

1955

Negroes in Montgomery, Alabama

Should we join the bus boycott?

It is December 1955. You are a Negro living in Montgomery, Alabama. Many Negroes ride the city buses to work. In fact, most of the riders on the buses are Negroes. But the seats on the buses are segregated. That means that the Negroes have to sit in the back of the bus. Only white people can sit in the front. If a Negro is sitting in the front of the bus, a white person can make the Negro stand up and move to the back. The law in Alabama says that public transportation must be segregated like this.

A few days ago, Rosa Parks, a Negro woman, refused to give up her seat to a white man. She was arrested. She is going to be tried in court tomorrow. Negro leaders in

Montgomery have called for a boycott of city buses. They think that now is a good time to protest against state laws that allow segregation. Last year, the Supreme Court decided that school segregation is unconstitutional. Maybe we can make segregated transportation illegal, too.

But a boycott could be dangerous. White people will be angry. The police will not protect Negroes. There will be violence against us. Nobody knows if a boycott will change the law. There have been boycotts in other states, but the laws have not changed. In addition, we will have to walk to work, pay for taxis, or ride with friends who have cars. Life will be more difficult. Is it worth it?



Fingerprinting Rosa Parks





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(continued)

Comprehension

1. Who are you in this situation?
2. Why do Negroes want to change the state law?
3. Why do the state laws say that bus seats must be segregated?
4. What do Negro leaders think is a good way to change the state laws?
5. Why do they think that now is a good time to try to change the public transportation laws?
6. How could a bus boycott change the state law?
7. What are some good reasons for joining the boycott?
8. What are some good reasons for not joining the boycott?
9. What does the last sentence of the story ("Is it worth it?") mean?
10. What decision do you have to make?

Decision

- *Should you join the bus boycott? Choose one of the following options:*

- (a) Yes, join the bus boycott.
- (b) No, do not join the bus boycott.
- (c) Do not join the boycott the first day. Wait for a while.

How long will you wait? _____

How will you decide to join or not to join? _____

- (d) Other: _____

- *Why did you decide that way? Plan how you will explain your decision to your classmates. Write out your reasoning completely.*

