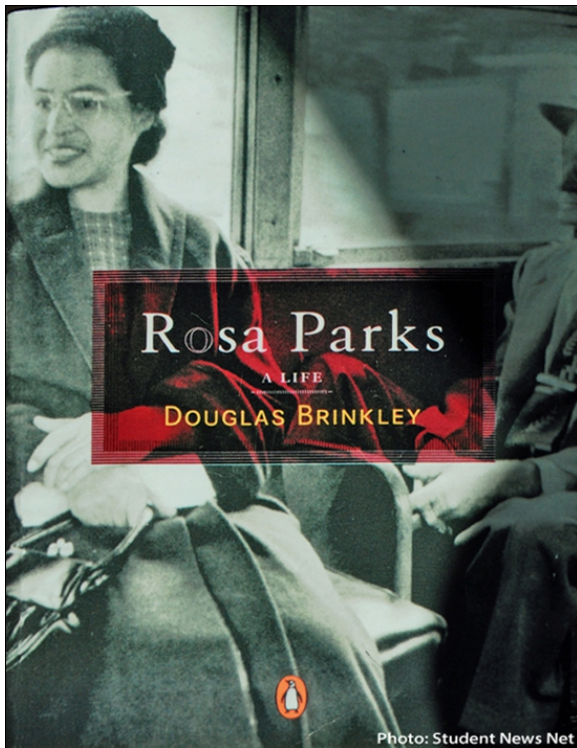


## **Study Guide and Learning Activities** **for *Rosa Parks: A Life* by Dr. Douglas Brinkley**

This study guide has been developed by Judy S. Miller, M.Ed., M.A., Student News Net editor, in support of the April 27, 2018 Student News Net Symposium: **Actions and Accomplishments of African American Women of the 1940s and 1950s**. Dr. Douglas Brinkley will be the keynote speaker discussing his book, *Rosa Parks: A Life*, published in 2000. Students are invited to read the book before the Symposium and submit presentations to the Symposium through this website beginning in March.

Symposium website: [www.studentshareknowledge.com](http://www.studentshareknowledge.com)



*Rosa Parks: A Life* by Douglas Brinkley



*Rosa Parks is fingerprinted during her second arrest on Feb. 22, 1956. (Photo: Library of Congress)*

### **Overview**

**Age range: grades 7-12**

#### **Part I – Chapters 1 through 9 (pp. 1-173)**

Part I of the Study Guide covers the life of Rosa Parks through her Dec. 1, 1955 refusal to give up her seat on Montgomery City Bus #2857 and the immediate aftermath of that brave action. For her safety, her brother convinced Rosa and Raymond, her husband, to move to Detroit in 1957 where she lived until her death in 2005.

#### **Part II – (Chapters 11-12 on pp. 174-246)**

Part II of the Study Guide covers the last three chapters in the book from 1957 on after Rosa Parks moved to Detroit.

## **Objectives:**

After reading Dr. Brinkley's book and completing activities in this study guide, students will be able to:

1. Summarize the reason Dr. Brinkley chose to write a biography of Rosa Parks (1913-2005).
2. Summarize the process Dr. Brinkley followed in writing his biography on Rosa Parks.
3. List, recall, and explain the significance of eight key years in the life of Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Movement.
4. Explain multiple experiences that coalesced to lead Rosa Parks to a lifelong commitment and dedication to the Civil Rights Movement.
5. Explain why Rosa Parks was uniquely qualified to help advance the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and beyond.
6. Analyze why Rosa Parks' Dec. 1, 1955 action on the Montgomery, Alabama city bus fostered a national awareness of discriminatory practices (Jim Crow laws) against African Americans and widespread resolve to address the injustice.
7. Compare Rosa Parks' life before and after her Dec. 1, 1955 action on the Montgomery city bus.
8. Formulate a statement on the legacy of Rosa Parks.
9. Create a presentation based on Dr. Brinkley's book.

## **Part I – Chapters 1 through 9 (p. 1-173)**

### ***A. Learning Activities and Questions for Objectives #1 and #2***

#### **Activities (Obj. #1)**

1. **Read pp. 233-234 (Bibliographical Notes in *Rosa Parks: A Life* by Douglas Brinkley.)**

On these two pages, Dr. Brinkley explains why he decided to write a biography of Rosa Parks. The idea for his book came to him in 1997 when he was leading a Magic Bus Civil Rights tour at important sites in the South with ten teachers and 20 students. The tour was sponsored by the University of New Orleans. **Activity:** On a map of the South, locate the following cities in Alabama: Tuskegee, Montgomery, and Selma. Locate Atlanta, Georgia; Memphis, Tennessee; and Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Place a star at each location. Calculate the distance, in miles, between Selma and Montgomery. Refer to the map while reading the book.

2. **Write a summary** of how Douglas Brinkley generated the idea to write his book.

#### **Supporting Questions (Obj. #1)**

1. What books did Rosa Parks write during her life?
2. What evidence did Dr. Brinkley cite on these two pages in support of his statement that in 1997, he discovered there were not any “serious biographies” of Rosa Parks?

## Activities (Obj. #2)

1. **Read pp. 234-246 in the book.** In this section of his Bibliographical Notes, Dr. Brinkley explains the process he followed as he wrote his book, a process that involved two years of extensive research, reading, primary source interviews, including Rosa Parks herself who was still alive when he wrote the book, and travel to important locations where Dr. Brinkley interviewed many people, including relatives of Rosa Parks.
2. **After reading pp. 234-246,** categorize the myriad sources of information Dr. Brinkley consulted and evaluated as he wrote his book. A few categories are defined above in Obj. #2, Activity #1. Use these categories as a foundation and add categories based on your reading. Under each general category, list 2-3 examples of Dr. Brinkley's activities. For example, under the Research category, Dr. Brinkley traveled to Detroit's Wayne State University where he studied the Rosa L. Parks Papers housed at the Walter Reuther Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs. (p. 235)

## Supporting Question (Obj. #2)

1. How many categories of information did you identify from your reading?
2. What source of information was particularly helpful to Dr. Brinkley in learning about Rosa Parks' life after she moved to Detroit?
3. What was Dr. Brinkley's top priority as he began gathering information and conducting research for his book?
4. What did Dr. Brinkley say about the inherent nature of 'oral histories'?
5. What steps did Dr. Brinkley take before his book was published to make sure it was an accurate portrayal of Rosa Parks?
6. What three autobiographies did Rosa Parks herself advise every American read?

## Compelling Questions (Obj. #1 and #2)

1. Why are historical biographies necessary in portraying the lives of important figures in history?
2. How do historical biographies enhance autobiographies written by important figures in history?
3. As Dr. Brinkley stated, why is journalism an important help to historians writing biographies of important historical figures?
4. What is the nature of oral histories that requires additional information in order to tell the complete story of an important historical figure?
5. How would you describe Dr. Brinkley's process that he followed when writing his book?

## ***B. Learning activities and Questions for Obj. #3***

### Activities

1. On a piece of paper or online doc, write the following dates: 1913, 1940, 1955, 1957, 1963, 1964, 1965, 2005. Leave enough room to write a short paragraph for each year. Refer to the

[Timeline](#) on the Symposium website. From the Timeline and related information from the book and other links, write a summary of what happened in each year that was significant in the life of Rosa Parks and/or the Civil Rights Movement.

2. In groups of 3-5 students, compare timelines. Discuss important events in each year. Have students enhance or modify their timeline summaries after comparing timelines.

### Supporting Questions

1. How old was Rosa Parks when she refused to give up her seat on the bus?
2. What prior event provided a blueprint for Rosa Parks in 1955 when she refused to give up her bus seat?
3. What protections did the Civil Rights of 1964 mandate?
4. What protections did the Voting Rights Act of 1965 mandate?

### Compelling Question

1. Why was 1963 a pivotal year in the Civil Rights Movement?

## C. Learning Activities and Questions for Obj. #4 and #5

### Activities

1. **Read pp. 1-43 (Prologue through Chapter 2):** Rosa Parks was born in Tuskegee, Alabama and moved to Montgomery when she was a toddler so her formative years were spent in Montgomery. Many events during Rosa's youth framed her worldview and her future life as a civil rights activist. Through the reading, note the following: 1) the influence Rosa's grandfather had on her; 2) the Scottsboro Nine case in the 1930s, 3) her experience fighting back after being pushed off a sidewalk by a white boy whose mother threatened Rosa for hitting her boy; 4) her school years at Miss White's Montgomery Industrial School for Girls; and 5) in 1941, her experiences working in an integrated environment at Maxwell Field during World War II.

**Activity:** In groups of 3-5 students, on paper or online, begin a summary of events and experiences that deeply affected Rosa as a young girl, an adolescent, and then as young woman. Annotate each entry with one or two sentences explaining how the event or experience deeply affected Rosa Parks.

2. **Read pp. 44-77 (Chapters 3 and 4):** The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment had been ratified in 1870 stating that the right to vote could not be denied because of “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” (p. 45 in Dr. Brinkley's book) In Chapter 3, Dr. Brinkley discusses Rosa's outrage at not being able to vote amid the discriminatory practices (Jim Crow laws) of the South, such as poll taxes that the Supreme Court ruled were constitutional in 1937 and literacy tests imposed by local election requirements. These requirements prevented many African Americans from voting. Rosa was even more outraged in 1941 when Sylvester, her younger brother, was drafted after the United States entered WWII upon Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. Her brother could potentially lose his life fighting for his country but could not exercise his right to vote. On pp. 47-48, Dr. Brinkley states this injustice helped motivate Rosa to join the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP.) The NAACP began a “Double V” (V for Victory) campaign to win both the war overseas to defeat Nazi Germany and the one at home to defeat discrimination against African Americans. Rosa voted for the first time in 1946. In Chapter 4, Dr. Brinkley discusses the 1953 African American Bus Boycott in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and the monumental Supreme Court ruling on May 17, 1954 – *Brown vs. Board of Education* – that stated separate public schools, based on race, violated the 14th Amendment that provides all citizens with equal protection under the law.

### Activities:

- a) In groups of 3-5 students, research the history and exact language of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments. Research Jim Crow laws: (1) as discussed in Chapter 3 in the book, (2) the Symposium interview (posted within Rosa Parks content section) of Christian Overland, executive vice president of The Henry Ford, and (3) through information posted by the [National Park Service \(NPS\) at the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park website](#).
  - b) Conduct a round-table with groups of 6-10 students to discuss the distressing reality that the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment did not prevent voting discrimination. Write a summary.
  - c) Read the information and watch the video on the Symposium website about Edna Griffin, often called the Rosa Parks of Iowa. The African American Museum of Iowa in Cedar Rapids has an exhibit about Edna Griffin and Krystal Gladden, museum educator, will be speaking at the Symposium. From the information posted, compare Edna's experiences to Rosa's in the 1940s during World War II.
3. **Read pp. 78-97 (Chapter 5 – The Preparation):** In summer 1955, Rosa Parks was awarded a scholarship to attend a two-week training workshop in civil activism at the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee titled, “Radical Desegregation: Implementing the Supreme Court Decision” (pp. 90-97 in Dr. Brinkley's book). In researching his book, Dr. Brinkley discovered 22 pages of Rosa's handwritten lecture notes from this workshop among her papers housed at Wayne State University, a discovery he said was astonishing. Dr. Brinkley states that Rosa's greatest reward for attending the workshop was meeting and forming a friendship with Septima Clark, a black activist who had studied with W.E.B. Du Bois at Atlanta University. Septima was the workshop director (pp. 96-97 in book) and became a role model for Rosa. Six months after the workshop, Rosa would sit in her seat to stand up for her civil rights and for the rights of all African Americans.

**Activity:** Read a summary of the *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision at the [Brown vs. Board of Education National Historic Site \(National Park Service\)](#) and answer Supporting Question #3 and Compelling Question #2 below.

## Supporting Questions

1. What were some of Rosa's personal characteristics that proved to be invaluable in her role as a peaceful advocate for civil rights?
2. What was the nature and extent of Rosa's support system as she increasingly became an active advocate for civil rights?
3. What were the important federal mandates guiding and supporting the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s?

## Compelling Questions

1. Why wasn't the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, ratified in 1870, an effective mandate ensuring African Americans living in the South had the right vote in all elections?
2. What was the significance of the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision by the Supreme Court to the Civil Rights Movement before Rosa's Dec. 1, 1955 bus action?
3. Is there a corollary in 2017 to the 1955 training Rosa received at the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee?

## Supplemental reading

*Double Victory: How African American Women Broke Race and Gender Barriers to Help Win World War II* by Cheryl Mullenbach (Note: Cheryl Mullenbach will be speaking at the Symposium)

## D. Learning Activities and Questions for Obj. #6

### Activities

1. **Read pp. 98-136 (Chapters 6 and 7 about Rosa's courageous action on the bus on Dec. 1, 1955 and its aftermath)** One of the main myths about Rosa Parks is that her action on Dec. 1, 1955 was the result of her simply being tired from a long day at work as a seamstress and that she was not a civil rights activist. However, at this point in the book, the reader is fully aware of Rosa's long dedication and commitment to fighting peacefully for civil rights. On p. 118, Dr. Brinkley quotes Rosa Parks about her action on that day. Rosa said: "I was determined to achieve the total freedom that our history lessons taught us we were entitled to, no matter what the sacrifice." In regards to choosing the day or the bus, she said: "When I declined to give up my seat, it was not that day, or bus, in particular. I just wanted to be free like everybody else. I did not want to continually be humiliated over something I had no control over: the color of my skin." Her sentiment was echoed many years later in 1963 when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech at the Aug. 28 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. **Activity:** [Read Dr. King's speech here.](#)
2. Find the portion of his speech during which Dr. King directly echoes Rosa's words. **Activities: (a)** Watch the video on the Symposium website of the interview with Christian Overland, executive director of The Henry Ford during which he showcases the Rosa Parks bus that the museum acquired in 2001 as the most significant artifact representing the Civil Rights Movement. In groups of 3-5 students, discuss the video. **(b)** Study the Dec. 1, 1955 arrest record posted within the Rosa Parks content section on the Symposium website. Who filed the complaint? Who was he? What law was Rosa cited for violating? [Study the arrest record preserved by the National Archives.](#)
3. **On page 122** of Dr. Brinkley's book, he discusses how the Bus Boycott was organized. **Activity: 1)** Research the African American population living in Montgomery in 1955 and the public transportation system – the Montgomery City Bus system. Many African Americans relied solely on buses for transportation to their jobs. **2)** Did bus lines run close to African American neighborhoods (west side of Montgomery) in 1955? **3)** What were their options once they decided to boycott city buses? **4)** Draw a sketch of the

major city streets and neighborhoods (such as the Cleveland Courts Project where Rosa lived) in Montgomery in 1955. Overlay the sketch with lines indicating the main bus lines.

4. **Read pp. 137-173** (Chapters 8 and 9 about the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Rosa's second arrest, and Dr. King's role as a minister and social activist in rallying the Montgomery community to support Rosa and the Boycott) Beginning on p. 137, Dr. Brinkley describes the interaction between Dr. King and Rosa Parks at Rosa's post trial rally on Dec. 5, 1955 at Holt Street Baptist Church. Dr. King's address was a turning point in his life. He was not known nationally before this address. As you read this chapter, note Dr. Brinkley's description of Dr. King's speech. **Discuss** how Dr. Brinkley painted such a vivid picture with words. Did you feel as if you were sitting in the church? How would this speech propel Dr. King to national prominence?
5. **On page 157**, Dr. Brinkley discusses the photograph most often associated with Rosa Parks showing her being fingerprinted by police. However, the photo was not from her Dec. 1, 1955 arrest but for a second arrest on Feb. 22, 1956 for violating Montgomery segregation laws as the Montgomery Boy Boycott continued. Many other people were also arrested that day for the same reason. The photo is at the beginning of this Study Guide. Describe Rosa's demeanor as seen in the photo. Compare the photo with Dr. Brinkley's description of how Rosa handled the tumultuous events from Dec. 1, 1955 on.

### Supporting Questions

1. Why did Rosa board the bus she did on Dec. 1, 1955?
2. What did she realize when the bus driver ordered her to give up her seat?
3. What crime was she charged with after being taken to city hall and then jail because she declined to give up her seat?
4. Did Rosa plan her action for that day?
5. What was the resolution of her arrest?
6. Why was Rosa arrested a second time at a later date?

### Compelling Questions

1. Why do you think Dr. Brinkley named Chapter 7 – Strength through Serenity?
2. What prepared Rosa to be so calm under the frightening circumstances on Dec. 1, 1955 given that an African American had recently been shot for asking for a fare refund when he decided not to ride a bus.
3. Why was the Montgomery Bus Boycott so successful?