

## Activity 5: Analyzing Rosa Parks's Arrest Record

*Misc.*

POLICE DEPARTMENT  
CITY OF MONTGOMERY

Date 12-1-55 19\_\_

Complainant J.F. Flake (wm)

Address 27 No. Lewis St. Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Offense Misc. Reported By Same as above

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Time Offense Committed 12-1-55 6:06 pm

Place of Occurrence In Front of Empire Theatre (On Montgomery Street)

Person or Property Attacked \_\_\_\_\_

How Attacked \_\_\_\_\_

Person Wanted \_\_\_\_\_

Value of Property Stolen \_\_\_\_\_ Value Recovered \_\_\_\_\_

Details of Complaint (list, describe and give value of property stolen)

We received a call upon arrival the bus operator said he had a colored female sitting in the white section of the bus, and would not move back.

We (Day & Mixon) also saw her.

The bus operator signed a warrant for her. Rosa Parks, (cf) 634 Cleveland Court.

Rosa Parks (cf) was charged with chapter 6 section 11 of the Montgomery City Code.

Warrant #114254

THIS OFFENSE IS DECLARED:  
 UNFOUNDED ☐  
 CLEARED BY ARREST ☐  
 EXCEPTIONALLY CLEARED ☐  
 INACTIVE (NOT CLEARED) ☐

Officers F.D. Day  
D.W. Mixon

Division Patrol Time 7:00 pm  
12-1-55

10M-PARAGON PRESS-24591

# Activity 5: Analyzing Rosa Parks's Arrest Record

## Guiding Questions

- How can people take action to promote change in a peaceful way?
- How can people take action to promote the fundamental values and principles promised by the Declaration of Independence?

## National Standards

### National Center for History in the Schools History Standards

- *Standard 4:* How democratic values came to be, and how they have been exemplified by people, events, and symbols
  - *Standard 4B:* Demonstrate understanding of ordinary people who have exemplified values and principles of American democracy

### National Standards for Civics and Government

- *NSCG.K-4.2.B* What are some important beliefs Americans have about themselves and their government?
  - Students should be able to identify some important beliefs commonly held by Americans about themselves and their government.

### Common Core State Standards

- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.2:* Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.
- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.1:* Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

### College, Career, & Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards

- *D2.Civ.2.3-5.* Explain how a democracy relies on people's responsible participation, and draw implications for how individuals should participate.

### Educating for American Democracy Roadmap

- *HDQ1.2A* Why and how do people take action in order to solve problems that affect them and others?
- *CDQ1.2A* Why might we want to make changes at local, state, or national levels? How can we promote change in an effective way?

# Historical Context

## An Act of Courage, The Arrest Records of Rosa Parks<sup>1</sup>

On December 1, 1955, during a typical evening rush hour in Montgomery, Alabama, a 42-year-old woman took a seat on the bus on her way home from the Montgomery Fair department store where she worked as a seamstress. Before she reached her destination, she quietly set off a social revolution when the bus driver instructed her to move back, and she refused. Rosa Parks, an African American, was arrested that day for violating a city law requiring racial segregation of public buses.

On the city buses of Montgomery, Alabama, the front 10 seats were permanently reserved for white passengers. [This diagram](#) shows that Mrs. Parks was seated in the first row behind those 10 seats. When the bus became crowded, the bus driver instructed Mrs. Parks and the other three passengers seated in that row, all African Americans, to vacate their seats for the white passengers boarding. Eventually, three of the passengers moved, while Mrs. Parks remained seated, arguing that she was not in a seat reserved for whites. James Blake, the driver, believed he had the discretion to move the line separating black and white passengers. The law was actually somewhat murky on that point, but when Mrs. Parks defied his order, he called the police. Officers Day and Mixon came and promptly arrested her.

In police custody, Mrs. Parks was booked, fingerprinted, and briefly incarcerated. The police report shows that she was charged with "refusing to obey orders of bus driver." For openly challenging the racial laws of her city, she remained at great physical risk while held by the police, and her family was terrified for her. When she called home, she spoke to her mother, whose first question was "Did they beat you?"

Mrs. Parks was not the first person to be prosecuted for violating the segregation laws on the city buses in Montgomery. She was, however, a woman of unchallenged character who was held in high esteem by all those who knew her. At the time of her arrest, Mrs. Parks was active in the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), serving as secretary to E.D. Nixon, president of the Montgomery chapter. Her arrest became a rallying point around which the African American community organized a bus boycott in protest of the discrimination they had endured for years. Martin Luther King, Jr., the 26-year-old minister of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, emerged as a leader during the well-coordinated, peaceful boycott that lasted 381 days and captured the world's attention. It was during the boycott that Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., first achieved national fame as the public became acquainted with his powerful oratory.

After Mrs. Parks was convicted under city law, her lawyer filed a notice of appeal. While her appeal was tied up in the state court of appeals, a panel of three judges in the U.S. District Court for the region ruled in another case that racial segregation of public buses was unconstitutional. That case, called [Browder v. Gayle](#), was decided on June 4, 1956. The ruling was made by a three-judge panel that included Frank M. Johnson, Jr., and upheld by the United States Supreme court on November 13, 1956.

For a quiet act of defiance that resonated throughout the world, Rosa Parks is known and revered as the "Mother of the Civil Rights Movement."

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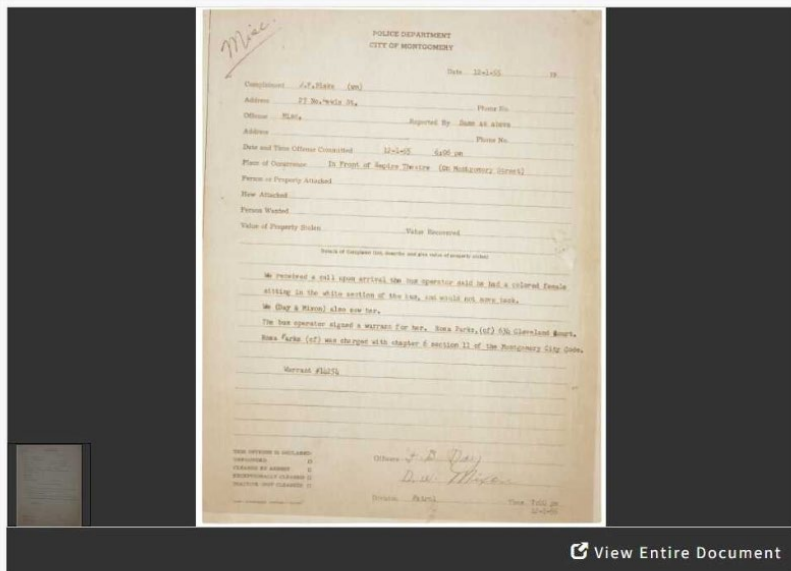
<sup>1</sup> Available online at <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/rosa-parks>

# Educational Activity

## Analyzing Rosa Parks's Arrest Record

*In this activity, upper elementary school students will analyze Rosa Parks's Arrest Record. After reviewing key details from the arrest record, students will consider what it means to take a stand against injustice and what lessons can we learn from Rosa Parks's story about the power of individual action to promote change in a peaceful way. Estimated time: 35 minutes.*

A digital version of this activity is available on DocsTeach, the online tool for teaching with documents from the National Archives. The [teacher page](#) provides an overview of the activity and suggested teaching instructions. Students can access the [student page](#) on their devices or you can project or screen share the activity with the whole class.



POLICE DEPARTMENT  
CITY OF MONTGOMERY

Date: 12-1-55

Complainant: J. B. [Signature] (m)

Address: 21 N. 7th St. Phone No. [Blank]

Officer: [Blank] Reported By: [Blank] at [Blank] Phone No. [Blank]

Date and Time Officer Contacted: 12-1-55 6:45 am

Place of Detention: In front of Section 12 office (on Montgomery Street)

Place of Property Seized: [Blank]

Value of Property Seized: [Blank] Value Received: [Blank]

Remarks of Complaint (See narrative and give value of property seized)

We presented a call upon arrival the not operator said he had a colored female sitting in the white section of the bus, and would not move back.

We find a person also was here.

The not operator signed a warrant for Mrs. Rosa Parks, (of 506 Cleveland Street, Mrs. Parks (of) was charged with chapter 8 section 11 of the Montgomery City Code.

Verdict #12-1-55

Officer: J. B. [Signature] D. W. [Signature]

Phone: [Blank] Time: 1:00 pm

View Entire Document

## Teaching Instructions

This activity can be used during a unit on the Civil Rights movement, in teaching about protests and civil disobedience, or when focusing on Rosa Parks's story. For grades 3-5. Approximate time needed is 35 minutes.

To spark student interest at the beginning of the activity, display [Rosa Parks's Fingerprint Card](#) and ask students to examine the document for 1 minute. Then ask students the following questions:

- What kind of document is this?
- For what reason was this document created?
- What are some unanswered questions you have about this document?

After discussing student responses to these questions as a whole class, tell students that they are going to spend some time finding the answers to their questions by becoming “document detectives.” Students can complete this part of the activity as a whole class, in small groups, or in pairs. Students will use primary source document analysis to identify key details from the [Record of Rosa Parks's arrest](#).

- **Meet the document**
  - Are there any special markings on the document?
  - Is it handwritten, typed, or both?
- **Observe its parts**
  - Who wrote the document?
  - Who read or received this document?
  - What is the date of the document?
- **Try to make sense of it**
  - What is the main idea of the document?
  - List two quotes (words from the document) that help support the main idea.

Ask groups to share details they discovered about the document with the whole class. If needed, walk students through each stage of the document analysis process, sharing out details as you go.

Following the whole class discussion about the main idea and purpose of Rosa Parks’s arrest record, share the following background information about the document:

*On December 1, 1955, during a typical evening rush hour in Montgomery, Alabama, a 42-year-old woman took a seat on the bus on her way home from the Montgomery Fair department store where she worked as a seamstress. Before she reached her destination, she quietly set off a social revolution when the bus driver instructed her to move back, and she refused. Rosa Parks, an African American, was arrested that day for violating a city law requiring racial segregation of public buses. In police custody, Mrs. Parks was booked, fingerprinted, and briefly incarcerated. The police report shows that she was charged with "refusing to obey orders of bus driver." Ms. Parks took part in a deliberate planned act of civil disobedience by refusing to relinquish her seat on a public bus.*

Define the term “civil disobedience” (the refusal to comply with laws as a peaceful form of political protest). Based on students' skill level, consider asking students what they think the term “civil disobedience” means using context clues from the background story about Rosa Parks’s arrest before sharing the definition.

To conclude the discussion about Rosa Parks arrest record and to highlight the impact of her peaceful protest, display the image of the [Bus in Montgomery, Alabama](#) and share the following with students:

*This photograph of an almost empty bus was taken during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Parks was not the first Black woman to refuse to give up her seat, but she was a woman of unchallenged character. As a result, she had the political backing and resources to garner public attention. Her arrest sparked the 1955-56 Montgomery bus boycott (70% of bus riders were African American) which lasted over a year. The well-organized, non-violent protest, organized by the Montgomery Improvement Association, hurt municipal revenues and helped focus national attention on Martin Luther King, Jr. For this quiet act of defiance that resonated throughout the world, Rosa Parks is known and revered as the "Mother of the Civil Rights Movement."*

Encourage students to reflect on the ideals promised to us by the Declaration of Independence and highlight for students that Rosa Parks took a stand against discrimination when she felt that her fundamental rights were being violated. Explain to students that throughout our history individuals, such as Rosa Parks, have used forms of peaceful protest to fight for change when they thought something was wrong.

- The Declaration of Independence emphasizes the importance of the individual and individual rights - all men are created equal and all people have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The rights and freedoms embodied in the Declaration of Independence did not initially apply to all Americans. Groups in American society have struggled to achieve the liberties and equality promised in the principles of American democracy.

Instruct students to click “when you’re done” to respond to the following questions in small groups or pairs. Encourage students to share their responses with the class to wrap up class discussion:

- What does it mean to take a stand against something that you think is wrong?
- What lessons can we learn from Rosa Parks’s story about the power of individual action to promote change in a peaceful way?



## Educational Activity Resources

Page 28

Name **Parks** **Rosa** **L.** Classification **28 MO 12**  
Surname Given Name Middle **28 MI**

Alias  
Nickname

No. **79521** Color **C.** Sex **Female** Reference

**RIGHT HAND**

1. Thumb 2. Index finger **m** 3. Middle finger **D** 4. Ring finger 5. Little finger **12**

**LEFT HAND**

6. Thumb 7. Index finger **m** 8. Middle finger **L** 9. Ring finger 10. Little finger

Impression taken by  
*Mary G. ...*  
(Signature of official taking prints)

Files searched by  
**ROSA L. PARKS** x **Rosa L. Parks**

Four fingers taken simultaneously

Left Hand Right thumb Right Hand

168

**Fingerprint Card of Rosa Parks**

<https://docsteach.org/documents/document/fingerprint-card-of-rosa-parks>

Misc

POLICE DEPARTMENT  
CITY OF MONTGOMERY

Date 12-1-55 19

Complainant J.F. Blake (wm)  
Address 27 No. Lewis St. Phone No.  
Offense Misc. Reported By Same as above  
Address Phone No.  
Date and Time Offense Committed 12-1-55 6:06 pm  
Place of Occurrence In Front of Empire Theatre (On Montgomery Street)  
Person or Property Attacked  
How Attacked  
Person Wanted  
Value of Property Stolen Value Recovered

Details of Complaint (list, describe and give value of property stolen)

We received a call upon arrival the bus operator said he had a colored female sitting in the white section of the bus, and would not move back.

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Rosa Parks (cf) was charged with chapter 6 section 11 of the Montgomery City Code.

Warrant #114254

THIS OFFENSE IS DECLARED:

UNFOUNDED ☐  
CLEARED BY ARREST ☐  
EXCEPTIONALLY CLEARED ☐  
INACTIVE (NOT CLEARED) ☐

Officers

F. B. Day  
D. W. Mixon

Division Patrol

Time 7:00 pm  
12-1-55

10M-PARAGON PRESS-24591

Police Report on Arrest of Rosa Parks

<https://docsteach.org/documents/document/police-report-on-arrest-of-rosa-parks>





**Bus in Montgomery, Alabama**

<https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/montgomery-bus>

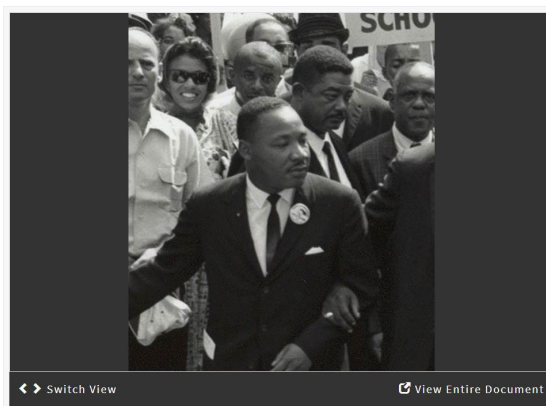
## Supplemental Educational Resources

The following educational activities are designed to support student learning. These activities are not required. Feel free to facilitate only the activities that you think would be most helpful for your students.

### 1. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Fight for Civil Rights

*Students will discover that Martin Luther King, Jr. and other activists fought for civil rights by exercising their First Amendment rights.*

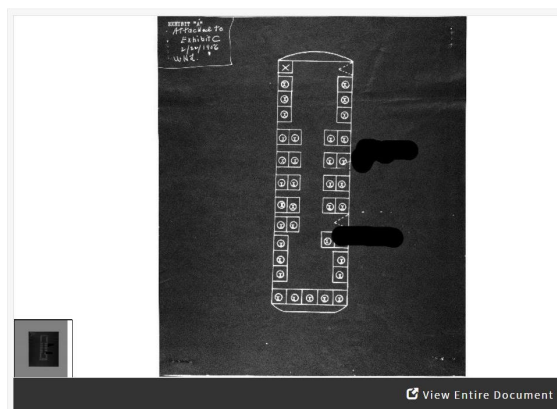
The [teacher page](#) provides an overview of the activity and suggested teaching instructions. Students can access the [student page](#) on their devices or you can project or screen share the activity with the whole class.



### 2. Examining Where Rosa Parks Sat

*Students will analyze and evaluate a diagram of the bus in which Rosa Parks took a seat and will apply prior knowledge to discern what this document is and why it is important.*

The [teacher page](#) provides an overview of the activity and suggested teaching instructions. Students can access the [student page](#) on their devices or you can project or screen share the activity with the whole class.



### 3. How can people make a difference?

*Students will match examples of civic engagement to records from the National Archives to answer the question, how can people make a difference?*

The [teacher page](#) provides an overview of the activity and suggested teaching instructions. Students can access the [student page](#) on their devices or you can project or screen share the activity with the whole class.

