

Rosa Parks Printable Reading Comprehension

Name _____

Rosa Louise McCauley was born February 4, 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama. Her father was a carpenter, and her mother was a teacher. When she was two, her parents separated. Her family moved to her grandparents' farm in Pine Level, Alabama. Both her grandparents were former slaves. Pine Level supported the idea of separate but equal. White children rode a bus to their newly built school while African-American children had to walk to a one-room schoolhouse that didn't have enough desks or supplies. Rosa quit high school when she was a junior to help take care of her grandmother. Afterwards, she worked as a seamstress in a shirt factory in Montgomery. In 1932, Rosa married Raymond Parks. He was a barber who was actively involved in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

On December 1, 1955, a bus driver asked Rosa to give her seat on a bus to a white male passenger. She refused. She was arrested and fined \$10 plus court costs (\$4) for violating a city ordinance that said the bus driver could assign seats. The Montgomery Women's Political Council printed and circulated a flyer throughout Montgomery's black community which read as follows:

"Another woman has been arrested and thrown in jail because she refused to get up out of her seat on the bus for a white person ... This has to be stopped. Negroes have rights too, for if Negroes did not ride the buses, they could not operate. Three-fourths of the riders are Negro ... We are ... asking every Negro to stay off the buses Monday in protest of the arrest and trial."

This non-violent protest was successful. Dr. Martin Luther King led the Montgomery Improvement Association. They advertised at black churches and asked people to continue the boycott. Ninety percent of Montgomery's black citizens, estimated to be around 42,000 protesters, walked, carpooled or took cabs. In the beginning, the boycotters were willing to accept a compromise that was consistent with separate but equal rather than asking for complete integration. They asked for courteous treatment by bus operators, first-come, first-served seating on buses, and employment of African American bus drivers. The boycott lasted 381 days. The bus company lost a lot of money. The United States Supreme Court ruled that the Montgomery segregation law was unconstitutional, and on December 20, 1956, Montgomery officials were ordered to desegregate buses. The bus boycott demonstrated the power of nonviolent mass protest and brought Dr. Martin Luther King to national attention as one of the leaders of the cause. The civil rights movement led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – which made it illegal to refuse employment to an individual on the basis of race and made segregation at any public facility against the law.

Rosa wrote four books, Rosa Parks: My Story, Quiet Strength, Dear Mrs. Parks: A Dialogue with Today's Youth and I Am Rosa Parks. At the ceremony where President Bill Clinton presented Mrs. Parks with the Medal of Freedom, she was called "the first lady of civil rights" and "the mother of the freedom movement". Time Magazine named her one of the 100 most influential people of the 20th century. She died October 24, 2005.

1. How did Rosa Parks experience segregation at an early age?

- A. She refused to give up her seat on the bus
- B. Both her grandparents were former slaves
- C. She went to a different school than White children
- D. She married a man associated with the NAACP

2. How did the Montgomery Women's Political Council react to Rosa's arrest?

- A. It appealed to the President to take action
- B. It urged African-Americans to leave Montgomery
- C. It urged African-Americans to take over Montgomery's buses
- D. It urged African-Americans to stay off Montgomery's buses as a means of protest

3. What was Dr. Martin Luther King's role in the Montgomery protests?

- A. He rose to prominence as a result of the boycott
- B. He led the peaceful protests and bus boycott in Montgomery
- C. He decided how long the boycott would last
- D. He helped Rosa Parks write her books

4. What was the impact of the Montgomery Bus Boycott?

- A. The companies that operated Montgomery's buses lost a lot of money
- B. African-American bus riders asked for the drivers to treat them courteously
- C. Rosa Parks would eventually be called the "First Lady of Civil Rights."
- D. The African-American bus riders eventually accepted a compromise

5. Which of the following is the correct chain of events that occurred?

- A. Rosa Parks was arrested >> Montgomery buses were ordered to desegregate >> the bus boycott ended
- B. Rosa Parks was arrested >> the bus boycott was started >> the Supreme Court ruled Montgomery's segregation laws were unconstitutional
- C. Rosa Parks was arrested >> the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed >> the Supreme Court ruled Montgomery's segregation laws were unconstitutional
- D. Rosa Parks was arrested >> Montgomery was ordered to desegregate buses >> African-Americans of Montgomery asked for courteous treatment from bus drivers

6. Which is NOT true about Rosa Parks?

- A. She was called the "mother of the freedom movement"
- B. Time Magazine called her one of the 100 most influential people of the 20th century
- C. She wrote four books
- D. She dropped out of college when she was a junior

7. Which of the following best describes the LOGIC within the third paragraph?

- A. We have the power. If we stop riding buses, the laws will have to change
- B. The segregation laws are unfair. We should work to change them
- C. Because 3/4 of bus riders are African-American, the laws will never change
- D. To change the laws, we should only stop riding the bus on Monday