

The Montgomery Bus Boycott

On Thursday, December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks waited for a bus at Court Square in Montgomery, Alabama. She was on her way home from her job as a seamstress at the Montgomery Fair, a department store. When the bus came, Parks, an African American, walked to the rear of the bus and sat down in the first row of the “colored section”—the section where black people were required to sit. By the next stop all of the seats became filled, and a white man was left standing. The bus driver demanded that Parks give her seat to the man, but she refused. She was tired of the **demeaning** treatment of black passengers. The driver sent for two policemen who arrested Parks and took her to jail.



Word of Parks' arrest spread quickly through the black community. Its leaders decided to call a one-day boycott of the buses on Monday, December 5, the day of Mrs. Parks' trial. Fliers asking Montgomery's African Americans to stay off the buses were distributed, and plans for alternate methods of transportation were set up. On Sunday, the city's black ministers called upon members of their churches to take part in the protest.

At her Monday morning trial, Parks was found guilty of breaking the bus segregation laws and fined ten dollars. That afternoon the leaders of the boycott formed the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) with Martin Luther King, Jr., as its president. The city buses had very few black riders that day. Eager to join the boycott, many African Americans rode in car pools or piled into black-owned taxis for a fare of ten cents. Others decided to walk.

A community meeting was held Monday night. Hundreds attended and voted to continue the boycott until the bus company agreed to treat black passengers fairly and with courtesy. Dr. King spoke to the crowd and urged them to work together and to protest peacefully.

Montgomery's black population of about 50,000 stayed off the buses month after month. The bus company started losing thousands of dollars, but its officers refused to meet the MIA's demands. As the boycott continued, the police began **harassing** the black drivers of car pools and taxis. Hate groups, like the White Citizens Council, made threatening phone calls and sent nasty letters to leading black citizens. Dr. King's home was fire-bombed. Through it all, though, the boycotters and the MIA leaders remained determined, united, and nonviolent.

It was through the federal courts that the MIA finally achieved a resolution and victory. On November 13, 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregated seating on Montgomery's public buses was unconstitutional. When the written court order arrived in Montgomery in December, the boycott ended. Black passengers, thanks in great part to Rosa Parks' courageous stand against injustice, could now ride the city buses and sit with dignity anywhere they wanted.

Name: _____

COMPREHENSION CHECK

GRADE: _____

RCP#29

1. Why did the bus driver have Rosa Parks arrested?
 A. She was sitting in the front of the bus.
 B. She refused to give her seat to a white passenger.
 C. She had not paid her fair of ten cents.
 D. She had been rude to him.
2. In paragraph one, it says that Parks was "tired of the demeaning treatment of black passengers." To *demean* a person means to
 A. bore that person with uninteresting conversation.
 B. cause that person to lose pride or self-esteem.
 C. force that person to stop eating his or her snacks.
 D. confuse that person by giving wrong directions.
3. Which of these words do you think best describes how Montgomery's black leaders probably felt when Parks was arrested?
 A. ashamed B. frightened C. helpless D. angry
4. At the community meeting on Monday night, it was decided that
 A. the boycott should continue until the bus company changed its rules.
 B. Martin Luther King, Jr. should be the president of the MIA.
 C. black-owned taxis should charge a fare of ten cents.
 D. black passengers should pay more money to ride the city buses.
5. In paragraph five, it says that "the police began harassing the black drivers of car pools and taxis." To *harass* means to
 A. offer assistance. B. praise. C. bother repeatedly. D. disappoint.
6. Based on what you read in this passage, you can conclude that members of the White Citizens Council
 A. were pleased with the Supreme Court's decision.
 B. offered help and encouragement to Montgomery's leading black citizens.
 C. were in favor of the bus boycott.
 D. supported segregated seating on Montgomery's buses.
7. Which of these statements about the Montgomery bus boycott is NOT true?
 A. It caused the bus company to lose thousands of dollars.
 B. It inspired Montgomery's black community to become united.
 C. It was ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court.
 D. It brought about violence and threats from white hate groups.
8. How long did the Montgomery bus boycott last?
 A. one day B. about one year C. several months D. about two years