

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. Rosa Parks grew up at a time when Black people and other people of colour were treated as second-class citizens. They did not have the same rights as White people.

Segregation in America

When Rosa Parks was growing up, Black people were not allowed to use many of the same public places as White people. This was called 'segregation'. The laws in many American states enforced segregation between White people and Black people in public places such as schools, transport, toilets and restaurants. They also made it difficult for Black people to vote. Many White people did not respect Black people and treated them very badly.

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 the 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

Rosa Parks was an Black 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 on a farm with her mother, brother and grandparents in a place called Montgomery in the USA. Rosa Parks grew up at a time when Black people and other people of colour were treated as second-class citizens. They did not have the same rights as White people.

Segregation in America

When Rosa Parks was growing up, Black people were not allowed to use many of the same public places as White people. This was called 'segregation'. The laws in many American states enforced segregation between White people and Black people in public places such as schools, transport, toilets and restaurants. Usually, the schools, hospitals and bathrooms that White people used were in much better condition than the ones that Black people had to use. The laws at the time also made it difficult for Black people to vote. Many White people did not respect Black people and treated them very badly.

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."

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. 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

Rosa Parks was an Black 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. Black people and other people of colour were treated as second-class citizens. They did not have the same rights as White people.

Segregation in America

When Rosa Parks was growing up, Black and White people were separated by law in many ways. This was called 'segregation'. The laws in many American states enforced segregation between White people and Black people in public places such as schools, transport, toilets and restaurants. It was also clearly apparent that Black facilities were of a poorer standard than White facilities. The laws at the time also made it difficult for Black people to vote. So not only were Black and White people segregated, but Black people were treated very badly in 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."

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. 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. The author uses the words 'second-class citizens' to describe how people of colour were treated. What do you think this means?

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

6. Find a compound adjective 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.

~~SECRET~~