

## Civil Rights – Lesson 5

### Why did 3,200 people march from Selma to Montgomery?

#### Subject Knowledge Notes

Throughout March of 1965, a group of demonstrators faced violence as they attempted to march from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, Alabama, to demand the right to vote for black people. One of the pivotal days was March 7, when 17 people were injured by police, including future Congressman John Lewis. Since that time, March 7th has been known as "Bloody Sunday."

The march has been reenacted many times on its anniversary. In 2015, President Barack Obama marked the 50th anniversary of the march by delivering a speech at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma. It is about 50 miles (80 kilometers) from Selma to Montgomery.

#### Timeline:

- February 1965 - Marches and demonstrations over voter registration prompt Alabama Governor George C. Wallace to ban nighttime demonstrations in Selma and Marion, Alabama.
- February 18, 1965 - During a march in Marion, state troopers attack the demonstrators. State trooper James Bonard Fowler shoots and kills Jimmie Lee Jackson. Fowler was charged with murder in 2007 and pleaded guilty to manslaughter in 2010.
- March 7, 1965 - About 600 people begin a march from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, Alabama, led by Lewis and Hosea Williams. Marchers demand an end to discrimination in voter registration. At the Edmund Pettus Bridge, state and local lawmen attack the marchers with billy clubs and tear gas, driving them back to Selma.
- March 9, 1965 - Martin Luther King Jr. leads another march to the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The march is largely symbolic; as arranged previously, the crowd turns back at a barricade of state troopers. Demonstrations are held in cities across the United States to show solidarity with the Selma marchers.
- March 9, 1965 - President Lyndon Johnson speaks out against the violence in Selma and urges both sides to respect the law.
- March 9, 1965 - Unitarian Universalist minister James Reeb, in Selma to join marchers, is attacked by a group of white men and beaten. He dies of his injuries two days later.
- March 10, 1965 - The US Justice Department files suit in Montgomery, Alabama, asking for an order to prevent the state from punishing any person involved in a demonstration for civil rights.
- March 17, 1965 - Federal District Court Judge Frank M. Johnson Jr. rules in favor of the marchers. "The law is clear that the right to petition one's government for the redress of grievances may be exercised in large groups."
- March 18, 1965 - Governor Wallace goes before the state legislature to condemn Johnson's ruling. He states that Alabama cannot provide the security measures needed, blames the federal government, and says he will call on the federal government for help.
- March 19, 1965 - Wallace sends a telegram to President Johnson asking for help, saying that the state does not have enough troops and cannot bear the financial burden of calling up the Alabama National Guard.
- March 20, 1965 - President Johnson issues an executive order federalizing the Alabama National Guard and authorizes whatever federal forces the Defense Secretary deems necessary.
- March 21, 1965 - About 3,200 people march out of Selma for Montgomery under the protection of federal troops. They walk about 12 miles a day and sleep in fields at night.
- March 25, 1965 - The marchers reach the state capitol in Montgomery. The number of marchers grows to about 25,000.
- August 6, 1965 - President Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Taken from <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/15/us/1965-selma-to-montgomery-march-fast-facts/index.html>

#### Lesson Five: Why did 3,200 people march from Selma to Montgomery?



5 mins

- Display the key question for the lesson (Slide 2)?
- Display the retrieval quiz and give pupils five minutes to complete it independently (Slide 3).
- Circulate to gather information about common misconceptions or mistakes.
- Display the correct answers and allow pupils to self-mark (Slide 4).











10 mins

- Read about the Civil Rights Act 1964 – connect back to MLK's speech and the March on Washington DC.
- Ask pupils why new laws were important?
- Pupils should complete Q.1 independently – share answers.
- Note that attitudes may not have been changing with all people everywhere (hence, changes in law very important).

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### Why did 3,200 people march from Selma to Montgomery?

 5 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Display the literacy test given to black people in 1964 (Slide 5).</li><li>• Ask the pupils to try and answer the questions.</li><li>• Do they think that they would get 100%? Could they complete it in 10 minutes?</li><li>• Discuss how this was a tactic to subvert the law.</li></ul>
  10 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read about the death of Jimmy Lee Jackson</li><li>• Ask pupils to think about everything that we have discussed, and to write what caused civil rights activists to organise a march.</li><li>• They may mention the Louisiana Literacy Test, the success of the Washington DC March, Rosa Parks' arrest, or any other reasonable answer.</li><li>• Discuss the different responses.</li></ul>
  10 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Display the map showing the march route (Slide 6).</li><li>• Tell the story of Turnaround Tuesday.</li><li>• Ask pupils how people marching may have felt betrayed by MLK.</li><li>• Read the text, and discuss as a class whether MLK made the right decision.</li></ul>
  10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue reading to the end of the text.</li><li>• Note the importance of the President intervening (Slide 7).</li><li>• Ask pupils to think about how the events of Selma changed the minds of Americans.</li><li>• Pupils should write their response.</li><li>• They may use the President's quote to support their answer.</li><li>• Discuss responses and allow pupils to edit their answers.</li></ul>
 5 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask pupils to return to page 3, and answer the question: <b>'Why did 3,200 people march from Selma to Montgomery'?</b></li></ul>