

Name: _____ Class: _____

The Many and the Few

By J. Patrick Lewis
2001

J. Patrick Lewis is an American poet and prose writer known for his children's poetry. In this poem, a speaker describes the effects of Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat on the bus for a white passenger. As you read, take notes on who "the Many" and "the Few" are.

For Rosa Parks, Part-time Seamstress,

Montgomery, Alabama, December 1, 1955

[1] It was an Alabama day
For both the Many and the Few.
There wasn't really much to do;
No one had very much to say.

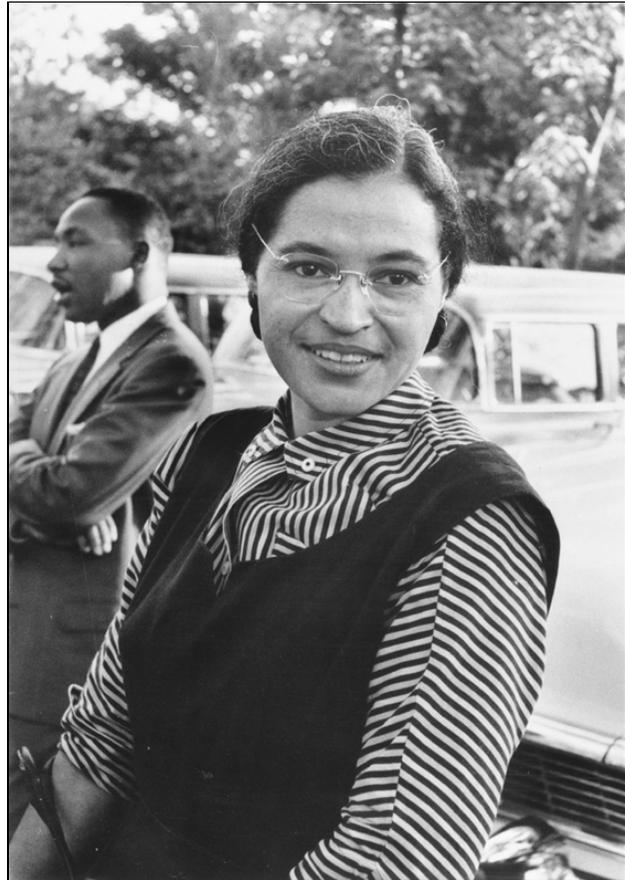
[5] Until a bus, the 4:15,
Drove by. But no one chanced to see
It stop to pick up history.
The doors closed slowly on a scene.

[10] The quiet seamstress paid her fare
And took the one seat she could find,
And, as it happened, just behind
The Many People sitting there.

The Many People paid no mind
Until the driver, J.P. Blake,
[15] Told the Few of them to take
The deeper seats. But she declined.¹

Blake stopped the bus and called the police;
And Many a fire was set that night,
And Many a head turned ghostly white
[20] Because she dared disturb the peace.

To celebrate the ride that marks
The debt the Many owe the Few,
That day of freedom grew into
The Century of Rosa Parks.



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1. **Decline (verb):** to say no to; to refuse

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following identifies a theme of the poem? [RL.2]
 - A. One person's action can impact many others.
 - B. It doesn't take much to create important change.
 - C. It takes many people to create positive change in the world.
 - D. Only certain people have the power to start a movement.

2. PART B: Which detail best supports the answer to Part A? [RL.1]
 - A. "There wasn't really much to do; / No one had very much to say." (Lines 3-4)
 - B. "The quiet seamstress paid her fare / And took the one seat she could find" (Lines 9-10)
 - C. "And Many a head turned ghostly white / Because she dared disturb the peace." (Lines 19-20)
 - D. "The debt the Many owe the Few, / That day of freedom grew" (Lines 22-23)

3. How does the word choice in stanza 2 contribute to the speaker's depiction of that day (Lines 5-8)? [RL.4]
 - A. It makes the events seem unimportant.
 - B. It emphasizes the importance of the events that took place.
 - C. It shows the events that took place as a small part of the Civil Rights movement.
 - D. It stresses how dangerous Parks' decision was to not give up her seat.

4. Who are "the Many" and "the Few"? Use details from the poem in your response. [RL.4]
