

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 in a time when African-American 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'?

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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**