

In Common: Effective Writing for All Students
Collection of All Student Work Samples, K-12

By The Vermont Writing Collaborative, with Student Achievement Partners and CCSSO

Fifth Grade
Range of Writing Informative / Explanatory
Writing Samples

File Name: I5R Claudette

Informative/Explanatory

Grade 5

Range of Writing

What Claudette Colvin Did

Learn about how Claudette Colvin helped the Civil Rights Movement

Though most people don't know it, Rosa Parks was not the first black person to refuse to give up her seat. Claudette Colvin refused nine months before Rosa, in 1955. It was during segregation and you would get arrested if you didn't let a white person sit down on a crowded bus while you stood. Segregation happened in lunch counters, schools, almost everywhere down south... Claudette Colvin was important because she stood up for what she knew was right and she motivated others.

Who was Claudette?

She was a fifteen year old black girl. She went to Booker T. Washington high in Montgomery, Alabama. Her family was very poor and her parents tried not to be noticed by white people because they didn't want to be arrested- the almost opposite of Martin Luther King Jr. She was a smart girl and hated **segregation**, especially the bus laws because her family had no car and she had to sit in the back. She really wanted to be able to sit in the front- or anywhere- of the bus. You can tell that Claudette wanted to do something about the bus laws.

What did she do?

One thing she did was she refused to give up her seat. The law in Montgomery was that you had to give your seat up to a white person if there was no space for them. Claudette was still fifteen. One day, she was tired of having to get up, so she just stayed in her seat. The bus driver yelled at her and soon police came and arrested her kicking and screaming. She was very brave to stand up to a police. An NAACP lawyer named Fred Grey decided to go to the city's federal court to say that **segregation** laws were **unconstitutional**. He tried to find people who would go and talk about how the bus laws were unfair. Most people who had been mistreated were too scared of what might happen to their families. Only four blacks came to the hearing; Claudette and three older women. She was very brave to go to court even though she knew the consequences.

Who did she motivate?

Nine months after Claudette's arrest Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat as well. On Monday, December fifth, Martin Luther king and other black leaders had black elementary and high schools pass out thirty– five thousand fliers saying stay off the buses. That was the beginning of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Though Claudette was not the reason for the bus boycott, she made black leaders realize that they needed to do the same thing only using someone more experienced.

Why didn't black leaders use her?

Though Claudette did refuse before Mrs. Parks, black leaders didn't want to start a bus boycott just because of a teenager. Also, she was hard to deal with because she swore a lot when the police took her off the bus, so they didn't want that to happen in court or anything. Being poor didn't help either, and Claudette thought they didn't use her because she and her parents weren't part of the inner circle, a group of more wealthy. The court case she went to is not very well known so she is not recognized that way. Big history books don't even have a caption about her. While she is not well known, she was still important to the civil rights movement.

In conclusion, Claudette Colvin did what was right and motivated people. She was a big help to the civil rights movement because she motivated Rosa Parks and the black leaders to start the bus boycott. She helped when she went to the hearing because it ended segregation on buses. As Claudette said, "Enough is enough" and at the time that was very true.

Sources

, recognize

File Name: ISR Claudette Report
Informative/Explanatory
Grade 5
Revised and Edited for Student Use

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Who was Claudette?

She was a fifteen-year-old black girl. She went to Booker T. Washington High in Montgomery, Alabama. Her family was very poor, and her parents tried not to be noticed by white people because they didn't want to be arrested—the almost opposite of Martin Luther King Jr. She was a smart girl and hated **segregation**, especially the bus laws, because her family had no car and she had to sit in the back. She really wanted to be able to sit in the front of—or anywhere in—the bus. You can tell that Claudette wanted to do something about the bus laws.

What did she do?

One thing she did was she refused to give up her seat. The law in Montgomery was that you had to give your seat up to a white person if there was no space for him or her. Claudette was still fifteen. One day, she was tired of having to get up, so she just stayed in her seat. The bus driver yelled at her, and soon police came and arrested her as she was kicking and screaming. She was very brave to stand up to the police. An NAACP lawyer named Fred Grey decided to go to the city's federal court to say that segregation laws were **unconstitutional**. He tried to find people who would go and talk about how the bus laws were unfair. Most people who had been mistreated were too scared of what might happen to their families. Only four blacks came to the hearing: Claudette and three older women. Claudette was very brave to go to court even though she knew the consequences.

Whom did she motivate?

Nine months after Claudette's arrest, Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat as well. On Monday, December fifth, Martin Luther King and other black leaders had black elementary and high schools pass out thirty-five thousand fliers saying "Stay off the buses!" That was the beginning of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Though Claudette was not the reason for the bus boycott, she made black leaders realize that they needed to do the same thing, only using someone more experienced.

Why didn't black leaders use her?

Though Claudette did refuse before Mrs. Parks, black leaders didn't want to start a bus boycott just because of a teenager. Also, she was hard to deal with because she swore a lot when the police took her off the bus, and black leaders didn't want that to happen in court or anything. The fact that she was poor didn't help either, and Claudette thought they didn't use her because she and her parents weren't part of the inner circle, a group of more wealthy black people. The court case she went to is not very well known, so she is not recognized that way. Big history books don't even have a footnote about her. While she is not well known, she was still important to the civil rights movement.

In conclusion, Claudette Colvin did what was right and motivated people. She was a big help to the civil rights movement because she motivated Rosa Parks and the black leaders to start the bus boycott. She helped when she went to the hearing because it ended segregation on buses. As Claudette said, "Enough is enough!" and at the time that was very true.

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Note: The student's original report was done using a publishing application. This version does not include all of the illustrations and text features in the original.

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File Name: I5R Letters From Rifka

Informative/Explanatory

Grade 5

Range of Writing

Letters From Rifka

Have you ever been determined to do something? In the book, Letters From Rifka, the main character was determined to leave Ukraine to get to America. Rifka, a 12 year old girl, is forced to leave Russia because if she doesn't she will be killed. Along the way she is determined and that determination helps her to get to America. Rifka never gave up hope. In other words she had indomitable spirit.

In the beginning, at the Polish border when Rifka got off the train, the guards force her and her family to take off their clothes for the Doctor. They did this because the Doctor wanted to see if she had a disease. Her determination enabled her to stand there naked, even though it was an uncomfortable, humiliating situation.

Another time was when she was on the ship to America. She nearly drowned and lost a friend when a tempest hit. She goes into the hold which really smells. After the storm ends she looks for her friend, Peter, and learns that he has been lost at sea during the storm. Rifka returns to her cabin in tears. A few hours later, when she hears people ooing and ahing up on deck as the statue of Liberty

comes into sight she realizes she still wants to go to America. Her determination gave her the power to endure the emotions she had and then gave her strength to carry on without her friend.

Another example is when Rifka is in the hospital wing at Ellis Island. A Doctor asks Rifka to take off her kerchief so he can check her for ringworm. Rifka realizes that if he finds something wrong with her she can be sent back to Ukraine. She was so determined to get to America that she stood up to an American doctor. Other people that didn't have as much determination might not have done that because they would be too frightened to stand up to someone who could send them back to their old country.

So as you can see, determination can get you anywhere. It got Rifka to America. How? It gave her the strength to carry on even though the obstacles were hard to overcome. Determination can help you achieve your goals too.

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Another time was when she was on the ship to America, she nearly drowns and loses a friend when a tempest hit. She goes into the hold which really smells. After the storm ends she looks for her friend, Peter, and learns that he has been lost at sea during the storm. Rifka returns to her cabin in tears. A few hours later, when she hears people "ooing" and "ahhing" up on deck as the Statue of Liberty comes into sight she realizes she still wants to go to America. Her determination

gave her the power to endure the emotions she had, and then gave her strength to carry on without her friend.

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