

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Month: Jan.

Week #: 19

Day: b. Tues. Time: 30 min.

Rosa Parks's Bus Ride

Life Tree Learning Systems ©

Objectives/Aims

The students will: experience first hand what Rosa Parks went through on Dec. 1, 1955.

Materials

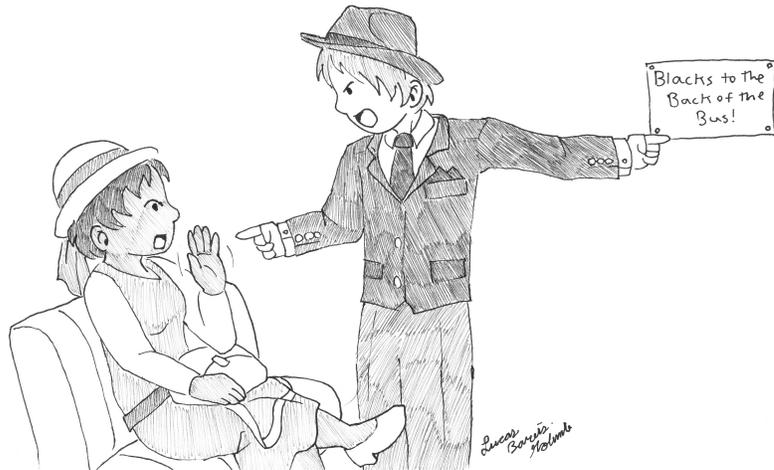
purse, shopping bag; chairs are optional

Illustration

Meet Rosa Parks. An ordinary person, like you and me, that did extraordinary things! She took a stand, using nonviolence, against laws that weren't fair, against injustice. Are we strong enough to take a stand for peace and against injustice?

Background See the answers under "Group Discussion Questions."

Note: Any words in quotations are Rosa Parks' own words and come from questions posed by students on the Scholastic Web site from January to February 1997.



Group Activity

1. Directions for play set up:

- Setting: Arrange all but seven of the students sitting as if they were on a bus (chairs can be used or the students can sit on the floor), with two students to a side with an aisle between them. Towards the middle of the bus, leave a seat open next to the aisle and leave two additional seats open towards the front of the bus. Tell the students sitting in the front that they are Caucasian (white). Tell the students in the back of the bus that they are nonwhite (African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American etc.). The remaining seven students will be the following characters:

Note: You may or may not have a racially diverse student body. If you don't have students of the appropriate racial group, then the actors will need to pretend to be racially different.

Rosa Parks - select an assertive female student 'of color' (to use the 1950's term - explain term to students and who was considered a person of color) who personifies Rosa's strong character; have her standing at a bus stop waiting expectantly carrying a purse and shopping bag

Bus Driver- select a white male student; needs to be somewhat ornery; have him seated at the front left corner of the bus pretending to hold a steering wheel

Policemen (2) - select two white male students who are large in stature

White People (3) - at least one needs to be male; have them standing off stage

2. The play:

Rosa Parks: Angry Bus Rider

Narrator: (To the audience.) Many of the words you are about to hear, came from an interview posed to Rosa by students on the Scholastic Web site from January to February 1997.

Rosa Parks was tired. She'd just spent all day sewing and pressing clothes at a Montgomery, Alabama department store, where she was a tailor's assistant. Her feet, neck and shoulders ached as she arrived at her bus stop to go home. The thought of standing during the ride did not sit well with her, so she let one crowded bus go by.

Narrator: A second, less crowded bus came. She got on, all the while thinking aloud...

Rosa Parks: [Gets slowly on the bus speaking out loud to herself.] That particular day that I decided 'to get on that bus' was not the first time I had trouble with that particular driver. [Motion at the seated bus driver.] He evicted me before, because I would not go around to the back door after I was already onto the bus. The evening that I boarded the bus and noticed that he was the same driver, I decided to get on anyway. I did not sit at the very front of the bus; I took a seat with a man who was next to the window... the first seat that was allowed for 'colored' people to sit in. We were not disturbed until we reached the third stop after I boarded the bus. At this point a few white people boarded the bus, and one white man was left standing.

White People: [Get on the bus with two of the three finding seats in the front of the bus leaving a lone man standing.]

Bus Driver: [Turns and notices the lone man standing and shouts his words at Rosa.] You need to stand up!

Rosa Parks: No, I will not.

Bus Driver: [Sets the emergency brake and angrily stomps back to yell at Rosa.] I'll have you arrested!

Rosa Parks: [Speaking aloud to herself again.] And I told him he could do that. So he didn't move the bus any further. Several black people left the bus. [Several students leave from the back.]

Policemen: [Get on the bus and walk towards Rosa.]

Bus Driver: [Speaking to the police in an angry voice.] I told her [Points at Rosa.] to stand up and move to the back of the bus, but she wouldn't.

Policemen: [Calmly, but sternly speaking to Rosa.] Why didn't you stand up?

Rosa Parks: [I don't think I should stand up. Why do you push us around?]

Policemen: I don't know. But the law is the law and you are under arrest. [Pick up her purse and shopping bag; they escort her firmly by the arm from the bus and off stage.]

3. When the play is over have the students return to their places to answer the discussion questions.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What do you think happened to Rosa Parks after she was arrested?

A: She was arrested and put in jail. A friend and civil rights leader, Mr. E. D. Nixon, posted bail to get her out of jail. Later she went to court and was found guilty of breaking a city segregation law for which she was fined \$14.

2. How do you think she felt during this experience and why?

A: Perhaps she was too tired to feel afraid, because she could have put in jail, or worse, killed (Colored people could be lynched [hanged to death] for stepping out of line. Or, even more likely, if she was arrested and convicted, she could have possibly lost her job.) So she was probably felt brave, courageous, frustrated, upset, et.

3. What happened as a result of Rosa's action?

A: The local NAACP chapter organized a boycott, led by M. L. King, Jr. of the bus system in which colored people refused to ride the bus.

A: Rosa's conviction was challenged in court resulting in the U.S. Supreme Court outlawing segregation on city buses.

A: It catapulted a Baptist clergyman, by the name of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to national prominence.

4. Rosa Parks was an ordinary person, like you or I. Do you think our own small actions can have a profound effect on others? Why?

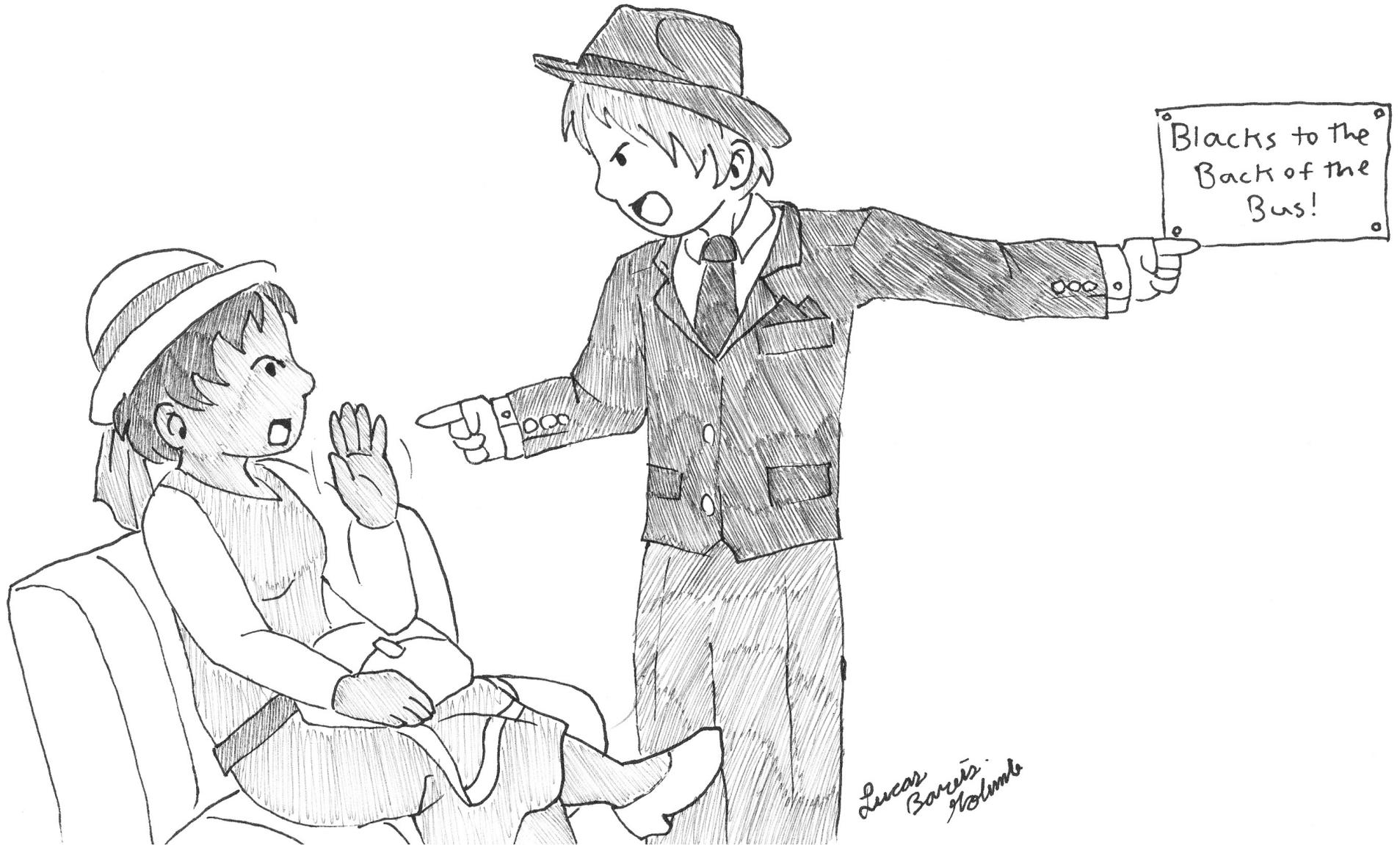
A: Yes, because Rosa's simple act of civil disobedience led to the results mentioned before in the above question.

Conclusion:

Say, "Even though she had every reason to be afraid, Rosa Parks had the courage to stand up against injustice, becoming one of the 'sparks' of the civil rights movement and ultimately helping to change history."

Jan. 19 b. Tues.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: Rosa Parks's Bus Ride



**Meet Rosa Parks. An ordinary person, like you and me, that did extraordinary things!
She took a stand, using nonviolence, against laws that weren't fair; against injustice.
Are we strong enough to take a stand for peace and against injustice?**