

# Non-Fiction: Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks was an African-American woman who made history with her comparatively small action of sitting still on a bus, which went on to spark major changes in American society.

## Early Life

Rosa Parks was born Rosa Louise McCauley on 4th February, 1913. After her parents separated, she grew up on a farm with her mother, brother and grandparents in Montgomery, Alabama, USA. She grew up in a time when America was segregated before the Civil Rights Act was enforced.



## Segregation in America

Segregation meant black and white people had to be separated by law in many ways. They had separate toilets, water fountains, entrances to public buildings and black and white children had to go to separate schools. It was also clearly apparent that black facilities were of a poorer standard than white facilities. So not only were black and white people segregated; black people were treated as second-class citizens within society.



## The Bus Ride That Changed History

On 1st December, 1955, Rosa Parks was travelling home from work on a bus and sitting – as rules required – in the black section to the rear of the bus. Bus companies prioritised seating for white people and moved black people further back, or made them stand if the white section was full and a white person needed a seat. This happened to Rosa and she was told to move further

back to give her seat to a white person...but she refused to move. She was threatened with police action but she stayed sat still, adamant that she would not follow the 'rules'. Eventually, the police arrested, charged and fined her for breaking the law.

## What Happened Next?

Amazingly, Rosa's defiance unleashed a wave of protest. Around 40 000 black

citizens (and some white citizens) supported the 'Montgomery Bus Boycott'. The profits of the bus companies fell and the sheer size of the movement could not be ignored. The press reported it all over America and the boycott went on for 381 days. It gained the attention of the USA government and just over a year later, in December 1956, the unfair segregation on buses was lifted.

Rosa's small actions made history as they acted as a catalyst for the Civil Rights movement, which eventually succeeded. Even though it wasn't the end of segregation and civil rights still had a long way to go, it was a victory for the rights of black people within society.

"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**

# Questions

1. ...Rosa's small actions made history as they acted as a catalyst for the Civil Rights movement ...

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What does the word catalyst mean in this context? **Tick one.**

It ended the Civil Rights movement.

It accelerated the Civil Rights movement.

It advertised the Civil Rights movement.

It won the Civil Right movement.

2. In the 'Segregation in America' section, the author uses the words 'second-class citizens'. Explain what you think this means.

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3. What are the key themes of the text? **Circle two.**

R

Rosa Parks' early life.

Segregation in America in the 1950s.

Rosa Parks' bus protest in 1955.

How seats are organised on public buses.

4. Tick whether the following statements are true or false.

R

	True	False
Rosa grew up on a farm.		
Facilities for white people were of a poorer standard than those segregated for black people.		
Rosa was arrested for not moving from her seat on the bus.		
Rosa's actions ended segregation in America.		

5. Rosa was born Rosa Louise McCauley. Why do you think her name changed?




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6. If you were to describe Rosa, what type of person would you say she was?



**Explain your answer.**

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7. Were all white citizens of the opinion that black people should be made to sit at the back of the bus? **Explain your answer.**




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8. Match the statement with the date it happened.



**1956**

Rosa refused to move seats.

**1955**

Rosa Parks was born.

**1913**

Segregation on buses is lifted.

9. Part of the text is placed in a purple box. Why has the author done this?




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10. Write down a compound adjective from the text.




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# Answers

1. ...Rosa's small actions made history as they acted as a catalyst for the Civil Rights movement ...

What does the word catalyst mean in this context? **Tick one.**

- It ended the Civil Rights movement.
- It accelerated the Civil Rights movement.
- It advertised the Civil Rights movement.
- It won the Civil Right movement.

2. In the 'Segregation in America' section, the author uses the words 'second-class citizens'. Explain what you think this means.

**Accept references to: people who were not treated as valued member of society / people treated differently to others / people treated worse than others / people who don't have the same rights as others**

3. What are the key themes of the text? **Circle two.**

Rosa Parks early life.

Segregation in America in the 1950s.

Rosa Parks bus protest in 1955.

How seats are organised on public buses.

4. Tick whether the following statements are true or false.

	True	False
Rosa grew up on a farm.	✓	
Facilities for white people were of a poorer standard than those segregated for black people.		✓
Rosa was arrested for not moving from her seat on the bus.	✓	
Rosa's actions ended segregation in America.		✓

5. Rosa was born Rosa Louise McCauley. Why do you think her name changed?

**She got married.**

6. If you were to describe Rosa, what type of person would you say she was? **Explain your answer.**

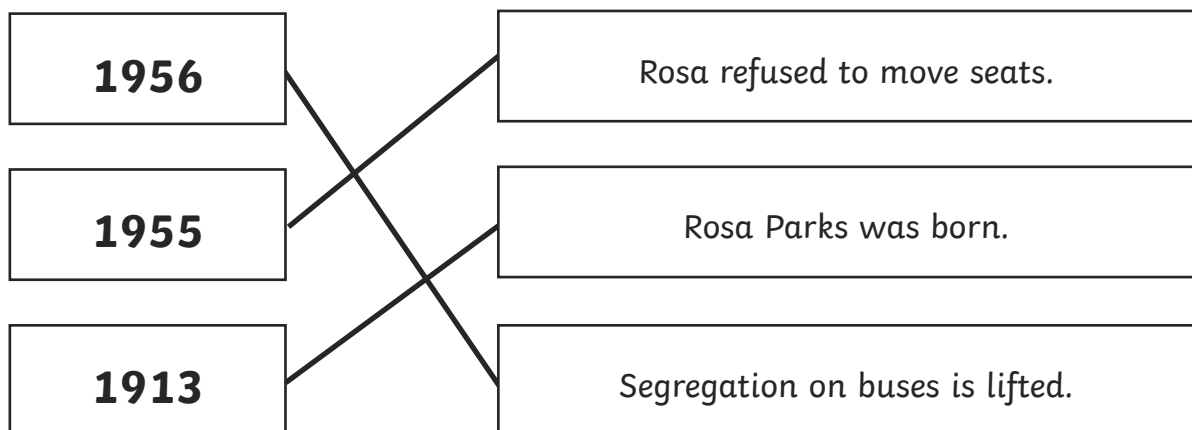
**Accept answers that reference:**

- **brave – she stood up for her rights / risked jail**
- **calm – she didn't use violence in an unfair situation**
- **stubborn/determined – she refused to move from her seat /she never gave up**
- **proud – for being proud of who she was**

7. Were all white citizens of the opinion that black people should be made to sit at the back of the bus? **Explain your answer.**

**No. It states that some white citizens supported the 'Montgomery Bus Boycott'.**

8. Match the statement with the date it happened.



9. Part of the text is placed in a purple box. Why has the author done this?

**The author has used a purple box because it is a quote from Rosa Parks and he wants it to stand out from the rest of the text.**

10. Write down a compound adjective from the text.

**African-American or second-class**