

# **From Slavery to Civil Rights: Get On the Bus with Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr.**

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## **Overview**

The Montgomery Bus Boycott is one of the many important events that occurred during The Civil Rights Movement. The Boycott started in December 1955 and lasted 381 days. Because of the efforts of the people in Montgomery, Alabama, the Supreme Court upheld a federal district court ruling that segregation on buses was unconstitutional. Most people are aware that a seamstress named Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white bus rider in Montgomery was the catalyst that sparked the historic bus boycott. They also know that Martin Luther King, Jr. played a very pivotal role. Rosa Parks wasn't the first Black to be arrested; however, she was the first who was well known in the Montgomery community. She was at one time, the secretary to the president of the NAACP. Martin Luther King, Jr. was the pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery. He and other community leaders felt that a protest of some kind was needed to help facilitate a change. This unit will include the roles played by Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr. and others.

## **Rationale**

Every year during Black History Month, my students are asked to choose an African American to complete a research report on. They must research and do a report on that person. Everyone asks to do research on Martin Luther King, Jr. or Rosa Parks. They appear to be the only African Americans our students seem to know. When I inquire about what they really know, it turns out that our student's background knowledge is minimal. Through this unit, I intend to build their content knowledge about these individuals and the roles African Americans played in the Civil Rights Movement. The creation of a curriculum unit around this topic fits into the social studies component on Black History. Students will brainstorm in groups to identify information they actually

know about Rosa Parks and Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. They will begin with completing the K and the W sections of a KWL graphic organizer worksheet. In the introductory lesson, they will participate in a group discussion and keep a log of their information to refer to throughout the unit. It will be required of them to create a set of at least five focus questions to use in their reports. The students will use their time in the computer lab to research the answers to the questions they created. Students will be required to read at least three different selections and/or passages about Rosa Parks and Dr Martin Luther King. They must be able to correctly answer five comprehension questions. This will demonstrate their level of understanding of the material. As they read along during a shared reading assignment, they will be asked to highlight important information to be used in their reports.

### Historical Context

Rosa Parks was arrested on December 1, 1955 because she refused to give her seat to a white man on the bus. She called E.D. Nixon, a veteran civil rights and NAACP leader. She thought he was best prepared to help her. Nixon worked closely with Rosa Parks, as she was the NAACP's secretary. Because Fred Gray, a black attorney was unavailable, to help Rosa, Nixon called Clifford Durr, a white former New Dealer who had resigned from the Federal Communications Commissions during the late 1940's due to his opposition to cold war loyalty oaths. His wife Virginia had occasionally hired Rosa Parks as a tailor for the family. Nixon went with the Durr's to the Montgomery jail and offered his home as bond to secure Parks release. He immediately began calling black residents to talk about launching a boycott to put an end to the bus seating policies in Montgomery. Nixon had long wanted to organize a boycott. On March 2, 1955 a fifteen year old high school student named Claudette Colvin had been arrested for violating Montgomery's bus ordinance. According to Clayborne Carson, Nixon was looking for the right time to launch a boycott. When Rosa Parks was arrested, he and others felt the time was right to go ahead with plans for a boycott. The brief 1953 bus boycott in Baton Rouge, Louisiana served as a stimulus for residents of Montgomery to consider taking action.<sup>1</sup>

Rosa Parks was one of many women who worked tirelessly during the Civil Rights Movement. Darlene Clark Hine says, "Jo Ann Gibson Robinson and Barbara Deming have enriched considerably our understanding of the roles American black and white women played in the post-World War II struggles for human dignity and basic civil rights." She urges everyone to read *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the women Who Started It: The Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson edited by David J. Garrow*. She feels that without this memoir, scholars would still attribute the genesis of the Montgomery boycott to black male leaders, giving nominal credit to women.<sup>2</sup>

The 2002 Rosa Parks Story starring Angela Bassett gives background information about her and her relationship with her husband Raymond Parks, as well as her plunge into

the Civil Rights Movement. We find out that Rosa learns of the NAACP through a childhood friend. She later becomes the secretary for the organization. Rosa learned at an early age by her grandfather, that she was not inferior to anyone. This is something that she held on to and never forgot. It was hard for her to allow herself to be mistreated on a daily basis by the transportation system in Montgomery. On that fateful day in December 1955, she couldn't take it anymore, and as a result, the beginning of a change in the bus system in Montgomery, Alabama had begun. Because this unit is created for third graders, I viewed the DVD to see if it would be suitable for them. Some parts may be a little mature for third grade. Teachers should view this DVD and determine its suitability for themselves.<sup>3</sup>

Most believe Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was somewhat of an initiator of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. However, because he was selected to head the Montgomery Improvement Association, he became the best known of the boycott's participants. Clayborne Carson states in his magazine article *To Walk in Dignity: The Montgomery Bus Boycott*, although King played a crucial role in transforming a local boycott into a social justice movement of international significance, he was himself transformed by a movement he did not initiate. Nearly all of the key people involved in the boycott had been longtime residents of Montgomery. King however, had only been in Montgomery for a little more than a year. Not long after Dr. King became the pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Rosa Parks encouraged him to participate in the NAACP.<sup>4</sup>

## **Objectives**

This unit is intended for students in third grade. By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- State three to five facts about Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks.
- Give at least two reasons why and/or how King and Parks were important to the Civil Rights Movement.
- Define the terms segregation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
- Give at least two outcomes of the boycott and include the steps that were taken by the African Americans of Montgomery, Alabama to help end bus segregation.
- Tell how important community politics were in the fight for bus desegregation.
- Have a clearer understanding of the role some renowned historical figures played in the fight for civil rights.

## **Strategies**

Students will: complete a KWL graphic organizer to assess their level of understanding as well as knowledge of the subject. Through a shared reading approach, students will read selections from books, and articles on the subject of the Montgomery Bus Boycott,

Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King Jr. Students will work cooperatively with a partner or group to research topics related to the unit. They will be responsible for completing a book report to share in the form of an oral report. Some may make dioramas or poster board presentations. A teacher made test will be given at the end of the unit. Various strategies will be used for student engagement and achievement.

- Cooperative learning (think-pair-share)
- Chart, Graph, Illustrate
- Differentiated Instruction
- Reading in small groups
- Previewing Vocabulary
- Making Connections
- Summarizing
- Distinguishing Fact from opinion
- Graphic Organizers
- Independent Research
- Note Taking (at individual reading levels)
- Role Playing
- Comparing and Contrasting
- Homework
- Oral Presentation

### **Classroom Activities**

**Introductory Lesson:** Objective: Students will participate in a group discussion and complete a graphic organizer to be referred to throughout the unit.

Materials:

- KWL Graphic Organizer
- Chart Paper
- Markers and Colored Pencils

Procedure:

Students will complete the K and W of a KWL graphic organizer in reference to Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The teacher will record student responses on chart paper. The chart paper will be posted in the classroom as a visual.

**Lesson 1:** Objective: Students will brainstorm ideas with each other and be able to create a set of five focus questions to use in their reports.

Procedure:

Students will brainstorm in their groups to come up with a set of five focus questions. During computer class, each student will use the internet to research

their question. Once back into groups, students will be given a specific task and/or job to perform. The jobs are defined as:

- Recorder
- Reporter
- Time-Keeper

Afterward, students will share their findings with the group. Then, each group member will share out with the whole class.

Lesson 2: Objective: Students will read a passage about Rosa Parks and be able to correctly answer five comprehension questions.

Procedure:

Through Shared Reading, students will listen to and read along to selected passages about Rosa Parks. They will high light important information to be used in their reports. Each student will respond in writing to comprehension questions about what they have read.

Homework assignment:

Find and bring to class, three pictures of Rosa Parks. Within their group setting, they will decide which three pictures they want to present in a one- minute discussion. This will be a pre- class activity.

Lesson 3: Objective: Students will read a selected passage about Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. Students will be able to create five questions to be answered in reference to the information learned in the passage. They will draw and/or illustrate a scene from their reading.

Homework assignment:

Find and bring to class, two pictures of Martin L. King, Jr.

Materials:

- Copy of the text
- writing paper
- drawing paper
- crayons or markers

Procedure:

Through Shared Reading, students will listen to and read along to an Informational Text. They will independently create 5 questions, then think of a scene they would like to illustrate.

Lesson 4: Objective: Students will read an Informational Text about the Montgomery Bus Boycott and be able to write ten facts that address what happened, when, where and

how long the event took place. Students will work with a partner and record their answers on chart paper to be shared later.

Materials:

- Copy of the text (see appendix for link)
- Chart paper

Procedure:

Through Shared Reading, students will listen to and read along to an Expository Text. Working with a partner, students will list ten facts with a focus on the What, When, Where and How approach. Chart paper will be posted around the room so that individual groups will be able to record their facts.

Lesson 5: Objective: Students will create a timeline of the major events of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, including the beginning date and ending date. Students will use at least two different websites.

Materials:

- Copy of the website information
- Poster board
- Markers

Procedure:

Using the Jigsaw strategy, students will review at least two websites for information to incorporate in their timeline. Students will work with a partner to complete a timeline and record the facts on line paper before transferring it to poster boards.

Lesson 6: Objective: Students will read an excerpt from a memoir and be able to identify at least two other participants in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and list ten new facts about the boycott.

Procedure:

Students will use the book: *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It, The Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson*. They will find ten new facts to record in their journals to be shared with the class.

Lesson 7: Objective: Students will give oral presentations as well as submit written assignments to be assessed.

Procedure:

Each student, partnership and/or group will give a 3- 5-minute oral presentation of the completed work. This could take 2 or 3 days to come to fruition. Finally, all work will be put on display.

### **Annotated Bibliography**

Suggested Teacher Readings:

- Gibson-Robinson, Jo Ann, and Garrow, David J., 1987, *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It: The Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson-Robinson*, Knoxville, TN, University of Tennessee Press .

This book offers a wealth of information about the women that helped to initiate the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

- de Kay, James T., 1969, *Meet Martin Luther King, Jr. (Landmark Books)*, New York, New York, Random House, Inc.

This book can offer background information for teachers and students

- Boone-Jones, Margaret, 1986, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Picture Story*,

Beautifully illustrated pictures that tell a story about Martin Luther King, Jr.

- Scholastics, 1996, *African Americans Who Made a Difference: 15 Plays for the Classroom*, New York, New York, Scholastic Inc.

This is a kid friendly book of fifteen plays of famous African Americans that can be used in the classroom for role- playing purposes.

Suggested Student Readings:

- Bauer, Marion Dane and Smith, Jaime, 2009, *My First Biography: Martin Luther King, Jr.*, New York, NY, Scholastics, Inc.
- Marzollo, Brian J. and Pinkey, J. Brian and Pinkey, J., 2006, *Happy Birthday, Martin Luther King Jr. (Scholastic Bookshelf)*, New York, NY, Scholastics, Inc.
- de Kay, James T., 1969, *Meet Martin Luther King, Jr. (Landmark Books)*, New York, New York, Random House, Inc
- Scholastics, 1996, *African Americans Who Made a Difference: 15 Plays for the Classroom*, New York, New York, Scholastic Inc.

## Resources

- <http://www.watson.org/~lisa/blackhistory/civilrights-55-65/montbus.html>
- [www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement](http://www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement)
- Hayes School Publishing Co., Inc., 1992, Ketchum, Peter J. *Readings About Famous African Americans*, Grades 2 -5 (pgs 35 – 36 and 44 -45)
- Instructional Fair/TS Denison, 2001,Shallop,Laura, *Celebrating Our Heritage/African-American History*. Pages 45 – 46.

## Appendix/Standards

- To research the Montgomery Bus Boycott use Website: [www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement](http://www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement)  
[www.watson.org/~lisa/blackhistory/civilrights-55-65/montbus.html](http://www.watson.org/~lisa/blackhistory/civilrights-55-65/montbus.html)
- Rosa Parks primary source image: <http://www.vibe.com/article/rosa-parks-become-first-african-american-woman-statue-capitol-hill>
- Image of Rosa Parks: <http://www.dcthornton.com/2005/10/24/rosa-lee-parks-rip/>
- Image of Dr. King and other Civil Rights Activist: [http://www.apwu.org/laborhistory/08-1\\_bayardrustin/08-1\\_bayardrustin.htm](http://www.apwu.org/laborhistory/08-1_bayardrustin/08-1_bayardrustin.htm)
- Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Third Grade
  - Reading Independently
    - ✓ 1.1.3.A Identify the author’s purpose and type grade level text.
  - Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Text
    - ✓ 1.2.3.B Differentiate fact from opinion
    - ✓ 1.2.3.D Make inferences from text when studying a topic
  - Types of Writing
    - ✓ 1.4.3.B Write informational pieces using illustrations when relevant
  - Historical Analysis and Skill Development
    - ✓ 8.1.2A Identify the difference between past, present and future using time lines



- ✓ 8.1.3B Identify facts, opinion, multiple points of view and primary sources as related to historical events
- Quality of Writing
  - ✓ 1.5.3.C Organizing writing in logic order – Including a beginning, middle and end.
  - ✓ 1.5.3. F Use grade appropriate conventions of language when writing and editing.
    - Spell common frequently used word correctly
    - Use capital letters correctly
    - Punctuate correctly
    - Use correct grammar and sentence structure.
- Statistics and Data Analysis
  - ✓ 2.6.3.C Describe data displayed in a diagram (e.g., Venn), a graph, or a table.
  - ✓
  - ✓ 2.3.3.D Analyze data shown in tables, charts, diagrams and graphs; compare the data from 2 categories displayed in a graph and compare representations of a set of data in different graphs.
- Historical Analysis and Skills Development
  - ✓ 8.3.3.A Identify and describe the social, political, cultural, and economic contributions of individuals and groups in United States History.
  - ✓
  - ✓ 8.3.3.C Demonstrate an understanding of how people in different times and places view the world.
  - ✓
  - ✓ 8.3.3.D Identify and describe how conflict and cooperation among groups and organizations have impacted the history and development of the United States.
    - Ethnicity and race
    - Working conditions
    - Economic stability

➤ KWL Graphic Organizer: <http://tweenteaching.blogspot.com/2012/08/kwl-chart.html>

➤ Dr MLK Crossword Puzzle: <http://www.edhelper.com/MLK2551.htm>

➤ *The Rosa Parks Story* DVD

## Notes

1. Carson, Clayborne (2005). *To Walk in Dignity: The Montgomery Bus Boycott*
2. Hine, Darlene Clark (1988). *NWSA Journal*. The Johns Hopkins University Press
3. DVD, *The Rosa Parks story*. Xenon Pictures, Inc., Santa Monica, CA.
4. Carson, Clayborne (2005). *To walk in Dignity: The Montgomery Bus Boycott*