

Name _____

Date _____

Malcolm X

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. Years before he changed his name to Malcolm X, Malcolm Little was an excellent student. Little had plans to become a lawyer, but an English teacher urged him to be more “realistic.” The teacher suggested it made more sense for a black person to focus on carpentry than to study law. As a result, Little became disillusioned with school and dropped out the following year, at the age of 15. After leaving school, Little moved to Boston to live with his half-sister. He became involved with drugs and crime as he moved from Boston to Flint, Michigan, to Harlem, New York, and back to Boston. In 1946, he was arrested for burglary and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Based on the passage, which of the following best describes why Malcolm Little dropped out of school?

- A. His teacher told him to join a religious group to continue his education.
- B. His teacher suggested he had no chance of becoming a lawyer because he was black.
- C. His teacher suggested his grades were not high enough to become a successful lawyer.
- D. His teacher told him he would make more money as a carpenter than he would as a lawyer.
2. In prison, Malcolm Little took his education into his own hands. Starting with the dictionary, he read every book in the prison library. While working through his personal education, Little was introduced to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad, the head of the Nation of Islam. Muhammad combined principles of Islam with a focus on discipline and self-reliance within the black community. The Nation of Islam advocated for black separatism. This meant they believed a separate black state and government would be more productive than an integrated society with white people. Upon his release from prison, Little joined the Nation of Islam and changed his name to Malcolm X. Malcolm saw the legacy of slavery in his birth name, explaining that “Little” was a name slave-owners had given to his family. The X represented his lost African name and heritage, something he sought to reclaim.

At the time of joining the Nation of Islam, with which of the following statements would Malcolm X most likely agree?

- A. Black people should partially integrate into white society, but maintain some self-reliance.
- B. Black people should have a separate society, but depend on white society for some things.
- C. Black people should create a society and government that is completely separate from white society.
- D. Black people should integrate fully into white society and become a part of their existing institutions.

3. Malcolm X was a charismatic and intelligent speaker. He quickly rose to prominence as the voice of the Nation of Islam, sharing Elijah Muhammad’s teachings with a wider audience than ever before. Malcolm X spoke forcefully and directly to black Americans who were fed up with how they were being treated in the United States. Malcolm X served as a counterpoint to Martin Luther King Jr. While King preached nonviolence, tolerance and integration, Malcolm focused on self-reliance, self-defense and separatism. Though he never took part in any violence, Malcolm X did not discourage it and stressed the importance of fighting back if attacked. He gave voice to the anger and frustration many black people felt but could not express openly. Throughout the early 1960s, Malcolm became a controversial figure. White people in power perceived him as a threat and some black activists considered him too radical.

Based on the passage, why was Malcolm X a controversial figure in the eyes of white people in power?

- A. He promoted conservative values to an increasingly liberal country.
- B. He promoted and took part in violent protests across the country.
- C. He was pushing for integration too quickly and too forcefully.
- D. He gave voice to anger that had previously been kept silent.
4. Amidst growing tension and disagreements with Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X left the Nation of Islam in 1964. Following a pilgrimage to Mecca, Malcolm converted to Sunni Islam. He changed his name to el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz and began preaching a more tolerant version of Islam. He softened his stance on separatism and self-defense as he vowed to continue the fight for civil rights.

Read the following passage from Malcolm X’s autobiography published in 1965.

Despite my firm convictions, I have been always a man who tries to face facts, and to accept the reality of life as new experience and new knowledge unfolds it. I have always kept an open mind, which is necessary to the flexibility that must go hand in hand with every form of intelligent search for truth.

Based on the passage, which of the following statements would Malcolm X most likely agree with in 1965?

- A. Beliefs are static and should never change.
- B. Beliefs should change when facts prove them wrong.
- C. Beliefs may change, but those changes should be kept private.
- D. Beliefs should change easily and quickly based on emotion or fact.

5. Malcolm X was assassinated on February 21, 1965 at the Audubon Ballroom in New York City. According to police, three members of the Nation of Islam opened fire as he approached the podium to speak. Malcolm X, once a poster child for the Nation of Islam, had become an enemy to its members. As Malcolm X had become more and more popular in the late 1950s and 60s, tensions between him and Elijah Muhammad increased. A combination of jealousy, political disagreements and Malcolm X's disapproval of Muhammad's extramarital affairs left the two men at odds. Malcolm X left the organization in 1964. The following year, and only a week after a separate attempt to harm him and his family, Malcolm X was murdered at the hands of the organization he once fervently advocated for and helped popularize.

What does the passage suggest about the relationship between Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam?

- A. Rising tensions between Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam led to Malcolm X's assassination.
- B. Without Malcolm X, Elijah Muhammad would not have become the head of the Nation of Islam.
- C. Disagreements between Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam made the Nation of Islam more popular.
- D. The increasing popularity of the Nation of Islam angered Malcolm X, prompting him to leave the organization.

6. Read the following excerpt from Malcolm X's autobiography, where he discusses his self-education in prison:

It was because of my letters that I happened to stumble upon starting to acquire some kind of a homemade education.

I became increasingly frustrated at not being able to express what I wanted to convey in letters that I wrote, especially those to Mr. Elijah Muhammad. In the street, I had been the most articulate hustler out there – I had commanded attention when I said something. But now, trying to write simple English, I not only wasn't articulate, I wasn't even functional. How would I sound writing in slang, the way I would say it, something such as, 'Look, daddy, let me pull your coat about a cat, Elijah Muhammad-'

Many who today hear me somewhere in person, or on television, or those who read something I've said, will think I went to school far beyond the eighth grade. This impression is due entirely to my prison studies.

What prompted Malcolm X to start educating himself in prison?

- A. He wanted to represent himself in his parole hearing to prove he could be a lawyer.
- B. He was bored and needed something to keep him busy while he awaited trial.
- C. He would be released early if he passed a series of state examinations.
- D. He was embarrassed he could not express himself through writing.