Idea**
The quest for civil rights became a nationwide movement in the 1960s as African Americans won political and legal rights, and segregation was largely abolished.

**Key Terms and People**

- **James Farmer** American civil rights leader
- **Mohandas Gandhi** leader of India’s nonviolent struggle for independence
- **SNCC** Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; formed to hold nonviolent protests
- **Freedom Riders** groups of people who took buses through the South to try to integrate public accommodations
- **James Meredith** first African American to enroll at the University of Mississippi
- **Medgar Evers** head of Mississippi NAACP; shot dead in his front yard
- **Civil Rights Act of 1964** bill banning discrimination in employment and public accommodations

**Section Summary**

**SIT-INS AND FREEDOM RIDES**

African American civil rights leaders like **James Farmer** and Martin Luther King Jr. borrowed the tactic of nonviolence from **Mohandas Gandhi**. Gandhi had used it as he led India’s struggle for independence from Great Britain. African American protesters began a sit-in movement aimed at segregated restaurants. They would take a seat and order food. The restaurants would refuse to serve them. The protesters would then not leave until the police arrived and arrested them. Protesters faced abuse and ended up in jail, but the tactic worked. Sit-in leaders formed **SNCC**—the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

CORE aimed to integrate bus stations. They sent **Freedom Riders** on buses in the South. African American Freedom Riders would try to use whites-only restrooms and lunch counters. Often they faced angry mobs. Attorney General Robert Kennedy sent federal marshals to protect them. In 1961 the government forced bus and train stations to integrate.

**What was a sit-in?**

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**Why did the attorney general send federal marshals to protect the Freedom Riders?**

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INTEGRATING HIGHER EDUCATION
The NAACP tried to integrate universities and colleges. By 1961 it had a court order for the University of Georgia to admit two black students. Like them, James Meredith, who tried to enroll in the University of Mississippi in 1962, was threatened. He arrived with 500 federal marshals but faced 2,500 protesters. Troops had to be sent in to control the riot.

ALBANY AND BIRMINGHAM
In Albany, Georgia, SNCC protested when local officials did not integrate bus stations. The campaign, called the Albany Movement, filled local and surrounding jails with protesters, including King. The tactic failed, though, as King’s SCLC took control of the campaign and local officials would only negotiate with local leaders. In Birmingham, Alabama, King used children as protesters. The police used fire hoses to break up a march. Hundreds of protesters were jailed. Federal negotiators pressured the city to give in to King’s demands. King’s motel was bombed.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964
President Kennedy wanted a law ending segregation in public accommodations. These are facilities that serve the public, such as hotels and restaurants. When Medgar Evers, head of the NAACP in Mississippi, was assassinated, many whites saw how serious the situation was. In August 1963 more than 200,000 people attended the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. There, King gave his “I Have a Dream” speech. The next month a Birmingham church was bombed, and three months later Kennedy was dead. But President Johnson pushed for the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It banned discrimination in employment and public accommodations.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY
Critical Thinking: Elaborate Write a short story about a young civil rights protester who had to face fire hoses and other abuse.
The Civil Rights Movement

Section 3

MAIN IDEA
In the 1960s, African Americans gained voting rights and political power in the South, but only after a bitter and hard-fought struggle.

Key Terms and People

Voter Education Project a civil rights campaign aimed at registering African American voters

Twenty-fourth Amendment amendment banning states from taxing citizens to vote

Freedom Summer hundreds of volunteers went to the South to register voters and teach

Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) African American delegation to the Democratic National Convention

Fannie Lou Hamer poor sharecropper and a leader of the MFDP

Voting Rights Act of 1965 law protecting the voting rights of minorities

Section Summary

GAINING VOTING RIGHTS
In 1962 SNCC, CORE, and other groups founded the Voter Education Project (VEP). Their aim was to register southern African Americans to vote. Marches to register voters were attacked by mobs or broken up by police. Some workers were killed. Still, the VEP was a success.

Some African Americans were kept from voting by poll taxes, taxes that some states charged for voting. In 1962 Congress passed the Twenty-fourth Amendment. It banned poll taxes in elections for president or Congress. It was ratified and went into law in 1964.

Freedom Summer was a project that sent hundreds of white college students to Mississippi in 1964. They were trained by SNCC workers to register voters and teach in schools. When it was discovered that two CORE workers and a Freedom Summer volunteer were murdered, many volunteers went home. Those who stayed faced attacks and arrests. Despite the violence, 17,000 blacks applied to vote. The state accepted only about 1,600 of these applications. A federal law was needed.

What was the aim of the VEP?


What did the 24th Amendment prevent?


What did the Freedom Summer volunteers hope to accomplish?


POLITICAL ORGANIZING
African American leaders supported President Johnson in the 1964 election. Many of them agreed not to hold protests until after election day. SNCC, however, did not. They wanted to rid the Democratic Party of its own racism. SNCC helped organize the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). It sent 68 delegates to the Democratic National Convention. They were to replace the delegates sent by Mississippi’s all-white Democratic Party. Fannie Lou Hamer, an MFDP leader, presented their case. President Johnson offered a compromise that allowed two delegates to vote. The NAACP and SCLC supported the compromise; SNCC and the MFDP did not. This helped split the civil rights movement.

THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT
The SCLC now focused on voting rights for African Americans. The campaign began in 1965 with marches in Selma, Alabama. More than 2,000 marchers were arrested. When Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested, the national media arrived. Pictures of mass arrests and children being jailed appeared on televisions across the country.

In another march, a state trooper killed a marcher. To protest the actions of the police, King announced a march from Selma to Montgomery. Six hundred African Americans began the 54-mile march. Before they could leave Selma, city and state police attacked them with tear gas, clubs, and other weapons. Many people saw this violence on TV. When the march went on two days later, hundreds of black and white northern supporters joined them. The march was halted again but without violence. Finally, protected by federal troops, 25,000 marchers arrived in Montgomery. A week later President Johnson proposed a tough new voting rights law. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed by a large majority.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY
Critical Thinking: Elaborate African Americans and women both fought for the vote. Yet today many Americans don’t bother to vote. Write three paragraphs on why this is and what could be done about it.
The Civil Rights Movement

Section 4

**Main Idea**
Continued social and economic inequalities caused many young African Americans to lose faith in the civil rights movement and integration and seek alternative solutions.

**Key Terms and People**

*de jure segregation*  
segregation by law

*de facto segregation*  
segregation by custom and practice

*Kerner Commission*  
commission formed to study the causes of 1960s riots in U.S. cities

*Stokely Carmichael*  
leader of SNCC who founded the Black Power movement

*Black Power*  
civil rights movement that rejected nonviolence and integration and called for separate, African Americans–only, political and economic organizations

*Black Panther Party*  
an organization inspired by Black Power movement; called for blacks to control their own communities; members carried guns

*Malcolm X*  
Nation of Islam leader and minister who called for revolution and was assassinated after changing his views

**Section Summary**

**EXPANDING THE MOVEMENT**

The civil rights movement had done much to end segregation by law, or *de jure segregation*. However, there was still much *de facto segregation*. This is segregation that exists through custom and practice.

De jure segregation ends when laws are changed. De facto segregation is much harder to overcome. Many African Americans outside the South faced de facto segregation, especially in housing. African Americans were often shut out of white neighborhoods. Banks often made it hard for African Americans to borrow money. Black neighborhoods had high unemployment and poverty.

From 1964 to 1967 violence erupted in more than 100 U.S. cities. In the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, a six-day riot destroyed entire blocks. More than 3,000 people were arrested and 34 people were killed. In Detroit, 43 died in riots. President Johnson appointed the *Kerner Commission* to study the causes of the riots. It reported that poverty and discrimination were the causes. Northern riots convinced Martin Luther King Jr. to campaign in

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**How did de facto segregation affect African Americans in the North?**

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**Circle the number of U.S. cities that experienced rioting in the mid 1960s.**

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Chicago. The campaign failed as Chicago’s blacks’ concerns were economic, not political, and its police reacted with nonviolence.

**FRACTURES IN THE MOVEMENT**

Although the civil rights movement seemed unified, it was made up of many separate groups. After SNCC and CORE workers were harassed during Freedom Summer, some members of these organizations began to reject nonviolence. Under the leadership of Stokely Carmichael, SNCC itself rejected nonviolence. Carmichael started the Black Power movement. It rejected nonviolence and integration. It wanted separate, African Americans–only, political and economic organizations.

The Black Power movement inspired some blacks to create the Black Panther Party. It called for a revolution to change American society. Its leaders were usually armed. Most people who believed in Black Power were Black Muslims. They were members of the Nation of Islam, a group founded in 1930 and based on the religion of Islam. One of its leaders and ministers was Malcolm X. He first called for revolution and criticized nonviolence. Later he softened his views. He was killed by Black Muslims after he appealed for the races to get along.

**THE ASSASSINATION OF KING**

In 1968 Martin Luther King led a march in Memphis. He was supporting striking sanitation workers. They were protesting discrimination in the city’s work and pay policies. King also spoke at a rally. The next day he was killed by a white sniper. Angry riots erupted in 120 cities. Troops were called in to restore peace. One leader noted that King would have been upset by the violent reaction to his death.

**CHALLENGE ACTIVITY**

**Critical Thinking: Evaluate** Explain why various civil rights groups used different methods. Why were there divisions within the civil rights movement? Write a two-paragraph evaluation.
The Civil Rights Movement

Section 5

Key Terms and People

**Poor People’s Campaign**  King and the SCLC’s campaign to fight poverty

**Ralph Abernathy**  leader of SCLC after the assassination of Martin Luther King

**Civil Rights Act of 1968**  law banning discrimination in housing; also called the Fair Housing Act

**affirmative action**  programs that gave preference to minorities and women in hiring and admissions

**John Lewis**  civil rights activist and former SNCC head who was elected to Congress from Georgia

**Andrew Young**  Georgia’s first black member of Congress since Reconstruction

**Jesse Jackson**  adviser to Martin Luther King and founder of Operation PUSH

Section Summary

**A CHANGE IN GOALS**

The **Poor People’s Campaign** was an expansion of the civil rights movement. Laws had given African Americans more rights. But Martin Luther King Jr. knew that poverty kept many African Americans from achieving equality. After King’s death, **Ralph Abernathy** took over the SCLC. Without King’s leadership, the campaign did not succeed.

**THE DECLINE OF BLACK POWER**

The civil rights movement took place during the height of the Cold War. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover believed that civil rights groups were led by Communists. In 1956 Hoover created a secret program to spy on groups involved in unrest. FBI agents were to disrupt and interfere with the activities of these groups. The FBI spread false rumors about the Black Panthers. It also forged letters, posters, and leaflets. The FBI made the Black Panthers look more violent than they really were. Police raided Panther headquarters. There were gun battles. Many Panther

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**Why did the civil rights movement take on the problem of poverty?**

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**What else was the nation facing during the civil rights movement?**

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**Underline the ways the FBI weakened the civil rights movement.**
leaders died or went to prison. The FBI also helped destroy SNCC in the early 1970s.

NEW CHANGES AND GAINS
President Johnson signed the **Civil Rights Act of 1968**. It is also called the Fair Housing Act. This law banned discrimination in the sale or rental of housing. Some people felt that school integration was progressing too slowly. The courts ordered that students be bused from their neighborhood schools to other schools. Many people were violently opposed to busing, especially in the North. Forced busing caused some whites to leave the cities for the suburbs. The blacks in the cities soon gained political power. By 1974 several large cities had elected African American mayors, including Los Angeles and Atlanta.

Starting in the late 1960s, **affirmative action** programs gave preference to minorities and women in hiring and admission to college. The backlash against these programs cost the Democrats support. Many southern whites and urban, working-class whites became Republicans.

African Americans took over some elected offices in the South. Many who had played a role in the civil rights movement served the nation. Thurgood Marshall became the Supreme Court’s first African American justice. **John Lewis**, a civil rights activist, was elected to Congress from Georgia. **Andrew Young** had been a staff member of SCLC. He was elected to Congress from Georgia. Later he was the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. **Jesse Jackson** had been an adviser to Martin Luther King. He founded the civil rights organization Operation PUSH. He became an activist for poor and oppressed peoples around the world. At home, he ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984 and 1988.

**CHALLENGE ACTIVITY**
**Critical Thinking: Evaluate** Some people have argued that affirmative action programs are no longer necessary, or that they are “reverse discrimination.” What do you think? Write three paragraphs explaining what affirmative action is and what you think about it.