

courage    seamstress    discrimination  
justice    arrested    segregation

## Rosa Parks Takes a Stand

Rosa Parks was tired. She had worked long hours that day as a seamstress at a local clothing store in Montgomery, Alabama. However, it was not because she was physically tired that she refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man. It was because she was worn-out from being pushed around. She was tired of the discrimination in the world around her.

Discrimination is when a person is treated differently or judged unfairly by others. Rosa Parks lived at a time and in a place where people were discriminated against based on the color of their skin. Black people were often treated differently than white people. They could not shop at the same stores, eat at the same restaurants, or even use the same water fountains as white people.



Schools were segregated, or separated, according to a person's skin color. As a child, Mrs. Parks remembered school buses taking white children to their schools. Meanwhile, black children had to walk miles to their often-run-down schools. Schools for black children did not have enough books, supplies, or even desks; however, there were plenty of learning materials at schools for white children. At a young age, Mrs. Parks understood, but did not accept, that there were two worlds: a world for white people, and a world for black people.



Parks was small as a child, but she was not one to back down from a fight. There were some white children in her neighborhood who would bully black children. Mrs. Parks often stood up to them, sometimes even resorting to using her fists.

Even though Mrs. Parks saw a lot of hatred and unkindness, she also knew that not all people were like that. Mrs. Parks believed in the goodness of all people. She believed in a person's ability to do the right thing.

On December 1, 1955, Mrs. Parks took a stand against discrimination by remaining seated on the bus. The rules for who could sit in which bus seat were unjust. At that time, there was a section of the bus for white people and a smaller section at



the back of the bus for black people. The white section could be made bigger according to how many white passengers were on the bus. Even though most of the passengers on busses were generally black people, they often had to stand, or even get off the bus, if there was not enough room for white passengers.

As more white passengers boarded the bus that day, the bus driver demanded that Mrs. Parks and three other passengers in the “colored” section give up their seats to four white passengers. Mrs. Parks thought of how her people had been abused and mistreated because of the color of their skin. The three other passengers moved, but Parks refused. The bus driver started to become angry.

“Are you going to stand up?” he asked Mrs. Parks.

“No, I’m not,” she replied.

“Well, if you don’t stand up, I’m going to have to call the police and have you arrested,” he went on.

“You may do that,” Mrs. Parks responded.

Mrs. Parks was duly arrested. The next day, when she went to court, her trial lasted 30 minutes. She was found guilty and fined, but Mrs. Parks continued to fight for her rights in the courts.

Rosa Parks became a spark that helped ignite the fight against segregation. After her arrest, over 40,000 black people boycotted riding the bus. They carpooled together, used cabs operated by black drivers, and some even walked as far as 20 miles to get to work.

While that type of segregation no longer exists in America today, there is still inequality, and there are wrongs that need to be righted. Rosa Parks fought for racial, criminal and social justice for her entire life. She showed that even ordinary people can take a stand for what is right and make a change. Sometimes, all it takes is a simple act of courage.



## Rosa Parks Takes a Stand (exercises)

### Part One: Matching Opposites.

During Rosa Park's time, there were a lot of things that were opposite of how they should have been. Match the words in column A to the word that means the opposite in column B.

#### Column A

1. unfair
2. different
3. unjust
4. unequal
5. segregate
6. cruel
7. wrong
8. enemy
9. move
10. afraid

#### Column B

- a. brave
- b. friend
- c. kind
- d. equal
- e. same
- f. fair
- g. just
- h. keep together
- i. right
- j. stay

**Part Two: Fill in the blank.**

Use the words in the Word Bank to fill in the blanks below.

**Word Bank**

tired

segregated

spark

boycotted

discrimination

1. Mrs. Parks became a \_\_\_\_\_ that ignited the fight against segregation.
2. Mrs. Parks took a stand against \_\_\_\_\_ by remaining seated in her seat on the bus.
3. She was \_\_\_\_\_ of the discrimination in the world around her.
4. Over 40,000 black people \_\_\_\_\_ riding the bus.
5. Schools were \_\_\_\_\_ or separated, according to a person's color of skin.

**Part Three: What Would You Do?**

Imagine you were at a playground and saw another child being treated unfairly or bullied because of how they looked. What would you do?

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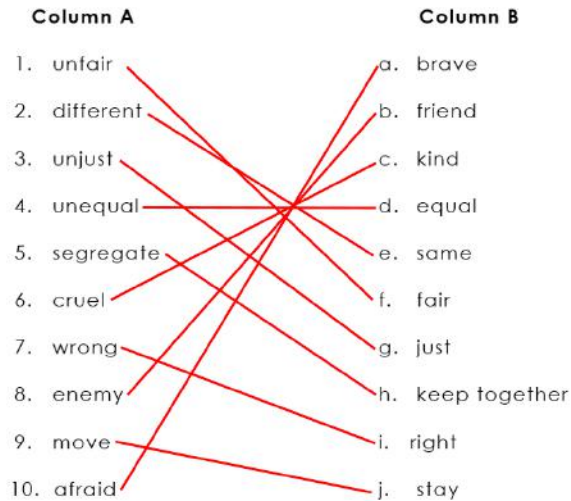
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# Rosa Parks Takes a Stand (answers)

## Part One: Matching Opposites.



## Part Two: Fill in the blank.

1. Mrs. Parks became a spark that ignited the fight against segregation.
2. Mrs. Parks took a stand against discrimination by remaining seated in her seat on the bus.
3. She was tired of the discrimination in the world around her.
4. Over 40,000 black people boycotted riding the bus.
5. Schools were segregated or separated, according to a person's color of skin.

## Part Three: What Would You Do?

Answers will vary.