

Title of Lesson: How Would You Feel?
The Bravery of Civil Disobedience
(Suggested grade level:) 6th

This lesson was created as a part of the Alabama History Education Initiative, funded by a generous grant from the Malone Family Foundation in 2009.

Author Information: Lesa H. Roberts, Ph.D. (Cohort 1: 2009-2010)

School: Hampton Cove Middle School

School System: Huntsville City Schools

Huntsville, AL

Background Information:

On the evening of December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks boarded a bus in downtown Montgomery, Alabama. She was on her way home from work as a seamstress and was tired. She was also secretary of the local chapter of the NAACP. The seat she selected was in the reserved “white section” of the bus. As more white passengers loaded, the driver told Parks, an African American, to move to the back, to the “colored section”. She refused. At the next stop, she was taken off the bus by the police, arrested for breaking the law, and fined \$10 plus \$4 for court costs. This was not an uncommon occurrence in Montgomery for African Americans, but this occasion sparked a boycott of the Montgomery bus system that would become a part of America’s Civil Rights history. The boycott organizers hoped to cripple the city financially by encouraging Montgomery’s African American bus riders to use alternate forms of transportation. Seventy-five percent of the bus riders were black; a loss of that income might get the city’s attention. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a local Baptist minister, became a household name because of the boycott and his leadership in the Montgomery Improvement Association. The bus boycott lasted for more than a year. City officials arrested King and other leaders, but African Americans held firm as they walked and carpooled to work and church. The bus company lost thousands of dollars in fares. The Supreme Court finally settled the matter by ruling that the Montgomery bus segregation law was unconstitutional.

Prior to this lesson, the teacher should read the article about the [Montgomery Improvement Association](#) from the [Encyclopedia of Alabama](#). Highlight information to share with the class about its establishment, leaders, and meetings. (Additional information on the Encyclopedia of Alabama website is available about the [Montgomery Bus Boycott](#) .)

Overview of lesson:

Students will read and analyze a primary document ([Integrated Bus Suggestions](#)) and discuss how the Montgomery bus boycott was an example of civil disobedience. Students will then write narrative stories from the point of view of a white or African American bus rider during the first week after integration on the Montgomery busses.

Content Standards

[Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies](#) (Bulletin 2004, No. 18)

Grade 6: Content Standard 13

Describe the role of major civil rights leaders and significant events occurring during the modern Civil Rights Movement.

[National Standards for History, 1996](#)

Era 9 Standard 4: Explain the resistance to civil rights in the South between 1954 and 1965

[National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies](#), (Bulletin 111, 2010)

Standard 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

Standard 4: Individual Development and Identity

Standard 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Standard 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

Standard 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

Primary Learning Objective(s):

- Students will read and analyze a primary document.

Additional Learning Objective(s):

- Students will relate the bus boycott to civil disobedience.
- Students will write paragraphs integrating the bus suggestions into a narrative story from the point of view of someone riding the bus after the first week of integration.

Time allotted: two 45-minute class periods or one 90-minute block

Materials and Equipment:

- Background information on the [Montgomery Improvement Association](#), for teacher use only.
- [“Integrated Bus Suggestions”](#) – 1 copy per student and teacher
- Student notebooks

Background/Preparation:

Students should have background knowledge of the history of segregation in Alabama up through the 1950s. They should also be familiar with the story of Rosa Parks and the young minister, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This lesson can serve as a concluding lesson during a study of the Montgomery bus boycott and the Supreme Court ruling.

Procedures/Activities:

Engagement/Motivation Activity:

There are several appropriate children’s books about Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycott. Any of the following titles may be read to review the story prior to this lesson.

- *I Am Rosa Parks* by Rosa Parks, Jim Haskins and Wil Clay (1999)
- *Who Was Rosa Parks?* by Yona Zeldis McDonough (2010)
- *If A Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks* by Faith Ringgold (2003)
- *A Picture Book of Rosa Parks* (Picture Book Biographies) by David A. Adler (1995)
- *The Bus Ride that Changed History: The Story of Rosa Parks* by Pamela Duncan Edwards (2005)
- *Rosa* by Nikki Giovanni (2005) Caldecott Honor Book

Step 1	After reviewing the story of Rosa Parks and Dr. King's involvement as a local minister, distribute copies of the primary source, <i>Integrated Bus Suggestions</i> .
Step 2	Share the definition of civil disobedience with the students: <i>Refusal to obey civil laws in an effort to induce change in governmental policy or legislation, characterized by the use of passive resistance or other nonviolent means.</i> The Montgomery Bus Boycott is one of King's first attempts at civil disobedience as a leader of Civil Rights Movement.
Step 3	Ask the students which words demonstrate King's desire for a peaceful integration of the busses. Have them underline/highlight those words and phrases on the handout.
Step 4	Discuss the suggestions. Which would be the easiest to comply with? Which would be the most difficult? Why? If you were an African American who had grown up being segregated, how would you feel? If you were a white person who had grown up with segregation, how would you react?
Step 5	Assign the students to write a short story about the first week of Montgomery bus integration. They may choose to be a teenager or an older rider. They may choose to be African American or white. They may be nervous or excited, eager or reluctant, mad or happy.
Step 6	Encourage the students to incorporate the suggestions from the handout into their writing. For example, they may use the specific actions and language that were suggested as the two races sat beside one another.
Step 7	Allow students to work with a partner to edit rough drafts.
Step 8	Allow volunteers to share their writing with the class. Turn in papers.

Assessment Strategies:

- Handouts may be evaluated for highlighted words and passages that evidence civil disobedience.
- Short stories may be assessed by the attached rubric.

Extension:

Allow students to work in pairs. One partner should take the role of an African American bus rider; the other should take the role of a white passenger. Allow them to write a script of the Montgomery bus integration story and perform it for the class.

Remediation:

Allow a partner or aide to read the handout aloud to the student and work with him/her to underline phrases and words that evidence civil disobedience.

Accommodation:

Read the handout aloud to the student and work with him/her to underline phrases and words that evidence civil disobedience. Allow the student to write a paragraph describing how one passenger would feel about riding the newly integrated bus.

Story Writing: Civil Disobedience

Student Name _____

Directions: You will write a short story about the first week of the Montgomery bus integration. You may choose to be a teenager or an adult rider. You may choose to be African American or white. Use adjectives to describe your feelings, such as nervous, excited, eager, reluctant, mad, or happy. Incorporate the suggestions from the primary source, [Integrated Bus Suggestions](#), into your writing. For example, you may use the specific actions and language that were suggested as the two races sat beside one another.

CATEGORY	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
Focus on Assigned Topic	The entire story is related to the assigned topic and allows the reader to understand much more about the topic.	Most of the story is related to the assigned topic. The story wanders off at one point, but the reader can still learn something about the topic.	Some of the story is related to the assigned topic, but a reader does not learn much about the topic.	No attempt has been made to relate the story to the assigned topic.
Spelling and Punctuation	There are no spelling or punctuation errors in the final draft. Character and place names that the author invented are spelled consistently throughout.	There is one spelling or punctuation error in the final draft.	There are 2-3 spelling and punctuation errors in the final draft.	The final draft has more than 3 spelling and punctuation errors.
Accuracy of Facts	All facts presented in the story are accurate.	Almost all facts presented in the story are accurate.	Most facts presented in the story are accurate (at least 70%).	There are several factual errors in the story.
Setting	Many vivid, descriptive words are used to tell when and where the story takes place.	Some vivid, descriptive words are used to tell the audience when and where the story takes place.	The reader can figure out when and where the story takes place, but the author doesn't supply much detail.	The reader has trouble figuring out when and where the story takes place.
Action	Several action verbs (active voice) are used to describe what is happening in the story. The story seems exciting!	Several action verbs are used to describe what is happening in the story, but the word choice doesn't make the story as exciting as it could be.	A variety of verbs (passive voice) are used and describe the action accurately but not in a very exciting way.	Little variety seen in the verbs that are used. The story seems a little boring.

Total Points: _____

Comments: