

Taking a Stand

Personal Narrative

Objective

Students will be able to...

- read about young people who have made a difference.
- analyze events leading to a movement for change.
- recognize how they, too, can stand up for an issue they believe in.

Materials

- projector or document camera
- highlighters (one per student)
- Young Voices Make a Difference (one poster per student; page 4)
- Claudette Colvin: A True Revolutionary (one per student; page 5)
- Essential Questions 1 (one per student if no accommodations needed; page 8)
- Essential Questions 2 (accommodations handout with paragraph numbers; page 9)

Social Emotional Learning

Students will...

- become more socially aware after learning about young activists.
- build self-confidence by identifying with the reading and thinking about how they too can be an influencer or decision-maker for change.

Key Terms

Term	Definition
personal narrative	an essay about a writer's personal experience that uses first-person point of view
influencer	a person who promotes products, services, or actions on social media
decision-maker	a person with the authority to make important decisions

Introduction

Step 1

Distribute a copy of the Young Voices Make a Difference poster to each student.

Step 2

Project the poster and discuss the contest description and prompt. Answer possible questions.



Teach**Step 1**

Distribute a copy of “Claudette Colvin: A True Revolutionary” and project a copy. Explain that students are going to discover how Claudette Colvin, a civil rights pioneer (living in Montgomery, Alabama, as of 2020), began her inspiring life just like the prompt’s quotation suggests we all should.

Step 2

Using a shared reading strategy, read the story aloud while students follow along. Pause periodically and ask Essential Questions (handout) for a class discussion. Encourage students to highlight and cite text evidence for each of their answers.

Accommodation: Students may use a highlighter to mark the text evidence during breaks in the reading.

Accommodation: For visual learners, supply handout with questions.

Accommodation: Provide paragraph numbers where students can find text evidence.

Enrichment: Allow students to read independently.

Text Evidence

Question 3: Paragraph 4

Question 4: Paragraphs 5 and 6

Question 6: Paragraph 7

Question 7: Paragraphs 10 and 11

Question 8: Paragraph 12

Answer Key

Answers will vary but may include the following responses.

1. Based on the photo, Claudette Colvin looks calm, like she’s having a normal day.
2. Colvin is probably upset by the bus driver talking to her sternly while she is being “perceived to be committing an act of serious rebellion.” She could be angry because she has “paid for the same bus ride as the white passengers” but is being treated differently.
3. I feel the bus driver is doing his job, but I don’t like that he called the police. Maybe he could have talked to Claudette nicely and reminded her about the consequences.
4. “The police officers took her arms, kicked her, and forced her off the bus. Claudette was then handcuffed, arrested, and taken to jail.” She was also charged with breaking the segregation law and for “assaulting a police officer since one was scratched in the scuffle.” She was locked in a jail cell without being able to “make a phone call.”

5. I understand Claudette is breaking the law at this point in the story, but the law isn't fair. She has a right to stand up for equal rights.
6. She reacts by going to court "to get rid of the unfair segregation laws" in the city of Montgomery.
7. Rosa Parks' replacement of Claudette Colvin at first makes me mad since Claudette experienced all of the work and hurt, but I understand the reasons for it, such as Rosa Parks "had a reputation in the community of having a faultless character, quiet strength, and moral courage."
8. Claudette expresses her actions in a healthy and productive way by following the rules and being a "star witness in another case about segregation and discrimination." It was the Browder v. Gayle landmark federal case that ended segregation on public transportation in the state of Alabama.
9. I would feel the same way as Claudette since I like to stand up to injustice. If I see something wrong, I like to say something.

Conclusion



Step 1

Wrap up this first of five lessons with a brief discussion allowing students to talk about the role Claudette Colvin played in ending segregation and discrimination on buses in her state. Ask if students consider Claudette to be an influencer or a decision-maker. Then mention some powerful young influencers of today like Malala Yousafzai, Amika George, Edna Chavez, Greta Thunberg, Khalid, and Naomi Osaka. Ask what other young influencers they know.

Answer Key

Claudette was an influencer since she stood up for her rights by refusing to give up her seat on the bus, going to court, and fighting segregation rules in her state. Plus, her courage inspired others to join the fight. The story says, "Colvin's arrest caused Parks' arrest to have more of an impact. Colvin's arrest made people pay attention..."

Step 2

Ensure students know that while Claudette Colvin's actions resulted in statewide changes, young people may use their voices to make changes on all levels, like in their neighborhood, at their school, or anywhere else where they see they can make a difference. It's not necessary to focus on a movement but on an issue.

Young Voices Make a Difference

Istation's First Annual National Essay Contest



Enter Istation's first annual National Essay Contest – Young Voices Make a Difference! We want to know what's important to your middle school students. How would they change the world for good? Encourage students to enter today!

WHAT

6 student winners will be selected as finalists. Winning students and their teachers will each receive a **16GB tablet**. The grand prize winner's essay will also be incorporated into **Istation's HumanEX** learning pathway for other students to read and learn along with!

HOW

Parents or legal guardian may submit your essay for you. Essays may be submitted in English or Spanish. Educators can submit on behalf of the students but only with express written permission from a parent or legal guardian.

WHEN

Young Voices Make a Difference runs from **November 16, 2020**, to **February 28, 2021**. The winner will be announced on **March 31, 2021**.

Visit the [contest page](#) for more details



By Jenny Branson

- 1 Young people know that they have a lot to offer society when it comes to standing up for justice. They do not feel that they have to do things the same way as older generations. Young people have the fresh ideas and the energy to create changes that make society more just. This positive belief is not exclusive to teenagers of the current times, though. Claudette Colvin, born on September 5, 1939, in Montgomery, Alabama, was no different in her belief in the importance of change for the sake of justice.
- 2 As a teenager, Colvin lived in a time when segregation and racial discrimination were widespread in the United States. Colvin is African American, and during her youth, black people in Alabama were openly discriminated against by white people. One of the most **grievous** examples of discrimination at this time was the law that a black person had to give up his or her seat on a bus if a white person wanted that seat.
- 3 Some may be thinking that this is starting to sound like a Rosa Parks situation, and they are correct to make that connection. However, Parks was not the first to rebel against the discriminatory law. . . . Colvin did it before Parks!
- 4 On March 2, 1955, 15-year-old Colvin was riding a city bus home from school when a white person got on the bus and called for Colvin to give up her seat. Colvin refused. Then the bus driver commanded Colvin to get up and let the white person take her seat. Colvin told the bus driver she would not give up her seat. She said that she knew her rights as an American citizen and knew she did not have to give up her seat. Colvin believed that she had paid for the same bus ride as white passengers, and she should not be treated any differently than those passengers. At the time, Colvin was perceived to be committing an act of serious rebellion.
- 5 Because Colvin refused to give up her seat, the police were called. Soon after, the officers entered the bus and demanded that Colvin give up her seat. Colvin held firm and refused in the name of equal rights. The police officers took her arms, kicked her, and forced her off the bus. She was then handcuffed, arrested, and taken to jail.
- 6 Colvin was charged with breaking the segregation law, resisting arrest, and assaulting a police officer since one of the officers got scratched in the scuffle. Even though she was only 15 years old, the authorities booked her as an adult and locked her in a cell without allowing her to make a phone call.

- 7 Colvin was fearful that no one who could help her knew where she was. However, some classmates of Colvin's who had also been on the bus got in contact with her mother and her minister and told them what had happened. Colvin's minister paid her bail, and she was released.
- 8 Colvin eventually went to court with her objection to the segregation laws. She believed that the city of Montgomery needed to get rid of the unfair segregation laws since the Declaration of Independence states that all people are created equal. Colvin maintained that all people's rights should be equal as well, regardless of race. Unfortunately, in this instance, the court ruled against her.
- 9 There were community leaders who stood with Colvin, though. They believed that in order to end the segregation laws, the community needed to take a stand. The community leaders believed that African Americans needed to **boycott** the bus system to prove that the segregation laws were unfair. The community would have to be extremely motivated and supportive in order to boycott the buses. Not riding the buses was a significant sacrifice for many people.
- 10 However, the community did not think that Colvin would make a good spokesperson because she was young and did not have a polished image. Their logic assumed that they could gain more community support to change the segregation laws with a more professional and **refined** spokesperson. Rosa Parks had a reputation in the community of having a faultless character, quiet strength, and moral courage. In the community leaders' eyes, it was Parks who was an ideal representative for this civil rights action.
- 11 Nine months later, Parks did the exact same thing as Colvin. On a bus, she refused to give up her seat to a white person. She was 42 years old and an officer in the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). Parks was subsequently arrested. Colvin believed that her own arrest did not have the impact Parks' did because Colvin was a minor and Parks was an adult. And Parks was already well-known and respected in African American political circles. Parks seemed more **credible** as the face of a civil rights movement than the young Colvin would have been.
- 12 It is understandable that looking back on these events today, one may feel outrage that Colvin was not seen as a suitable symbol for the civil rights action. She had, after all, taken a stand before Parks did. However, many people agree that although Colvin's arrest was overshadowed by the arrest of Parks, Colvin's arrest caused Parks's arrest to have more of an impact. Colvin's arrest made people pay attention and become emotionally charged about the unfairness of the segregation laws. Parks's arrest then seemed all the more **atrocious** because it demonstrated a pattern of injustice.
- 13 Colvin, too, wanted to make sure that she played an active role in fighting for justice. So in 1956, she was a star witness in another case about segregation and discrimination. It was the landmark federal lawsuit

Browder v. Gayle. This case ended segregation on public transportation in Alabama. At last, the court ruled that the bus segregation laws were unconstitutional. Colvin felt that finally her beliefs were becoming a reality. She knew that regardless of skin color, people should have equal rights.

- 14 Claudette Colvin demonstrated to people of all ages that people of all races have the same constitutional rights. She taught people to stand up for the things they believe in. With her strong will, she knew that she had to be the change that she wanted to see in society.

Glossary

atrocious (adjective) – horrible, unacceptable

boycott (verb) – to deliberately avoid using a service or shopping at a business as a form of protest

credible (adjective) – believable, trustworthy

grievous (adjective) – severe; hurtful

refined (adjective) – polished, demonstrating good manners and education

Essential QuestionsNOTES

Instructions: Read the questions and listen for the teacher to prompt you to look for your answers. Highlight your text evidence.

1. Based on the illustration, what emotion do you think Claudette Colvin is feeling upon entering the bus?

2. How does she feel in paragraph 4 when the bus driver commands her to give up her seat?

3. How do you feel about the bus driver who is following the segregation law?

4. What events led to 15-year-old Claudette feeling alone and scared in jail

5. How are you feeling about what is happening in the story?

6. How does Claudette react to her arrest and overall treatment?

7. How do you feel about Claudette Colvin's being replaced with Rosa Parks to represent the bus system boycott?

8. How does Claudette express her actions in a healthy and productive way?

9. How would you feel if you were in the same situation as Claudette Colvin? Why?

Essential Questions 2NOTES

Instructions: Read the questions and listen for the teacher to prompt you to look for your answers. Use the paragraph numbers as a guide to find and highlight your text evidence.

1. Based on the illustration, what emotion do you think Claudette Colvin is feeling upon entering the bus?

2. How does she feel in paragraph 4 when the bus driver commands her to give up her seat?

3. How do you feel about the bus driver who is following the segregation law? [¶14]

4. What events led to 15-year-old Claudette feeling alone and scared in jail? [¶15 & ¶16]

5. How are you feeling about what is happening in the story?

6. How does Claudette react to her arrest and overall treatment? [¶17]

7. How do you feel about Claudette Colvin's being replaced with Rosa Parks to represent the bus system boycott? [¶10 and ¶11]

8. How does Claudette express her actions in a healthy and productive way? [¶12]

9. How would you feel if you were in the same situation as Claudette Colvin? Why?

