

Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks was a black woman, who played an important part in the American Civil Rights movement. She made changes to try to make life fair for black and white people in America.

Early Life

Rosa Parks was born on 4th February, 1913 and grew up on a farm with her mother, brother and grandparents in a place called Montgomery in the USA. When she was growing up, there was a lot of racism and black and white people living in America had to be separated by law.

Segregation in America

Segregation is the name of the law that separated black and white people in society at that time. It seems strange to think of today, but black and white people living then had separate toilets, schools, churches and even separate entrances for buildings such as the town hall. It was also clear to see that many of the public facilities provided for black people were not as clean or modern as the facilities provided for white people to use. Not only were black and white people segregated; black people were treated a lot worse than white people in the community.

The Bus Ride

On 1st December, 1955, Rosa Parks was sitting on the bus on the way home from work. She was sitting in the section segregated for black people but if the white section was full, black people had to move so white people could have a seat.

On this day, the white section was full and Rosa was told to move but she did not. The driver said that he would call the police but she stayed sitting down. Eventually, the police came and she was arrested, charged and found guilty for breaking the law and she had to pay a fine.

What Happened Next?

Amazingly, what Rosa did on that day started a big movement. 40 000 black people in the area (and some white people) refused to use the buses at all until they were treated fairly – this was called The Bus Boycott. The huge amount of people involved could not be ignored. The newspapers reported it and the boycott went on for 381 days before finally the government took action and the segregation on buses was lifted – and all because of Rosa Parks.

Rosa's actions made history as it sparked a movement to make a change. Even though it wasn't the end of segregation and civil rights still had a long way to go, it was a victory.

“People always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was forty-two. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.”

Parks, Rosa; James Haskins (1992). Rosa Parks: My Story. Dial Books. p. 116



Rosa Parks Questions

Try and answer the questions using full sentences.

1. Where did Rosa grow up?

2. What is 'segregation'?

3. What did Rosa Parks do to break to rules?

4. List three places where black and white people had to stay apart from each other.

5. Why do you think Rosa wouldn't move?

6. What was the name of the movement of people to stop using the buses?

7. In the final paragraph, what type of word is 'amazingly'?

Rosa Parks Questions

8. If you had been sitting next to Rosa Parks on that day, what do you think you would have done and why?

9. What sort of characteristics do you think Rosa Parks had? Give reasons for your answers.

Rosa Parks Answers

1. Where did Rosa grow up?

Rosa grew up in a place called Montgomery in America.

2. What is 'segregation'?

Segregation means the separation of people by law usually by race, gender or religion.

3. What did Rosa Parks do to break the rules?

Rosa Parks broke the rules because she did not move when she was told to do so to let a white person sit down on the bus.

4. List three places where black and white people had to stay apart from each other.

Three places where black people and white people had to stay apart from each other are: schools, churches and toilets. (Also accept any from: buses, town hall and public buildings.)

5. Why do you think Rosa wouldn't move?

Pupil's own response, which could include: she was tired of giving in/ she didn't want to be treated unfairly anymore/ she wasn't frightened of police action, etc.

6. What was the name of the movement of people to stop using the buses?

The name of the movement of people to stop using the buses was 'The Bus Boycott'.

7. In the final paragraph, what type of word is 'amazingly'?

The word 'amazingly' is an adverb.

8. If you had been sitting next to Rosa Parks on that day, what do you think you would have done and why?

Open-ended question for discussion, but answers should include reasons or evidence for choices.

9. What sort of characteristics do you think Rosa Parks had? Give reasons for your answers.

Open-ended and for discussion. Example answers might include:

- **braveness – for standing up for her rights**
- **calmness – to not get violent in such an unfair situation**
- **stubbornness – to not move on the bus**
- **proudness – for being proud of who she was**
- **determined – to stand her ground**

Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks was an African-American woman who made history with her comparatively small action of sitting still on a bus, which went on to spark major changes in American society.

Early Life

Rosa Parks was born on 4th February, 1913 and grew up mainly on a farm with her mother, brother and grandparents in Montgomery, Alabama, USA. She grew up at a time when American was segregated for black and white people.

Segregation in America

Segregation meant that many things for black and white people had to be separated by law. They had to use separate toilets, water fountains, entrances to public buildings and black and white children went to separate schools. It was also quite obvious that all the black facilities were not as clean or as modern as white facilities. Not only were black and white people segregated; black people were treated worse than white people within society.

The Bus Ride That Changed History

On 1st December, 1955, Rosa Parks was travelling home from work on a bus and sitting – as she had to – in the section allocated for black people at the back of the bus. The bus companies always moved black people further back or made them stand if the section allocated for white people was full and a white person needed to sit down. This happened to Rosa and she was told to move further back to give her seat to a white person...but she did not move. She was threatened with police action but she stayed put. Eventually, the police arrested, charged and fined her for breaking the law.

What Happened Next?

Amazingly, Rosa's behaviour unleashed a wave of protest and 40 000 black people in the area (and some white people) supported a bus boycott (a refusal to use the bus services in Montgomery). The bus companies lost a lot of money and the amount of people involved could not be ignored. The newspapers reported it and the boycott went on for 381 days, before it came to the attention of the government and just over a year later, in December 1956, the segregation on buses was lifted.

Rosa's actions made history as they sparked a movement to make a change. Even though it wasn't the end of segregation and civil rights still had a long way to go, it was a victory.

"People always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was forty-two. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in."

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Rosa Parks Questions

Try and answer the questions using full sentences.

1. Where did Rosa grow up?

2. What is 'segregation'?

3. How were the facilities provided for black and white people different?

4. How old was Rosa when she did not move on the bus?

5. If you boycott something, what are you doing?

6. In 1955, how were the buses in Montgomery segregated?

7. In 'The Bus Ride That Changed History' section, why has the author used an ellipsis?

Rosa Parks Questions

8. Near the end of the text, the author writes that 'it wasn't the end of segregation'. When the bus laws were changed, why wasn't it the end of segregation?

9. In Rosa's quote, what was Rosa tired of and why do you think this was?

10. What sort of characteristics and qualities do you think Rosa Parks had? Give reasons for your answers.

Rosa Parks Answers

1. Where did Rosa grow up?

Rosa grew up in a place called Montgomery in America.

2. What is 'segregation'?

Segregation means the separation of people by law usually by race, gender or religion.

3. How were the facilities provided for black and white people different?

The facilities provided for black people were not up to the same standard as the facilities provided for white people. They were not as clean or as modern.

4. How old was Rosa when she did not move on the bus?

Rosa was 42 years old when she did not move on the bus.

5. If you boycott something, what are you doing?

If you boycott something, you are refusing to go there or take part in it or have anything to do with it.

6. In 1955, how were the buses in Montgomery segregated?

In 1955, there were separate sections on buses allocated to white and black people. If the section allocated to white people was full, the black people on the bus were as to move back or stand to make way for the white citizens to have their seat.

7. In 'The Bus Ride' section, why has the author used ellipsis?

The author has used ellipsis to show a pause as there was a pause in real life as people waited for Rosa to move.

8. Near the end of the text, the author writes that 'it wasn't the end of segregation'. When the bus laws were changed, why wasn't it the end of segregation?

Even though the bus laws had been changed, it was not the end of segregation because there were still laws on segregation for many other places in the community, such as schools and churches.

9. In Rosa's quote, what was Rosa tired of and why do you think this was?

Rosa was tired of 'giving in'. I think that she had enough of things not being fair and being told what to do whilst feeling like a second-class citizen. She wasn't being treated fairly and up until then had been following the rules and not fighting back but she knew she couldn't do it anymore.

10. What sort of characteristics and qualities do you think Rosa Parks had? Give reasons for your answers.

Open-ended and for discussion. Example answers might include:

- **braveness – for standing up for her rights**
- **calmness – to not get violent in such an unfair situation**
- **stubbornness – to not move on the bus**
- **proudness – for being proud of who she was**
- **determined – to stand her ground**

Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks was an African-American woman who made history with her comparatively small action of sitting still on a bus, which went on to spark major changes in American society.

Early Life

Rosa Parks was born Rosa Louise McCauley on 4th February, 1913. After her parents separated, she grew up on a farm with her mother, brother and grandparents in Montgomery, Alabama, USA. She grew up in a time when America was segregated before the Civil Rights Act was enforced.

Segregation in America

Segregation meant black and white people had to be separated by law in many ways. They had separate toilets, water fountains, entrances to public buildings and black and white children had to go to separate schools. It was also clearly apparent that black facilities were of a poorer standard than white facilities. So not only were black and white people segregated; black people were treated as second-class citizens within society.

The Bus Ride That Changed History

On 1st December, 1955, Rosa Parks was travelling home from work on a bus and sitting – as rules required – in the black section to the rear of the bus. Bus companies prioritised seating for white people and moved black people further back, or made them stand if the white section was full and a white person needed a seat. This happened to Rosa and she was told to move further back to give her seat to a white person...but she refused to move. She was threatened with police action but she stayed sat still, adamant that she would not follow the 'rules'. Eventually, the police arrested, charged and fined her for breaking the law.

What Happened Next?

Amazingly, Rosa's defiance unleashed a wave of protest. Around 40 000 black citizens (and some white citizens) supported the 'Montgomery Bus Boycott'. The profits of the bus companies fell and the sheer size of the movement could not be ignored. The press reported it all over America and the boycott went on for 381 days. It gained the attention of the USA government and just over a year later, in December 1956, the unfair segregation on buses was lifted.

Rosa's small actions made history as they acted as a catalyst for the Civil Rights movement, which eventually succeeded. Even though it wasn't the end of segregation and civil rights still had a long way to go, it was a victory for the rights of black people within society.

"People always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was forty-two. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in."

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Rosa Parks Questions

Try and answer the questions using full sentences.

1. In the introduction paragraph, what type of word is 'comparatively'?

2. If Rosa was born with the name Rosa Louise McCauley, what can we most likely guess happened in her private life?

3. Explain what you understand by the term 'segregation'.

4. In the 'Segregation in America' section, the author uses the words 'second-class citizens'. Explain what you think this means.

5. Why did the bus driver ask Rosa to move on the bus?

6. Find two compound adjectives in the text.

7. What was 'The Montgomery Bus Boycott'?

Rosa Parks Questions

8. Near the end of the text, the author writes: 'Rosa's small actions made history as it acted as a catalyst for the Civil Rights movement', what does the author mean by 'acted as a catalyst'?

9. In Rosa's quote, what was Rosa tired of and why do you think this was?

10. What sort of characteristics and qualities do you think Rosa Parks had? Give reasons for your answers.

Rosa Parks Answers

1. In the introduction paragraph, what type of word is 'comparatively'?
The word 'comparatively' is an adverb.
2. If Rosa was born with the name Rosa Louise McCauley, what can we most likely guess happened in her private life?
Rosa's surname was probably changed because she got married. (She may also have changed her surname in conjunction with her mother and father splitting up).
3. Explain what you understand by the term 'segregation'.
The terms 'segregation' means the separation of people by law usually by race, gender or religion.
4. In the 'Segregation in America' section, the author uses the words 'second-class citizens'. Explain what you think this means.
'Second-class citizens' means people were treated as though they were not as valued in society as others.
5. Why did the bus driver ask Rosa to move on the bus?
Rosa was asked to move by the bus driver to give up her seat to a white person that had boarded the bus (as the 'rules' at the time stated).
6. Find two compound adjectives in the text.
Two compound adjectives in the text are: 'African-American' and 'second-class'.
7. What was 'The Montgomery Bus Boycott'?
The Montgomery Bus Boycott was when many black citizens (and some white citizens) refused to use the buses until it was fair for black and white people to sit where they liked and not be separated.
8. Near the end of the text, the author writes: 'Rosa's small actions made history as it acted as a catalyst for the Civil Rights movement', what does the author mean by 'acted as a catalyst'?
The phrase 'acted as a catalyst' means that something was given a boost, it speeded up the process or kick-started an event or change.
9. In Rosa's quote, what was Rosa tired of and why do you think this was?
Rosa was tired of 'giving in'. I think that she had enough of things not being fair and being told what to do whilst feeling like a second-class citizen. She wasn't being treated fairly and up until then had been following the rules and not fighting back but she knew she couldn't do it anymore.
10. What sort of characteristics and qualities do you think Rosa Parks had? Give reasons for your answers.
Open-ended and for discussion. Example answers might include:
 - **braveness – for standing up for her rights**
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