Notable Trade Book Lesson Plan

*Boycott Blues: How Rosa Parks Inspired a Nation*

Written By Andrea Davis Pinkney and Illustrated by Brian Pinkney

This *Boycott Blues: How Rosa Parks Inspired a Nation* lesson introduces students to the story of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The lesson includes an introductory activity that orients students to concepts of unfairness and discrimination, followed by a reading of the story. Students engage with primary sources (photographs) to compare and contrast life during segregation and life today. The lesson may be expanded to include a study of notable individuals involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Students utilize higher order thinking skills to determine ways to deal with issues of unfair situations they encounter. Throughout the lesson, students exhibit their learning through discussion, writing, and artistic expression.

Key Words: Civil Rights Movement, Discrimination, Montgomery Bus Boycott, Rosa Parks, Segregation

About the Author

Deborah Morowski, Assistant Professor of Elementary Education at Auburn University. Her research interests include social studies education, educational history, teacher education and African-American secondary education in the American South from 1900 to 1960. She can be reached at dlm0008@auburn.edu.

Citation for this Article

Boycott Blues: How Rosa Parks Inspired a Nation
Written by Andrea Davis Pinkney and Illustrated by Brian Pinkney
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Recommended for Grades 3-4
Lesson is designed to last two to three class periods.

Boycott Blues: How Rosa Parks Inspired a Nation recounts the story of Rosa Parks and the ensuing Montgomery bus boycott utilizing clear rhythmic text to evoke the feeling of blues music. Jim Crow is represented as a large black bird with bony wings. The narrator of the story, a blues-playing dog, makes the events surrounding the bus boycott accessible to young readers. Boycott Blues artfully describes the difficulties African-American children and adults experienced during the long boycott, as well as the outcome of the event. The appealing colored ink on clay board illustrations enhance the text in portraying the struggles and determination of those who participated in the bus boycott.

NCSS Standards

I. Culture
II. Time, Continuity, and Change
III. Individual Development and Identity
IV. Power, Authority, and Governance
V. Civic Ideals and Practices

Materials

1. Boycott Blues – one copy
2. Internet access
3. Books on Civil Rights leaders
4. 11x17 paper
5. Crayons and markers
6. Notebook paper and pencils
7. Assessment rubric
8. Mighty Times: The Legacy of Rosa Parks available from Teaching Tolerance

Objectives

Students will

• Compare and contrast life during and after segregation.
• Create a poster on a Civil Rights leader.
• Write a paragraph of at least five sentences.
• Identify four important facts about a Civil Rights leader.
**Procedures**

**Exploration/Introduction**

1. Have students seated in the front of the classroom, gather on the floor for a discussion on fairness. Have students seated in the back write three paragraphs on an unfair situation and how they attempted to resolve the dilemma. As students are working on the floor, the teacher will reward their efforts with a prize, such as stickers, candy, etc.

2. After five to ten minutes, have the students return to their seats and ask the students who wrote paragraphs “How did you feel during the activity?” Ask the students who worked on the floor, “How did you feel about the activity?” Students who previously did not receive a reward should receive one at this time.

3. Engage the class in a discussion about fairness and means by which such situations may be resolved.

**Development**

4. Explain that before the 1950s and 1960s, African-Americans were not permitted to engage in public life in the same way as white Americans.

5. Read *Boycott Blues*, locating Montgomery, Alabama on a map, and discussing vocabulary with which the students may be unfamiliar, such as Jim Crow, boycott, segregation, etc.

6. Show students historical photographs from the era of segregation available from Google Images (search segregation photos). Ask, “What do you think life was like for African-Americans during segregation?” “How would you feel if you were separated from other people just because of your hair color or your height, for example?”

7. Show students historical photographs from the Montgomery bus boycott, also available at Google images. Additional images are available through the Smithsonian (search segregation photos). Ask, “If you were an African-American student during the boycott, how do you think your life would have been different than it is today?”

8. Explain that the Montgomery bus boycott was part of a larger event called the Civil Rights Movement.

9. Ask, “How was life different after the Civil Rights Movement?”
10. Ask, “What experiences do you have with people being unfair to others?”
   “How did you help to resolve the situation?” “What are other ways that we
   can remedy these situations?”

11. Inform the students that they are going to learn more about individuals that
    were involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Divide the class into groups of
    four students.

12. Have students research major figures from the Civil Rights Movement such as
    Martin Luther King, Jr., Ruby Bridges, Rosa Parks, Thurgood Marshall, and
    Ida B. Wells-Barnett.

13. Tell students each group is responsible for finding the following facts:
    a. Where and when the individual was born.
    b. The individual’s role in the Civil Rights Movement.
    c. How this individual’s accomplishment(s) influence life today.

14. Have each group create a mini poster about its’ findings. Each student must
    contribute at least one relevant fact, including, but not limited to, those listed
    above to the poster and participate in the poster creation.

15. After the completion of the posters, each group will elect one person to serve
    as spokesperson for the group to share the findings with the class. Posters will
    hang on the wall for the remainder of the Civil Rights unit.

16. Have students individually write a paragraph of at least five sentences about
    the Civil Rights leader they researched. The paragraph should contain at least
    four facts learned by the students.

17. The teacher may choose to show the video Mighty Times: The Legacy of Rosa
    Parks as a follow-on to the lesson.

Assessment

Observe and listen to students’ responses, comparing life prior to and after
    desegregation to check for understanding.

Give students a participation grade for contributing one appropriate and relevant
    fact to the poster and assisting in its creation. Evaluate students on their
    paragraph. (See Appendix).
Students could engage family members in a conversation about their memories of the Civil Rights Movement.

A guest speaker who lived through segregation might address the class on life prior to and after desegregation.

Students could conduct independent readings of age appropriate books on Civil Rights leaders. The students then could write reviews of the books.


### Appendix

**Individual Paper Rubric**

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<th>16</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>8</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facts</strong></td>
<td>Contains four or more relevant and appropriate facts about a Civil Rights leader.</td>
<td>Contains three or four relevant and appropriate facts about a Civil Rights leader.</td>
<td>Contains one or two relevant and appropriate facts about a Civil Rights leader.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Capitalization and Punctuation</strong></td>
<td>All sentences begin with a capital letter and end with punctuation.</td>
<td>Four sentences begin with a capital letter and end with punctuation.</td>
<td>Three or fewer sentences begin with a capital letter and end with punctuation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling</strong></td>
<td>Two or fewer spelling errors.</td>
<td>Three to five spelling errors.</td>
<td>Six or more spelling errors.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Paragraph</strong></td>
<td>Contains a topic sentence and four or more supporting sentences.</td>
<td>Contains a topic sentence with three supporting sentences.</td>
<td>Does not contain a topic sentence.</td>
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