

ACTIVITY : THE ROME, GEORGIA SIT-INS

INSTRUCTIONS

For three days in February of 1963, students from Main High School, the school for African Americans in Rome, Georgia, engaged in sit-ins at segregated restaurants on Broad Street. Although no one was arrested during these incidents, the police wrote down the students' names and they were given warnings about the consequences of any future sit-ins. The Rome Council on Human Relations intervened and asked city leaders to push for the voluntary desegregation of eating establishments, but made little progress. Tired of waiting for equal treatment at public facilities in Rome, around one hundred Main students staged sit-ins at four different downtown locations on March 27, 1963. Sixty-two students were arrested and many spent the weekend in jail before standing trial the next week on charges of loitering and disorderly conduct.

Using the above information as a guide, students should cut out the quotes below, which were written by the Main High School students who participated in the sit-ins. Relying on what they know about cause and effect and the information they can infer directly from the quotes, students should arrange the quotes sequentially from what occurred first to what events happened last during the sit-in.

Optional modification: If you would like to increase the level of analysis required by the students, once they have put the quotes in order, either in small groups or as a class, discuss the content of each quote and whether or not the events it described were a necessary cause, contributory cause, or neither for the actions described in the following quote. A necessary cause is any action that was an essential occurrence before the action following it could happen. A contributory cause is a cause that helped lead to the action that followed, but was not sufficient to cause the end result by itself. A selection of neither suggests that quote provides additional detail or information, but did not directly or indirectly cause the actions that occurred after it.

From Rose Esserman Levin, *Voices in Protest*

(A) We left school campus about 3:15, on our journey. By the time we reached Gibbons Street, we were stopped by some students that had come from Albany, Georgia, so we decided to go to the Girls' Club and listen to what they had to say. Their group consisted of two boys and one girl. They said they were here to help us, and told us what we were getting into. After they had finished, we moved on toward the downtown area.
- Ender H.

(B) "After we had sat there about 30 minutes, the manager ordered that the counters be closed. The waitress pretending to wash off the counters...After throwing a bucket of soap and water on us, she went to get another one, and while she was gone, one white boy said, "Make sure you put some ammonia in it, and maybe it will wash that black off them." The worst thing, while she was doing this the policemen and white spectators had the nerve to laugh. The waitress laughed while she was doing it.
- Ender H.

(C) It was the first period and the day seemed as if it were going to be just like any other day. I was sitting in Homemaking doing nothing in particular, when this person came up to me and asked me if I was afraid to sit-in. I told him no. He asked me if I would be willing and I said yes. Then he gave me a sheet of paper to sign my name. I went home and told my mother. She left the decision up to me and told me to do what I thought was right. So I did.
-Mary H.

(D) "I, along with four other students, entered the store... the police came and told us the counter was closed and if we did not leave, we would be placed under arrest. I wondered if the officer would hit me because I refused to move. He asked us again to leave but we did not. Then he placed us under arrest. I turned around on the stool and asked the officer what was the charge. He replied 'loitering.'
- Lonnie M.

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(E) We left Main High School at 3:10 p.m. We were in groups, walking slowly. We were to walk in the stores at 4:00. At Sixth Avenue, I could see police riding the street and there were many more than usual on a day like this. As we neared the downtown area, I felt an object inside me. It was something that went all over my body. I felt as if someone was pouring cold water on me.
-Lonnie M.

(F) "Reluctantly, we stood up and the officer lined us up and marched us to the side entrance where there was a patrol car waiting for us. As I entered the car, I wondered why I was being carried to jail. I had done nothing wrong; after all, we are human beings. As the car pulled up to the jail, I could hear the students singing and clapping their hands."
-Lonnie M.

(G) Without the help of any adults, the young people sat-in on February 25-27. They were not arrested, but they were warned against repeating the incident. There was a great deal of criticism from the adult Negroes. That really surprised me, it was as if they were willing to go along with anything the white man gave them, but the students decided they had waited long enough. It had to be us, the young people, to make these giant steps for equal rights, and most of all, for freedom.
-Eula Mae F.

(H) On March 27th, a group of boys came up to me and said, "Will you be afraid to sit-in tomorrow in the downtown area?" I said no, I was not afraid. So they told me to come to a meeting and I did. Lonnie M., chairman, called the meeting to order. After devotion, he asked twenty people to lead groups, and they accepted. After dividing us into groups, we discussed our plans and waited for what could be the most dangerous and defiant day of our lives.
-Harry H.

ANSWER KEY

Activity : Rome, Georgia Sit-Ins

Order of Events: G, C, H, E, A, B, D, F

Optional Modification: The responses to analyzing the cause and effect of each event as necessary, contributory, or neither to the event following is open for debate based on the explanation of the student.

- February sit-ins -> agreeing to participate in new sit-in: Contributory
- Agreeing to participate in new sit-in -> planning new sit-in: Necessary
- Planning new sit-in -> nervous as near downtown: Contributory
- Nervous as near downtown -> get advice from Albany students: Neither
- Advice from Albany students -> students sit at lunch counter: Neither
- Students sit at lunch counter -> students are arrested: Necessary
- Students are arrested -> students re taken to jail: Necessary

Further Information on the Civil
Rights Movement in Rome, Georgia
is available at:
<https://sites.berry.edu/civilrights/>

