

Lesson 11:

Why and where Rosa Parks?

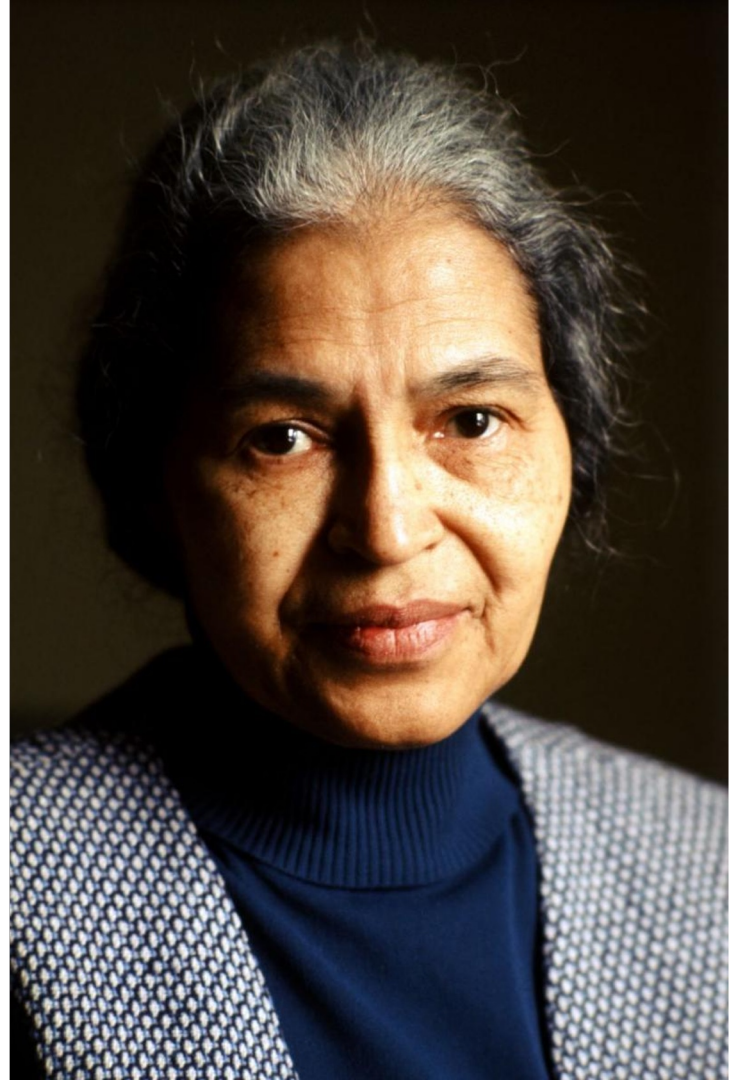
Unit 1
Grade 4

Warm Up

Imagine that you had to obey a rule that you and many other people believed was unfair. What do you think would be a good way to respond to that law?

In this lesson you are going to analyze an account of the day that a very famous woman named Rosa Parks did something that was historic and that brought about an important change in American history.

Does anyone know who Rosa Parks was and what made her famous?



Let's build some **context**. Context allows us to understand what was going on at the time an event occurred. It helps explain why and when the event occurred.

We are going to read some background information that will help explain what was going on in the city of Montgomery, Alabama back in 1955.

Focus on what the laws said and how they changed over time.

Resource 1: Life Long Ago

Name: _____

Was "Separate but Equal" Ever Legal in Our Country?

In 1898 the Supreme Court of the United States announced a decision that it was legal to separate Black and White people in almost every area of life - schools, businesses, hotels, movie theaters, swimming pools, beaches, trains etc. The reason was racism. There was one condition to the decision i.e., the places for Blacks and Whites had to be equal. This is known as the "separate but equal" doctrine. People of different races could be denied access to places but only if the separate places were equal in quality.

In 1954, the Supreme Court changed its decision. The Court announced that "separate is not equal" and that no school was allowed to prevent Black students from attending white schools. While the decision applied to schools, the rule that "separate is not equal" caused Black people to question other laws that did not treat them equally.

1. **Turn and Discuss:** How did the law in the United States change between 1898 and 1954?

What About Buses?

In 1955, all customers in the state of Alabama who rode a bus had to pay the same amount of money to ride the bus. But Alabama had a law that was common in some parts of the country at that time. It stated that Black people were not allowed to sit in the front of a bus. That law made it legal to separate Black and White people on buses. The first 10 seats on the bus in rows 1-5 were considered the front of the bus - for White people only. If a White person got on a bus and White people already filled the first 10 seats, any Black person sitting in the next row (row 5) had to get up and give his or her seat to the White person. And if those seats got filled, any Black people sitting in row 6 had to give up their seat to a White person if more White people got on the bus.

And Black people were not even allowed to sit in the same row as White people!

Turn and Discuss:

1. Explain Alabama's bus laws.

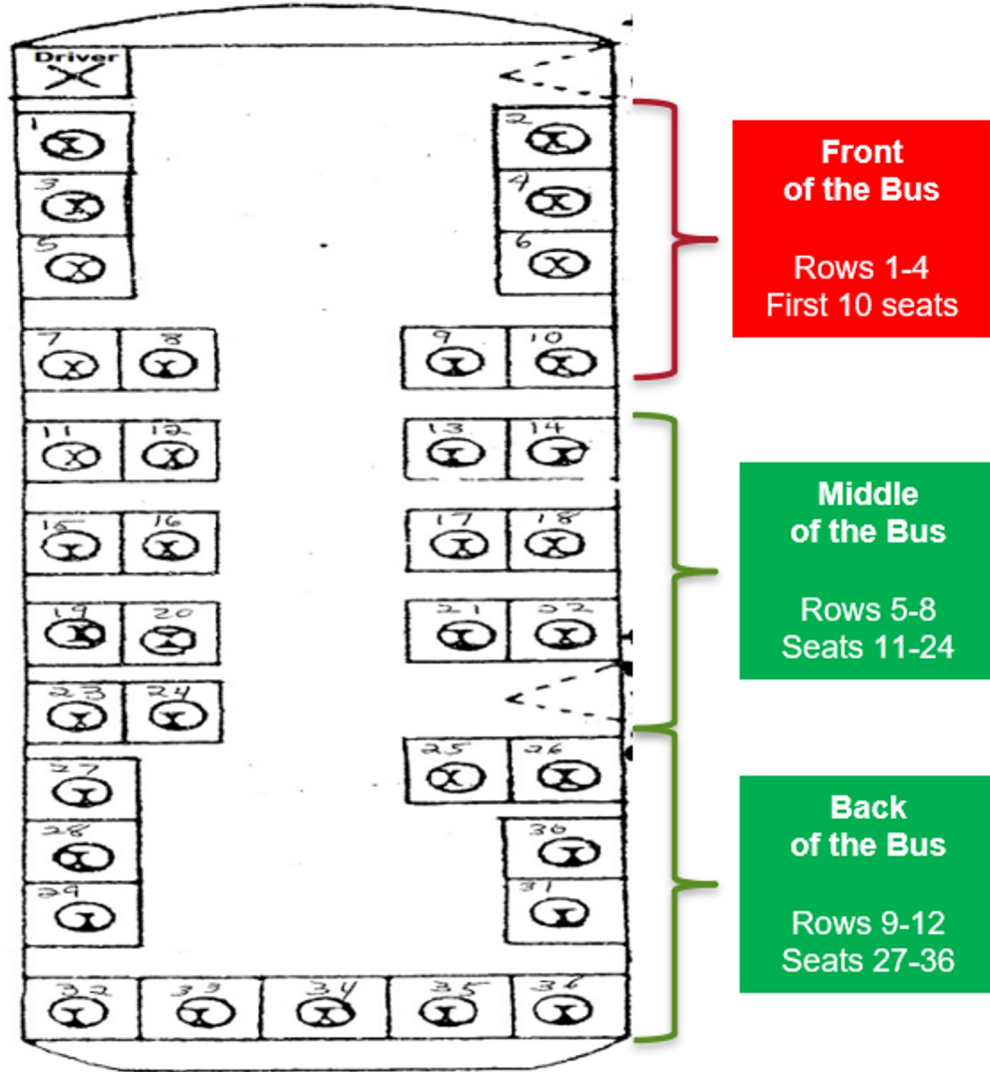
2. Why do you think Black customers who rode the buses in Alabama thought that the laws were unfair?

Diagram of the bus

Let's look at the

- Different seats
- Different rows
- Different sections of the bus

You are going to read an account of that famous day in 1955 when Rosa Parks boarded that bus. Your main task will be to identify the seat where Ms. Parks was sitting and why she decided to do what she did.



Fill in the rows and columns on Resource 3 using the dates and events provided on the page so you create a timeline with the events arranged in chronological order.

Resource 3: Create a Timeline

Name _____

Directions: Create a timeline using the dates and events listed below.

- Quiet Strength book published (1994)
- Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat (1955)
- Exploring My World book published (1991)

Year	Event

Purpose for Reading:

- ★ Where was Rosa Parks sitting?
- ★ What did she do in response to the bus law?
- ★ What did the author mean when they stated that Ms. Parks was tired?

Reading: Rosa Parks Acts Against Unfair Law

Independently, fill out
Resource 5: My
Conclusion and Account.

Use your Resource 4
reading.



The historic bus ridden by Rosa Parks (accessed [here](#))

December 1, 1955: My Account

On December 5, 1955, a Black woman named _____
got on a bus in Montgomery Alabama. The law stated that Black people
had to sit in the _____ of the bus. Only White people were allowed
to sit in the first ____ seats which were in the first ____ rows.

Ms. Parks was most likely sitting in row # _____. She refused to give up her
seat and was arrested. Ms. Parks explained that she was "tired." By "tired",
she meant that she _____

_____.

What evidence do I have to support this? The document I read states

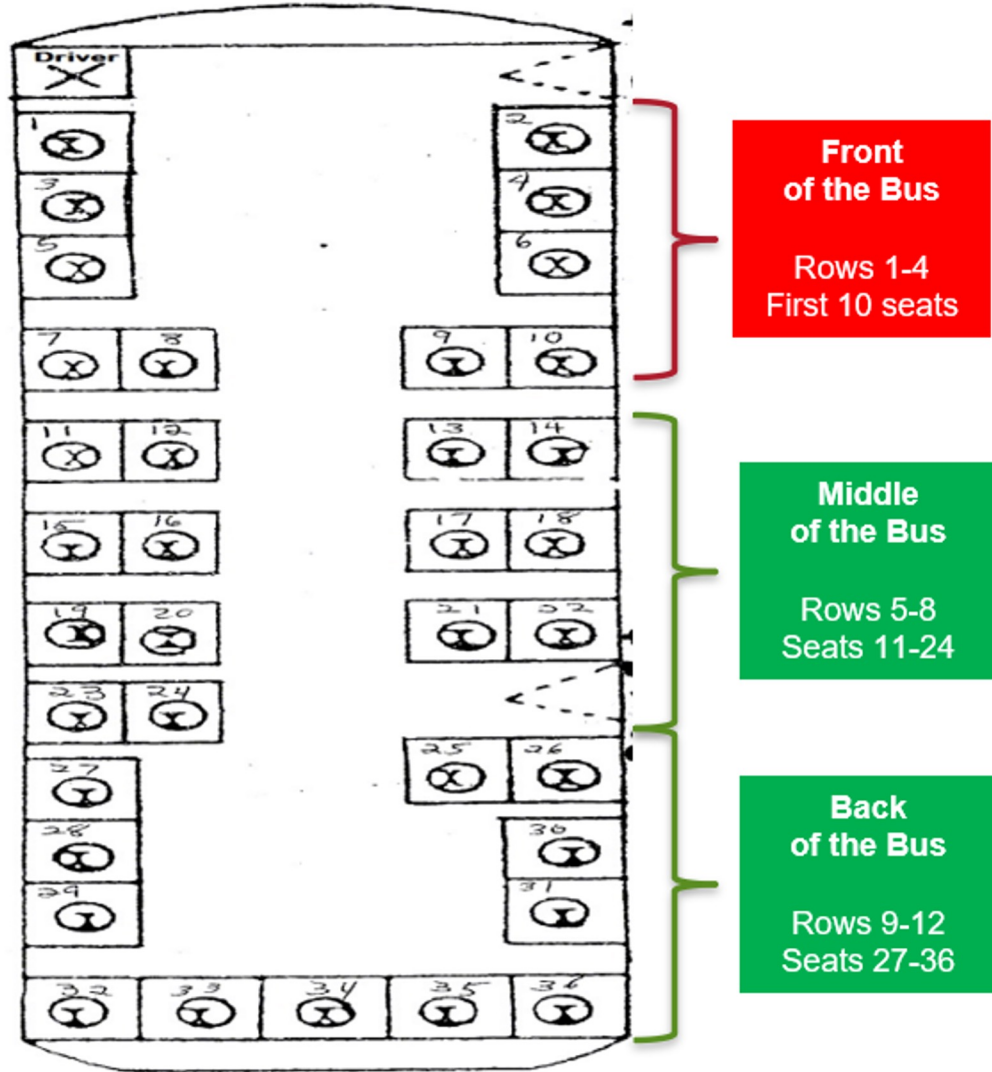
" _____
_____ "

One effect of Ms. Park's actions was that _____ changed so
that _____ |

Diagram of the bus

According to your reading and conclusion, where did Rosa Parks sit?

Color the spot where Rosa Parks sat.



Let's share our conclusions and accounts.

Did anyone have a different conclusion?

Why might there be different accounts of the same event?



The historic bus ridden by Rosa Parks (accessed [here](#))

December 1, 1955: My Account

On December 5, 1955, a Black woman named _____ got on a bus in Montgomery Alabama. The law stated that Black people had to sit in the _____ of the bus. Only White people were allowed to sit in the first ____ seats which were in the first ____ rows.

Ms. Parks was most likely sitting in row # _____. She refused to give up her seat and was arrested. Ms. Parks explained that she was "tired." By "tired", she meant that she _____

_____.

What evidence do I have to support this? The document I read states

" _____"

One effect of Ms. Park's actions was that _____ changed so that _____.

Find a partner who read the different account and share your conclusions.

Why might there be differences in your account and your partner's account?



The historic bus ridden by Rosa Parks (accessed [here](#))

December 1, 1955: My Account

On December 5, 1955, a Black woman named _____ got on a bus in Montgomery Alabama. The law stated that Black people had to sit in the _____ of the bus. Only White people were allowed to sit in the first ____ seats which were in the first ____ rows.

Ms. Parks was most likely sitting in row # _____. She refused to give up her seat and was arrested. Ms. Parks explained that she was "tired." By "tired", she meant that she _____


What evidence do I have to support this? The document I read states

" _____"

One effect of Ms. Park's actions was that _____ changed so that _____

Create a new account that includes information from both readings.

Resource 5: My Conclusion and Account Name _____



The historic bus ridden by Rosa Parks accessed 2020

December 1, 1955: My Account

On December 5, 1955, a Black woman named _____ got on a bus in Montgomery Alabama. The law stated that Black people had to sit in the _____ of the bus. Only White people were allowed to sit in the first _____ seats which were in the first _____ rows.

Ms. Parks was most likely sitting in row # _____. She refused to give up her seat and was arrested. Ms. Parks explained that she was "tired." By "tired", she meant that she _____

What evidence do I have to support this? The document I read states _____

One effect of Ms. Park's actions was that _____ changed so that _____

Source 1: Rosa Parks Acts Against Unfair Law

When Rosa Parks rode on a bus, she had to sit all the way in the back. Her city had a law. It said black people could not sit in the front of a bus.

One day Rosa was tired. She sat in the front. The bus driver told her to move. She did not. He called the police. Rosa was put in jail.

Some citizens tried to help. One of them was Martin Luther King Jr. The citizens decided to stop riding buses until the law was changed.

Their plan worked. The law was changed. Soon, many other unfair laws were changed. Rosa Parks led the way!

Source: Jeff Passe and Evangeline Nicholas (1991). Exploring My World. D. C. Heath and Co. Lexington, MA. Found in Kohl, Herbert. (2005). She Would Not Be Moved: How We Tell the Story of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The New Press. New York, NY

Source 2: Rosa Parks Acts Against Unfair Law

The custom for getting on the bus for black persons in Montgomery in 1955 was to pay at the front door, get off the bus, and then re-enter through the back door to find a seat. On the buses, if white persons got on, the colored would move back if the white section was filled. Black people could not sit in the same row with white people. They could not even sit across the aisle from each other...

On Thursday evening, December 1, I was riding the bus home from work. A white man got on, and the driver looked our way and said, "Let me have those seats."

...When more whites boarded the bus, the driver, J.P. Blake, ordered the Blacks in the fifth row, (the row I was sitting in), to move to the rear.

At first, none of us moved.

"Y'all better make it light on yourselves and let me have those seats," Blake said.

Then three of the blacks in my row got up. I do not remember being frightened...Our mistreatment was just not right, and I was tired of it.

I knew someone had to take the first step. So I made up my mind not to move. Blake asked me if I was going to stand up.

"No. I am not"

"Why do you push us around?" I said to one of the policemen.

"I don't know," he answered, "but the law is the law and you're under arrest."

Source: Rosa Parks with Gregory J. Reed (1994) *Quiet Strength*. Zondervan Publishing House. Grand Rapids, MI.

There might be different accounts of the same event in history, but it does not mean that someone lied. It may be because the person writing the account used different sources or evidence.



African Americans walk to work instead of riding the bus during the third month of an eventual 381-day bus boycott, Montgomery, Alabama, February 1956.
Don Cravens/The LIFE Images Collection via Getty Images

The Black people in Montgomery, Alabama started boycotting the buses. When Rosa Parks was asked about the boycott, she said, “Rather than ride in shame, we decided to walk with dignity.”

Nine months after the boycott started, the bus company had lost so much revenue due to the boycott that they ended their discriminatory bus rules.



African Americans boarding bus at the end of a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, that lasted more than a year. Don Cravens/The LIFE Images Collection via Getty Images