

READING WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES

Rosa Parks: Writing Assignment

Some books say something like this: “Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a White man. African Americans heard this and decided to boycott the buses.” But this is a brief description of a complex event. Write a more complete answer to the question: Why did the boycott of Montgomery’s buses succeed?

Use the documents and your background knowledge to support your ideas. Include specific examples and quotes.

Documents:

- Excerpt from a letter written by Jo Ann Robinson, May 21, 1954. Montgomery, Alabama. (In this letter, Jo Ann Robinson writes the Mayor of Montgomery asking for fair treatment on the buses.)
- Official report about the arrest of Rosa Parks. Police Department, City of Montgomery. December 1, 1955.
- Excerpt from a letter written by Virginia Foster Durr to Myles and Zilphia Horton, January 30, 1956. Montgomery, Alabama. (Virginia Foster Durr was a white woman who supported civil rights for African Americans in Montgomery. Here Durr writes the director of the Highlander Folk School and his wife. Highlander was a center for training civil rights activists and labor organizers.)
- Excerpt from the brief filed on behalf of Rosa Parks in *Parks vs. City of Montgomery*. Filed in the Court of Appeals, Montgomery, Alabama, March 28, 1956. Signed by D. Eugene Loe, attorney for the city of Montgomery, and Fred D. Gray and Charles D. Langford, attorneys for Rosa Parks.
- Excerpt from Jo Ann Robinson’s memoir, *The Montgomery Bus*

READING WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES

Boycott and the Women Who Started It, pp. 45-47, 1987. Knoxville, Tennessee.

- Excerpt from Ralph Abernathy's thesis for his master's degree, *The Natural History of a Social Movement*, 1958. Atlanta, Georgia. (In this excerpt, Reverend Ralph Abernathy remembers the first mass meeting of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) at a local Baptist church on the first day of the boycott. After this, the MIA held regular weekly meetings until the boycott ended.)
- Handbill produced by the Central Alabama Citizens Council, February 10, 1956. Montgomery, Alabama. (This handbill was given out at a rally in Montgomery organized by the Central Alabama Citizens Council. 10,000 white citizens attended. Leaders of Montgomery's local government—including Mayor Gayle—spoke to the crowd about preventing integration.)
- Excerpts from a speech by Martin Luther King, Jr., as reported by Anna Holden, a teacher at Fisk University. March 22, 1956. Montgomery, Alabama. (At this Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) weekly meeting, King spoke to the crowd.)
- Excerpt from Bayard Rustin's *Montgomery Diary*, February 24, 1956. Montgomery, Alabama. (Bayard Rustin, an African American civil rights activist, traveled to Montgomery to advise Dr. King and support the bus boycott. Though he was eventually asked to leave Montgomery because leaders feared his reputation as a gay Communist would hurt the movement, he kept a diary of what he found.)
- Excerpt from an interview conducted by Willie Lee, January 1956. Montgomery, Alabama. (Researchers from Fisk University visited Montgomery, Alabama, during the boycott to learn more and to document the movement. Researcher Willie Lee recorded this woman's ideas about the boycott during an interview at a car pool dispatch center.)