

Title of Lesson: *Montgomery Bus Boycott: We Would Rather Walk!*

Suggested grade level: 6

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: Jimmie Freeman (Cohort 2: 2010-2011)

Deshler Middle School

Tuscumbia City School

Tuscumbia, AL

Background Information:

- Information about the Montgomery Bus Boycott may be found at the [Encyclopedia of Alabama](#) Web site as well as numerous additional Web sites.
- A concise article about the Montgomery Bus Boycott can be found at http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/article_overview.htm. This Web site includes an AP photo of Rosa Parks being booked and the Rosa Parks's mug shot which was found in 2004 by Montgomery County Deputy Sheriff Derrick Cunningham,
- [The Rosa Parks Museum](#) Web site contains information about Mrs. Parks and about the bus boycott; it also has photos, including ones of the Montgomery city bus on which she rode.
- Download and review the documents included with the lesson:
 - [Negroes' Most Urgent Needs](#)
 - [Integrated Bus Suggestions](#)
 - [Rosa Parks on a bus boycott reenactment](#)
- The following books give more detailed accounts of the bus boycott:
 - *Daybreak of Freedom: The Montgomery Bus Boycott* (University of North Carolina Press, 1997)
 - *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It: The Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson* (University of Tennessee Press, 1987)
 - *Bus Ride to Justice* by Fred Gray (New South Books, 1995).

Overview of lesson:

This lesson begins with the conditions that led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The lesson then focuses on the precipitating event of Rosa Parks's refusal to give up her seat. The lesson concludes with cautions given to the African American community once the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the boycotters. Students will analyze primary source documents and photos related to the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Content Standards

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

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

National Standards for History, 1996

Standards in History for Grades 5-12 (p. 125)

Era 8: Standard 4 – The struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties

Standard 4A – The student understands the “Second Reconstruction” and its advancement of civil rights.

***Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*, (Bulletin 111, 2010)**

Standard 2: Time, Continuity, and Change (p. 97)

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

Standard 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions (p. 108)

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

Primary Learning Objective(s):

The student will be able to:

- List conditions in Montgomery which led to the bus boycott.
- Summarize the contributions of the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the national Civil Rights Movement.
- Empathize with the African Americans living in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955 who depended on public transportation.

Time allotted: 45 Minutes

Materials and Equipment:

- Pencil erasers or substitute reward
- Red and green index cards (have enough for the entire class)
- Primary source documents and photos
- Letter-writing assignment instructions and rubric (attached)

Technological Resources:

- Computer with internet access
- Digital projector

Background/Preparation:

Students should be familiar with the following:

- Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments
- Jim Crow laws
- Segregation
- *Brown v Board of Education, Topeka Kansas*

- Non-violent philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Procedures/Activities:

Engagement/Motivation Activity:

As the children walk into the classroom, give each student either a green or red card. During roll call, reward the students with a red card by giving them a pencil eraser, just for having a red card. When roll call is completed, ask the students, “How did you feel when I only rewarded children who were given a red card?” Give students time to respond. Next, ask the children the following question; “How would they feel if I only rewarded the boys in the class?” Give students a chance to respond. Tell the students, “Today, we are going to study a time when people were treated differently simply because of the color of their skin. The term that is used to describe such treatment is *discrimination*.”

To be fair, give students who received a green card an eraser before starting the lesson steps.

Step 1	Tell the students, “Today, we will be studying the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott. This event occurred in the 1950s and was a response by African Americans to the discriminatory city bus policies. On every city bus in Montgomery, there was a moving sign marking the division of the whites-only section from the African-American section. The first ten seats were always reserved for whites but the whites-only section could be extended toward the back of the bus if the white section filled up. In fact, when Rosa Parks was told to move, she was sitting behind the floating sign.”
Step 2	Show the class Negroes’ Most Urgent Needs . Give students time to read this document. Ask the students the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Which of these numbered sections is about Montgomery buses?” 2. “What are the problems for African Americans on the buses?” 3. “As numbers two and five deal with public boards, why would the African American community be concerned about representation on these boards?” 4. “What other concerns are being addressed in this document?” 5. “How are the listed conditions examples of discrimination?” 6. “How should citizens address undemocratic practices in a democracy?”
Step 3	Discuss with students the circumstances surrounding the arrest of Rosa Parks for refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery city bus on December 1, 1955. Show the students the photos of the bus, Rosa Parks being booked, and Rosa Parks’s mug shot. Ask the students the following questions:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Why do you think Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat?” • “What happened when the bus driver called the police?” • “What do you think were the reactions of the African American community to her arrest?”
Step 4	<p>Tell the students, “The African American leaders of the community decided that a bus boycott would be the most effective way to challenge discrimination on Montgomery city buses.” Review the term <i>boycott</i> with students. Ask the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How is a boycott an example of the non-violent strategies taught by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.?” • “How would this boycott have had a financial impact on the city of Montgomery or the company which owned the buses?” • “How would the boycott have affected African American workers, both male and female?” • “What arrangements do you think the African Americans had to make in order to get to work, church, stores, or other places?” • “Do you think that the boycott was an effective method to bring about change? Why or why not?” • “Can you think of any other strategies that would have been effective in ending segregation of Montgomery’s buses?” <p>Tell students that although Montgomery’s bus policy was challenged in court, the boycott lasted for 381 days. On November 13, 1956, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in favor of the plaintiffs by declaring the Montgomery bus segregation to be unconstitutional. On December 17, 1956, the Supreme Court rejected Alabama’s appeal of this ruling. African American leaders scheduled a mass meeting for December 20th at which they proposed the end of the boycott. The following day, African American Montgomeries led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. returned to the city buses.</p>
Step 5	<p>Display the document, “Integrated Bus Suggestions.” Give students time to read the document. Ask the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Who created the document?” • “What does the title <i>The Rev.</i> mean?” • “The authors of this document are Christian ministers. Which suggestions in the document reflect Christian teaching?” • “Why would the leaders of the Montgomery bus boycott have circulated such a document among the African American community?” • “What responsibility does the document place on riders of the

	<p>Montgomery city bus system?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How does this document put forth the idea of non-violence?” • “Do you agree with all of the suggestions? If not, which one(s) do you disagree with and why?”
Step 6	Show the students the picture of Rosa Parks riding a Montgomery city bus during a re-enactment in 1986 . Ask the students, “How would Rosa Parks have felt differently riding the Montgomery bus in 1986 from the way she felt on December 1, 1955?” Allow time for discussion.
Step 7	<p>Ask students the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How did the Montgomery bus boycott benefit the development of leadership and organizational skills of the Civil Rights Movement?” • “How did the Montgomery bus boycott help achieve the goals of the Civil Rights Movement?”

Assessment Strategies:

Have students write a letter to the editor of their local newspaper using the attached instructions and rubric.

Extension:

Have students research other principle people in the Montgomery bus boycott. Suggested people:

Johnnie Carr

Jo Ann Robinson

E. D. Nixon

Claudette Colvin

Robert Graetz

Clifford and Virginia Durr

Fred Gray

Solomon Seay

Remediation:

Students will create a word wall to display in the classroom using words they have learned in this lesson.

Accommodation:

Allow students to work with a peer or in a small group to brainstorm for information needed to complete the letter-writing assignment.

Modification:

Take out one of the components of the letter-writing assignment.

Letter to the Editor Assignment and Rubric

Student Name _____

Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper in which you:

- Explain that you have been studying the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
- Briefly describe the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
- Describe how the boycott achieved a major goal of the Civil Rights Movement.
- Express your appreciation for those who participated in this boycott.

CATEGORY	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	Score
Salutation and Closing	Salutation and closing have no errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and closing have 1-2 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and closing have 3 or more errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and/or closing are missing.	
Sentences & Paragraphs	All sentences and paragraphs are complete and well-constructed.	One to two sentences are not complete or poorly constructed.	Three to four sentences are not complete or poorly constructed.	More than four sentences are not complete or poorly constructed.	
Grammar & spelling	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	
Ideas	Ideas were expressed in a clear and organized fashion. It was easy to figure out what the letter was about.	Ideas were expressed in a clear manner, but the organization could have been better.	Ideas were not fully developed. It took more than one reading to determine what the letter was about.	The letter seemed to be a collection of unrelated sentences. It was very difficult to determine what the letter was about.	
Content Accuracy	The letter contains at least 5 accurate facts about the topic.	The letter contains 3-4 accurate facts about the topic.	The letter contains 1-2 accurate facts about the topic.	The letter contains no accurate facts about the topic.	

Total _____