

Name:

Date:

Famous People of the American Civil Rights Movement: Emmett Till, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King Jr. Questions

Use the “Emmett Till” handout to answer these questions

1. Who was Emmett Till? When and where was he born? What impact did his murder have on the civil rights movement?

2. Prior to Till taking a trip to Mississippi to visit relatives, what did his mother, Mamie Bradley, warn him about? Why?

3. What happened on August 24, 1955?

4. Why do you think Roy Bryant considered Till’s alleged harassment against his wife, Carolyn Bryant, such a serious offense?

5. Describe the extent of the violence inflicted upon fourteen-year-old Till by Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam. How did this complicate the positive identification of Till’s dead body?

6. How was the body found in the Tallahatchie River positively identified as Till’s?

7. What was the result of Mamie Bradley's decision to have an open casket funeral for her son?

8. Jet magazine, the most prominent nationwide African American magazine at the time, published this image of Mamie looking at her murdered child's mangled body in its September 15, 1955, article entitled, "Nation Horrified by Murder of Kidnapped Chicago Youth." How do you think the public reacted to this media coverage? Why do you think the media attention of Till's funeral helped gain public support for the civil rights movement? How do you think things would have been different had there not been magazine and newspaper coverage?



9. Comment on the all-white, all-male jury (seen in the first two rows of this photograph) in the Till murder trial in Mississippi. Do you think the rules for jury selection in the state created a fair and impartial jury? Explain.



10. What do the murder of Emmett Till and the acquittal of his killers reveal about race relations in America in 1955?

Use the “Rosa Parks” handout to answer these questions

11. Who was Rosa Parks? When and where was she born? What impact did her refusal to relinquish her seat on a public transit bus to a white man have on the civil rights movement?

12. How was Rosa Parks involved with the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP)?

13. On the evening of December 1, 1955, after her day’s work as a seamstress at the Montgomery Fair department store, forty-two-year-old Parks boarded a city bus to return home. What happened to her?

14. How do you think it would feel to be a person who, by law, must sit in the back of buses because of the way you looked? What would you be willing to do if a company you found out about was doing something that discriminated against or mistreated other people?

15. What do you think were some of the risks Parks faced when she refused to give up her bus seat?

16. Using the following police report on the arrest of Rosa Parks, identify the name of the bus driver (complainant) who called the police on her. When, where, and why was she arrested? Who were the officers that arrested her?

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.

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 #11254

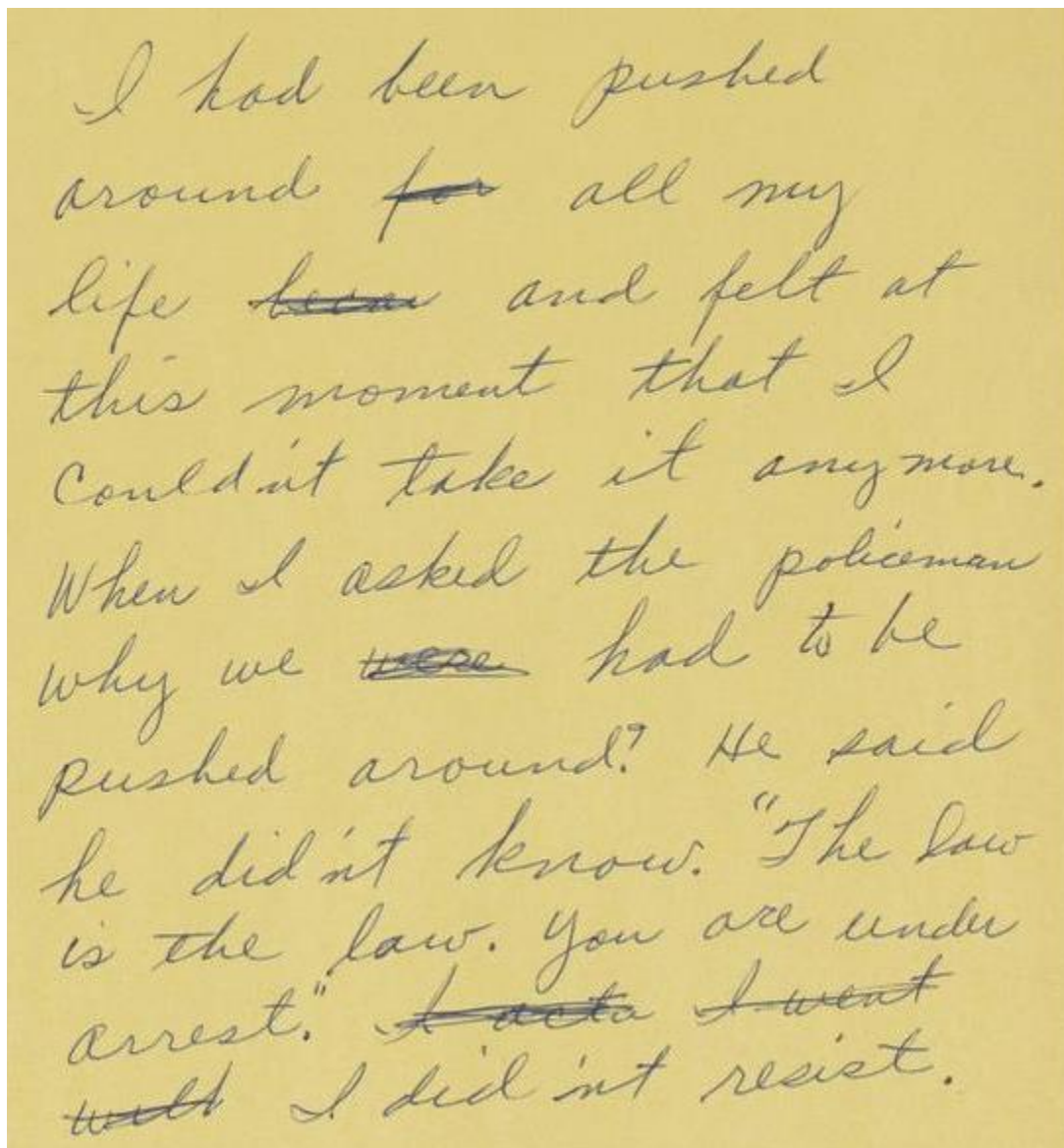
THIS OFFENSE IS DECLARED:
UNFOUNDED
CLEARED BY ARREST
EXCEPTIONALLY CLEARED
INACTIVE (NOT CLEARED)

Officers F. B. Day
D. W. Mixon

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

17. This courageous act of civil disobedience, she later recalled, was inspired by her thoughts about Emmett Till: "I thought of Emmett Till – a fourteen-year-old African American who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955, after being accused of offending a white woman in her family's grocery store, whose killers were tried and acquitted – and I just couldn't go back." What do you think she meant by this?

18. In the following note, Rosa Parks reflected on her arrest. What other reason does she give that contributed to her decision to not give up her seat on the bus?



I had been pushed around ~~for~~ all my life ~~been~~ and felt at this moment that I couldn't take it anymore. When I asked the policeman why we ~~were~~ had to be pushed around? He said he didn't know. "The law is the law. You are under arrest." ~~I~~ ~~acta~~ ~~I~~ ~~went~~ ~~with~~ I didn't resist.

19. How did the Montgomery Improvement Association (under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr.) and the African American citizens of Montgomery, Alabama, show their support for Parks? How long did they sustain their method of mass protest for? What challenges do you think these demonstrators faced as a result? What effect do you think their collective action had on the city-owned bus company?

20. What do you think Parks' legacy is?

Use the “Martin Luther King, Jr.” handout to answer these questions

21. Who was Martin Luther King, Jr.? When and where was he born? What impact did his leadership have on the civil rights movement?

22. What was the purpose of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)? What was King’s role with the MIA? What was the outcome of their protest?

23. In 1957, King and other civil rights and religious leaders formed a new organization dedicated to promoting nonviolent protests against discrimination, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). In what ways did King continue the struggle for equality as leader of the SCLC?

24. What inspired King to embrace nonviolent action as a guiding principle to achieve social change?

25. In April 1963, King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference began a nonviolent campaign for civil rights in a city regarded as the most segregated city in America: Birmingham, Alabama. What were the goals of the Birmingham Campaign? How did police respond to the demonstrators?

26. How do you think photographs like these might have gained support for the civil rights movement?



27. Why did King write the “Letter from Birmingham Jail”? How does he explain the purpose of nonviolent direct action? How do you think we can apply nonviolent direct action today to facilitate social changes?

28. What was the purpose of the March on Washington? Describe the size and nature of the crowd. Why do you think the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. was chosen as the location for this rally?

29. King delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, describing his vision for America where all citizens are united and free. Here is an excerpt of that speech:

“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.’ I have a dream that one day, on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood... I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character. I have a dream today!”

What message did King send in his famous “I Have a Dream” speech? Why do you think it was so effective?

30. What was the outcome of the March on Washington? What was the significance of the Civil Rights Act of 1964? That same year, how was King recognized for his contribution towards racial equality and justice? What do you think King's legacy is?