

Study Guide
Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott
Birmingham Children's Theatre



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www.bct123.org

Artistic Genre: Theatre

Alabama Touring Artist Program

presented by the Alabama State Council on the Arts

This Study Guide has been prepared for you by the Alabama State Council on the Arts in collaboration with the performing company. All vocabulary that is arts related is taken directly from the Alabama Course of Study, Arts Education. With an understanding that each teacher is limited to the amount of time that may be delegated to new ideas and subjects, this guide is both brief and designed in a way that we hope supports your school curriculum. We welcome feedback and questions, and will offer additional consulting on possible curriculum connections and unit designs should you desire this support. Please feel free to request further assistance and offer your questions and feedback. Hearing from educators helps to improve our programs for other schools and educators in the future.

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Set up:

Artists typically arrive 60 minutes before their scheduled performance in order to set up. Please have the space available to the artists as soon as they arrive.

All artists will need some kind of setup prior to arrival. Please communicate with the company to discuss needs. Before arrival, please make sure floors are clean, and any electrical hook ups are in place for the performance. If they have asked to use your amplification system, please have it ready for a sound test as soon as the artists arrive. Please provide a staff person to assist the artists with set up.

Role of the Audience:

When attending a performance or production, the following rules of common courtesy should be observed:

- Be attentive; refrain from talking and making inappropriate noises.
- Sit and become quiet when light or sound signals are given for performances.
- Remain quiet and seated during performances.
- Applause (clap) when appropriate.
- Refrain from touching production displays (scenery, costumes, props) unless permitted.
- Refrain from photographing or videotaping performances (without permission).

- Walk; do not run in performance halls.
- Turn all electrical and/or mobile devices off or to silent mode during performances.
- Avoid chewing gum and consuming food and drink during a performance.

Alabama Course of Study: Arts Education, 2017
Audience and Performer Etiquette, Appendix A

What to expect:

Birmingham Children’s Theatre will perform an hour-long production, which includes acting, singing and dancing. Students are encouraged to respond to the actors, the action on the stage, and the story. The actors love to hear you laugh, answer their questions, or help them tell the story. They may even ask you for help! Once the performance is over there will be a 15-20 minute talk back between the actors and students. Students will be asked to raise their hands if they have a response and to speak loudly so that everyone will hear them.

Historical Background:

In December 1955, Rosa Parks sat firmly in her seat on a Montgomery Bus. Sue Greenberg’s play tells the story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott from Mrs. Parks’ point of view. For centuries, African-Americans were forced to live as second class citizens in America, facing unequal treatment under the law, fighting for basic rights like voter registration and equality in education, housing, job opportunities and pay. As Rosa puts it “I wasn’t tired physically...No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.” This play traces how one woman’s action led to a large-scale boycott, gave rise to The Civil Rights Movement, and lead to landmark Supreme Court rulings concerning segregation in America.

Websites you might visit:

Rosa Parks Biography: <http://www.rosaparks.org/biography/>

Drama Games: <http://www.bbbpress.com/dramagames/>

Write and publish your own stories:

<https://fairytalez.com/blog/launches-self-publishing-feature/>

More drama activities:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks3/english/speaking_listening/drama/revis ion/3/

Curriculum Connections:

1. Identify the personality traits of a character in a story.
2. Identify the parts of a story (beginning, middle, and end). What is the main idea. What details support the main idea. What was the conflict?
3. Select appropriate voice tone, gestures, and facial expressions to tell a story and enhance meaning. Use mind, body and voice.
4. Guess what action will happen next in a story.
5. Recognize and create plot in a story.

Vocabulary:

1. **Character** - Person or figure in the world of the play possessing specific qualities and traits within the context of the story or drama.
2. **Action** - That which happens physically in a play and involves a distinct beginning, middle, and end.
3. **Conflict** - Struggle between two opposing forces.
4. **Dialogue** - The lines of a play spoken by the characters.
5. **Analysis** - the process of reading a play and researching its characters and events.
6. **Production Elements** - lighting, scenery, costumes, sound score and props to help the audience imagine place and time.

Things students should know:

1. Theatre requires the audience to use imagination. It is important to be ready to “suspend disbelief” and to be ready to believe what actors are pretending to do or be. Theatre employs many techniques to help you imagine. See if you can identify those techniques as you watch the play.
2. It is important to watch for clues to tell you who a character is and what will happen next. *Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott* is a new telling of a familiar story. It is told in a narrative style with actors directly addressing the audience. Characters will introduce themselves and the events of the play so you may follow the story as it unfolds.
3. Actors use mind, body and voice to create characters. They imagine the character using their minds; then they move and speak the way they imagine those characters would move and speak. We say, a really good actor “becomes” the character.

4. Sometimes actors improvise. Actors have to be ready to change at any moment. For example, if the audience laughs or claps for a really long time, an actor must adjust without losing character. If someone else on stage says their lines in a different order than what was rehearsed, the actor has to be ready to continue the story in a new way, without any planning ahead of time. If a costume piece falls off, or a prop is left in the wrong place, all these things have to look like they were supposed to happen. An actor's ability to adapt to any new situation, or improvise is an important technique for an actor to learn.

Suggested Activities to do before the performance:

1. Explore all the vocabulary words in this study guide. Talk about which if these terms are familiar in literature. Why would these terms also be important for theatre?
2. Explore the words equality, civil rights, and prejudice. Why is it important to understand and discuss these concepts? Have students talk about personal experiences dealing with each one.
3. Tell a story that deals with one or more of the concepts above in a circle. Each person gives one sentence of the story. Each sentence should add on to the sentence before it, so that the story develops as it travels around the circle. Remember to build to a conflict, and then resolve it before the end of the story.
4. Talk about "body language." Ask students to create body language to communicate an emotion or idea without speaking or making a sound. Ask other students to identify what is being communicated by the body language being performed by their peers. (i.e. looking down, folding arms, frowning, jumping). Think about how actors have to use their bodies to communicate and be ready to watch for that in the play.
5. Discuss the personalities of Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King, Virginia Durr, and Claudette Colvin. Imagine how these people would speak and act. What kind of body language might they use? Why?

Suggested activities to do after the performance:

1. Lead a reflection session using critical thinking with your students concerning the play. You may wish to use the reflective questions at the end of this guide. Have them critique the play by asking: 1-What did you see? What do you think the message of the play is? Why did the actors play it the way they did? Was it effective? Did it work for you? Why or why not?

2. Ask students to pick a famous person they want to research. They should analyze the character and decide how the person would speak, and act and create a short dialogue for them that will help others identify who the character is. Perform the dialogue for peers (without saying the name of your character) and have the other students guess the famous person. You win if others are able to guess your character, because that means you have been a successful actor.
3. Read about and research several historical events. Choose one event and write a script using dialogue that might have taken place during that event. Use your imagination. Create characters and be able to support why those characters were chosen, and why you give them specific personality traits. Also, make sure you include a conflict and a resolution.
4. Select a script to perform as a small group. Collaborate to decide on stage directions, props, scenery, and any other production elements you want to include. Perform the short play and then discuss it with peers. What worked really well? What might you change if you were to do it again?
5. Share your performances at community and school events - PTA, School Board meetings, Community festivals.

Reflective Questions to explore with students:

1. Conflict and resolution are important concepts for theatre. What conflicts did you notice in the play? How were the conflicts resolved? Or were they?
2. Do all actions have consequences? Are conflicts always resolved?
3. How do anticipated consequences affect the choices we make?
4. What were some of the consequences Rosa Parks must have anticipated concerning her decision to keep her seat on the bus?
5. Why do we consider her actions as an important part of our history?
6. Why do you think the playwright chose this story to create her play?
7. What does the play communicate, that cannot be understood by reading a book? How does theatre communicate and why is it an important art form?

Finally: If you are looking for a writing assignment we love getting letters from students. Especially those that answer some of these questions!