



QUESTIONS TO GUIDE READING AND DISCUSSION OF MARTIN LUTHER KING AND THE MONTGOMERY STORY

Note that the comic book, published in 1957, uses the terms “negro” and “colored” to refer to Black people. These were not used as racial slurs in the comic book, but today they are understood as unacceptable and disrespectful ways to refer to African Americans.

COVER

1. What information can we learn from the front cover of the comic book?

PART I

INTRODUCTION

2. According to the introduction, what was unique about what 50,000 Black people in Montgomery did and how they did it?

DR. KING'S LIFE & EDUCATION

3. What role did the church play in Martin Luther King's early life?
4. Why do you think the comic book authors made a point to portray a white college student saying, “Some of *us* don't like discrimination, either, Martin”?
Click here to learn about just some of Coretta Scott King's achievements both before and after she married Dr. King.

IN MONTGOMERY

5. In this section, we meet the narrator. What is his name? What do you think he means when he says, “We're all caught up in it in one way or another”? Can you think of issues today that “we're all caught up in”?
6. Why do you think Jones questioned having a gun and whether he would use it to protect his family?

7. Who does Jones say did have real courage?
8. Why does Jones say Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat? (Make sure to note this, because it's definitely not the whole story).
To find out more about Rosa Parks, [click here to learn about her lifetime of activist work.](#)
9. List the steps the comic book says Jones and others took to launch the boycott in response to Rosa Parks's arrest.
10. What was the name given to the organization that was coordinating the boycott? What was its demand? (Note: was it calling for desegregation of the buses?)
11. Who was chosen to lead that organization? And how did he describe the struggle they would be waging?

THE WALK TO FREEDOM

12. How did the police in Montgomery respond to the boycott?
13. What role did B.J. Simms and Rufus Lewis play in helping to keep the boycott going?
To find out more about their work, [click here to read an interview with Rufus Lewis from January 1956.](#) (Note that the comic book incorrectly names B.J. Simms as D.J. Simms).
14. What happened on January 30, 1956?

15. What did Jones think of Dr. King's response to it? What do you think about both of their reactions?
16. What does it mean that 93 leaders of the boycott were indicted? Why do you think people "were thrilled" that the leaders turned themselves in? Why was this so significant?
17. Who was E.D. Nixon?
[Click here to learn more about E.D. Nixon](#) and how important he was to the bus boycott.
18. What did Rev. Ralph Abernathy tell people that they had to prepare for?
[Click here to learn more about Rev. Abernathy](#) and his role in the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and beyond.
19. How did they prepare for this? What do you think about the approach they planned: would it be something easy or difficult to do?
20. What did the Supreme Court decision say?
21. What day did Black people start riding the buses in Montgomery again?
22. How did white many people respond to the end of the boycott and to integration on the buses? How did Black people deal with this response?
23. Why do you think violence by white people escalated *after* the end of the boycott?
24. How did Rev. Robert Graetz respond to the bombing of his house? What do you think of his response?
[Click here to learn more about Rev. Graetz](#) and his work in support of the boycott and the struggle for civil rights throughout his life.
25. Why do you think Jones says that what happened in Montgomery is a victory for all of the city? How do you think this news was received by people outside of Montgomery?
26. Explain what you think Jones means when he says that his gun "had gotten much too heavy for me to ever lift again."

PART II: MARTIN LUTHER KING TELLS HOW A NATION WON ITS FREEDOM BY THE MONTGOMERY METHOD

27. What nation is Dr. King talking about in this part of the comic book? Who led that movement? When did that struggle begin?
28. Note some of the strategies and events that Gandhi and his supporters went through before their now-famous Salt March. Which of these do you think might have been the most helpful or inspiring for people in Montgomery in 1955-56? Explain your choice.
29. What was one way that protesters made it "harder and harder for the British to keep control"? Why do you think this strategy had that effect?
30. In summing up how Indians gained their independence from Britain and what else they gained in the process, Dr. King says: "This is the unusual thing about nonviolence. Nobody is defeated; everybody shares in the victory." Explain what you think he means by this, using examples from Montgomery and from India. If you have questions about this analysis, note them, too; they will be important to discuss with your classmates.

PART III: HOW THE MONTGOMERY METHOD WORKS

31. Who is the narrator of this section?
32. In the first point about "The Montgomery Method," the reader is included in the story, addressed as "you." Why do you think the comic's authors decided to have Dr. King speak directly to us?
33. The second point emphasizes the need to recognize the humanity of your opponent. How does the image next to it help to illustrate this part of commitment to nonviolence? How difficult do you think it is to do this? Why is that important?
34. What is the thing you have to do that is "hardest of all?" How does the comic book say we have to do this?

35. Look at the image of the young woman in the blue checked dress with a white collar. She is “the schoolgirl in Little Rock” referred to in the text. What incident is this passage asking us to remember? Why is this important? (Hint: Keep in mind that the comic book was published in 1957).
36. What are the two wrongs the text mentions when it talks about not giving up? How does the image of the three Black men facing the white man help you to understand this point?
37. What do you think about what the text says about an oppressor being “afraid of you?” Does this help you to understand the approach of “The Montgomery Method”? Why or why not?
38. What are the five steps that Dr. King lays out for addressing a problem or injustice through nonviolent action?
39. Which one do you think you would be really good at? Explain why.
40. Which one do you think would be most difficult for you to do? Explain why.
41. Dr. King’s final reminder reiterates the Montgomery activists’ firm grounding in their Christian faith. What aspect(s) of this lesson can resonate with people from other faith traditions? Thinking about your own ethical or religious identity and community, what part(s) of the lessons from Montgomery have you seen practiced in your own place of worship, faith community (mosque, church, temple, gurdwara, synagogue, etc.), or other community group?

SUMMARY QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Besides the logistics work carried out by people like B.J. Simms and Rufus Lewis, what other kind of support do you think the boycott must have needed to keep going? Who do you think did this work?
2. Dr. King was chosen to head the MIA, in large part, because he was young and unknown in Montgomery. (E.D. Nixon, especially, thought it was important that King hadn’t been in the community long enough to be caught up in local internal politics). And though the comic book places him very much at the center of the struggle, Dr. King did recognize how much it wasn’t about him. While the boycott was going on, he acknowledged that even if he “had never been born this movement would have taken place. . . . I just happened to be here. . . .”

Go back through the comic book and find examples that support Dr. King’s observation. Note the instances that show the work, courage, and perseverance of other people from across the Montgomery community.

3. In the comic’s panels after the arrest of Rosa Parks, the narrator Jones says to his wife, “Rosa is a good woman and not a trouble maker. They had no right arresting her!”

What do you think of this statement? What do you think is a “trouble maker” in this context? Can someone be a good person *and* be a trouble maker? Explain.
4. What lessons from the comic book do you think are most relevant to you in your personal or daily life today? How does the comic book help you better understand the world you live in?
5. What lessons from the comic book do you think are most relevant to issues or problems in your community or country that you care about today? Which idea from the comic book would you most like to share with someone in your community? Which idea from the comic book would you most like to share with a political leader in your country?