

HISTORY IN MOTION

Discovering History and
Science through Public
Transportation

A
Seashore Trolley Museum
Curriculum



**“A Seat for Everyone: Public Transportation Weaving the Fabric
of Society”**

**The second in a unit of Three Lesson Plans
for Third to Fifth Graders (*with an option for 6-8 grade*)
Integrating U.S. History and Science with Language Arts**

by

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Unit Description and Background

This *History in Motion* curriculum is designed to help elementary students strengthen their skills in history and science through their exploration of public transportation systems in the past, present, and future, with a focus upon Maine.

Following the guidance of the Maine Department of Education, *History in Motion* targets the 2007 Maine Learning Results (MLR) Performance Indicators, the goals of Science-Technology-Education-Math (STEM) education, and the award-winning pedagogical standards set by the Engineering is Elementary (EiE) Program based at the Boston Museum of Science.

The lesson plans in this social studies unit may be combined with either “An Alarming Idea” or “The Attraction is Obvious” EiE units. See www.trolley museum.org for more information.

The research upon which this unit is based stemmed from development of the exhibit *History in Motion: Public Transportation Connecting Maine Communities* that opened at Seashore Trolley Museum in September, 2009.

Seashore Trolley Museum extends its gratitude to the following generous supporters who made the Atlantic Shore Line Railway #100 Restoration Project possible, including its associated exhibit and educational programming:

- Historic Transportation Enhancement Funds through the Federal Highway Administration and the Maine Department of Transportation
- H. Albert Webb Memorial Railroad Preservation Award through the Massachusetts Bay Railroad Enthusiasts, Inc.
- Kennebunk Savings Bank
- Amherst Railway Society
- The 470 Railroad Club
- Kennebunkport Business Association
- Ocean National Bank
- Henry Bowen Brainerd Bequest
- Charles Murray and Mary Elizabeth Cott Memorial Fund
- Richard Perkins Memorial Fund
- Members of the New England Electric Railway Historical Society
- Library at York County Community College
- O.R. Cummings
- AC Electric Corporation

Unit Outline:

Lesson 1: Trolleys, Textile Mills, and Tourists: How Maine's Electric Railways were an Economic Engine

Lesson 2: A Seat for Everyone: Public Transportation Weaving the Fabric of Society

Lesson 3: Birth of the Bus: Science, Invention and You

Unit Objectives

Essential Understandings:

*public transportation has been a vital part of the social structure of the United States for most of our nation's history

*transportation strategies and technologies overcome geographic obstacles and enable communities and cultural groups to connect with one another, enabling economic growth and sometimes cultural conflict

*industrialization, in general, and the invention of electric railways, buses, and automobiles, in particular, changed the diversity of Maine and the social mobility of its population

*natural resources, such as rivers, coal, and timber, were used to power trolleys and factories with steam power and electricity.

Essential Questions:

- *What types of public transportation have existed in Maine history?
- *How do electric railways differ from railroads?
- *Who used electric railways and why?
- *How and why were buses invented?
- *How did diverse cultural groups use, or were prevented from using, public transportation in Maine and beyond?
- What is invention and engineering and how do we use these ideas to design an electrical circuit? (i.e. the "Alarming Idea" EiE Unit)

Lesson 2: A Seat for Everyone: Public Transportation Weaving the Fabric of Society

Recommended Teacher Resources (please see www.trolleyuseum.org for a less static list of resources)

- **Rosa Parks: How I Fought for Civil Rights** <http://teacher.scholastic.com/rosa/>
- **Bus Boycot: Historical Documents Highlight Integration Milestone**
<http://www.tolerance.org/activity/bus-boycott-historical-documents-highlig>
- **Freedom's Main Line**
Teach about the 19th-century African Americans in Kentucky who used civil disobedience to protest segregation on public transportation nearly a century prior to the Montgomery Bus Boycott. <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/freedoms-main-line>
- "History in Motion" Maine Memory Network online exhibit
<http://www.mainememory.net/mho/>

Instructional Materials (please see www.trolleyuseum.org for a less static list of resources)

- **Mighty Times: The Legacy of Rosa Parks** (video)
This innovative and authoritative history of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott infuses the familiar story of the boycott with first person accounts, stirring dramatizations and narration by young people. This teaching kit includes the video and classroom activities.
<http://www.tolerance.org/kit/mighty-times-legacy-rosa-parks>
- **Claudette Colvin: Twice Towards Justice** (online video, highly recommended)
This is a trailer for the award-winning book featuring Phillip Hoose and Claudette Colvin. On March 2, 1955, Claudette Colvin refused to surrender her seat on the bus in Montgomery, but she was shunned, not celebrated, by the community. Months later Rosa Parks made the same bold statement which led to the desegregation of the Montgomery buses a year later.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZOpqtd8nw>
- One or more of the following:
 - **Claudette Colvin: Twice Towards Justice**
Phillip Hoose (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009). Grades 7-12
Based on extensive interviews with Claudette Colvin and many others, Phillip Hoose presents the first in-depth account of an important yet largely unknown civil rights figure, skillfully weaving her dramatic story into the fabric of the historic Montgomery bus boycott and court case that would change the course of American history.
 - **A Picture Book of Rosa Parks**
David A. Adler (Scholastic, 1995)
 - **Rosa**
Nikki Giovanni (Henry Holt and Co., 2007). Grades 3-5
Gives context to Rosa Parks' role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Children will learn of Parks' family life. They also will experience the day Parks refused to give

up her seat and see how the black community responded and rallied. By mentioning Emmett Till and others, Giovanni contextualizes Parks' place in the Civil Rights Movement.

- **The Bus Ride That Changed History: The Story of Rosa Parks**
Pamela Duncan Edwards (Houghton Mifflin Co., 2005). Grades 2-4
Tells the story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The book includes the boycott story along with a parallel story, below it, of children discussing its impact. These children ask and respond in much the same way your students might respond.
- Student Reading (provided) “A Seat for Everyone.” **NOTE:** This reading has been prepared for distribution to students on either school laptops or on printed paper.

Procedure

1. Teacher reviews Recommended Teacher Resources and Instructional Materials;
2. Assign or read to the class one of the recommended books;
3. Project YouTube video of Claudette Colvin on a screen for your class; encourage listening skills and critical thinking along these suggested lines:
 - *who did Claudette Colvin say inspired her to stay seated in her bus seat?
 - *why are those people who inspired her important in history? What did they do?
 - *what is Claudette’s advice about what we should do in the face of an injustice?
4. Assign the Student Reading “A Seat for Everyone” and have them fill out the questions in class or as homework (recommended for 3-5 grades); for 6th to 8th graders an alternative is to use the “A Seat for Everyone” interactive reading in Keynote format that is provided at www.trolley museum.org;
5. (Optional) Have students pretend that they work at Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport, Maine and they must decide whether or not to place on display in the museum a segregated seating sign (a.k.a. a Jim Crow sign). Should the museum expose visitors to a difficult chapter in history or keep the signs hidden away in storage? Have them explain why they made the decision they did.

Or, structure the assignment such that the decision has already been made to display the segregated seating sign in the gallery and they have been instructed by the museum’s director to write an interpretive label for it.

Prompts for getting them started on writing their own interpretive label for placing a Jim Crow sign (discussed and pictured in reading) in a gallery for museum visitors to see:

- a. what is the most important thing you would want a visitor to remember after they walk away?
- b. how can you make that most important point memorable? (e.g., by encouraging them to look at something in particular, or to imagine themselves in a particular role)
- c. what are some key words that you want to be sure to use (word bank exercise)?

Then, have them draft a label of 150 words or less.

Here is an example of a label for a different artifact to show how museums write labels:

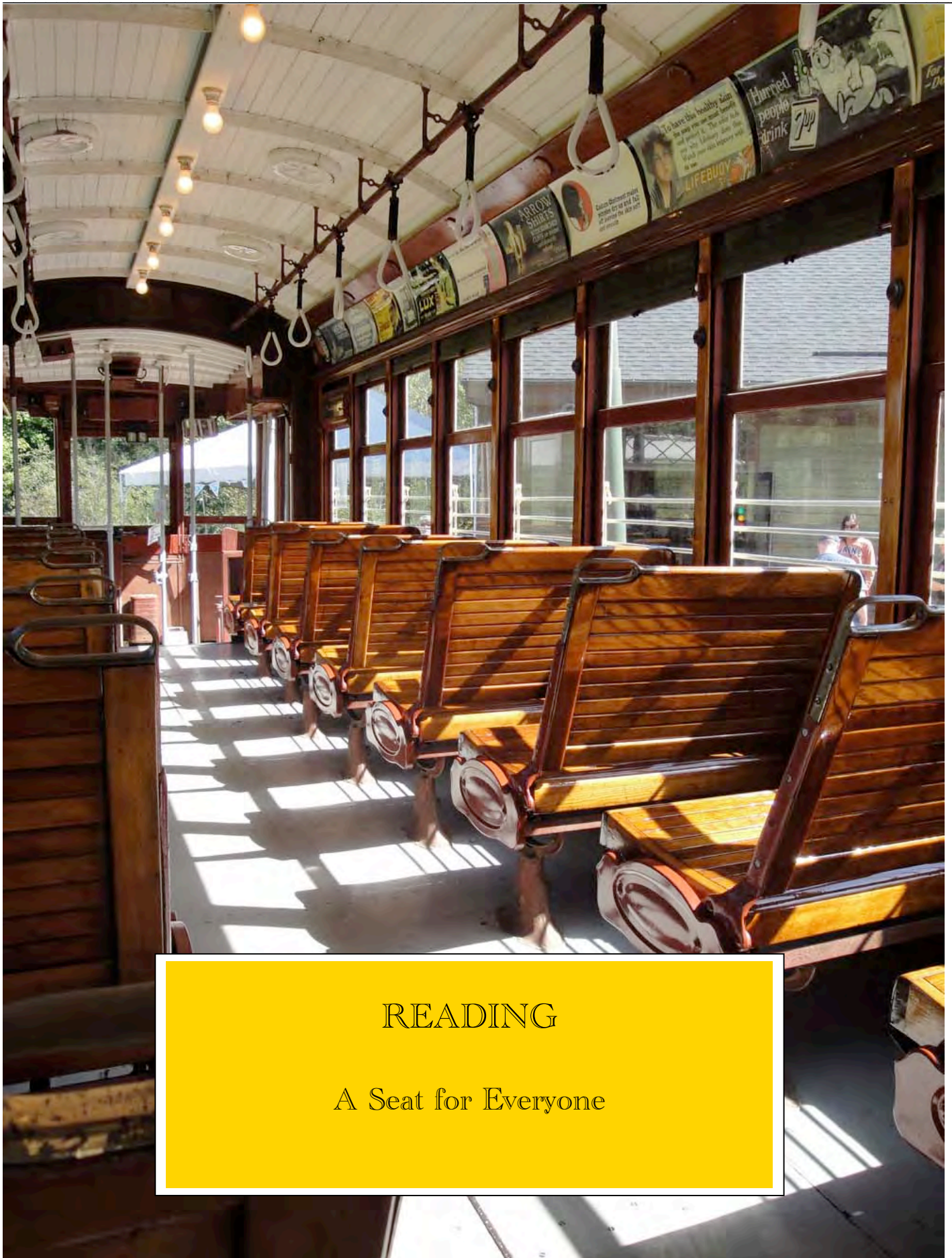


“Johnson J.” Fare Box

Metal, glass

c. 1930s

Bus fare box invented by Tom L. Johnson (1854-1911); commonly used on small transit systems as it processed only one coin at a time; rang with each 5 cent value and tallied the total so the transit company could “keep the driver honest.”



READING
A Seat for Everyone

Public Transportation and Discrimination



Before buses or automobiles, a type of streetcar was invented that rolled on rails and was powered by an electrical wire overhead. These electric streetcars (see above), also known as “trolleys,” changed people’s daily lives a great. People who once needed a day or longer to reach their **destination**, could finish their trip in only an hour or two. Streetcars traveled an average of ten miles per hour, or faster, for long distances. This was much faster than a person could walk or ride a horse.

Even after the Civil War and the end of slavery, American society still discriminated against people of color. One type of discrimination was **segregation**, or the separating of people into different groups based upon the color of their skin. Schools, churches, and even vehicles like streetcars were segregated.

This photograph (at right) shows the interior of a trolley in Dallas, Texas. Look how a sign “For Whites” showed the dividing line between the front and back of the trolley.





The state of Maine hosts the oldest mass transit museum in the world, the Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport. This museum cares for more than 250 historic vehicles, everything from horse-drawn “omnibuses” to electric streetcars, to the earliest buses, and more. When Seashore Trolley Museum received the donation of electric streetcar Dallas Car #434 (see above) in 1954, it was transported on top of a railroad car. With it came its original segregated seating signs that read “For Whites” and “For Colored” (see above). Trolley conductors moved the signs by placing them in brackets mounted near the windows (see right).

As Museum volunteers renovated Car #434, they put the signs in storage, feeling uncomfortable displaying them in the way they were originally used. Car #434 is fully restored now and available for visitors to ride.



Bravery and Boycotts



Once the internal combustion engine was invented, automobiles and buses became alternative ways to travel. By the 1930s, electric streetcars and passenger trains were still running, but they were not as popular. Few could afford to own an automobile, however. This made bus transportation essential for most people to travel to and from their jobs and schools.

Unfortunately, buses inherited segregated seating from prior railroad cars and electric streetcars. Segregation on public transportation was supported by local and state laws, known as Jim Crow laws. For example, the city code from Montgomery, Alabama stated:

“Every person operating a bus line in the city shall provide equal but separate accommodations for white people and negroes on his buses, by requiring the employees in charge to assign passengers seats on the vehicles under their charge in such manner as to separate the white people from the negroes...” (see original above)

African American people who endured such segregation were the children and grandchildren of those who had resisted slavery and had resisted segregation on railroad cars and in public places. African Americans in the southern U.S. challenged segregation by sitting down at lunch counters and refusing to give up seats in the “white” section of a bus.

C. 6, § 10

MONTGOMERY CITY CODE

C. 6, § 13

Sec. 10. Separation of races—Required.

Every person operating a bus line in the city shall provide equal but separate accommodations for white people and negroes on his buses, by requiring the employees in charge thereof to assign passengers seats on the vehicles under their charge in such manner as to separate the white people from the negroes, where there are both white and negroes on the same car; provided, however, that negro nurses having in charge white children or sick or infirm white persons, may be assigned seats among white people.

Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting the operators of such bus lines from separating the races by means of separate vehicles if they see fit. (Code 1938, §§ 603, 606.)

The Civil Rights Act of 1875 was meant to protect the rights of African American people after both the Civil War and slavery ended. However, the law did little to change the American culture of discrimination. Instead, it took new forms, such as “separate but equal.” No one could legally deny people of color a ride on a streetcar or a bus, but they could separate them from whites as long as they offered so-called equal transportation. Separation did not protect equality, however.

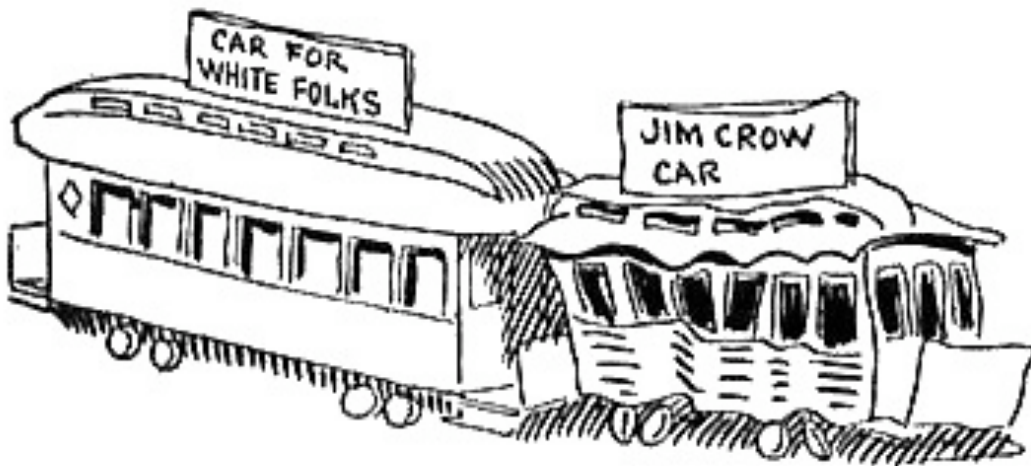
Look at the cartoon below, drawn in 1905 when segregated public transportation was common.

Write a list of three adjectives for each of these electric streetcars:

Car for White Folks

Jim Crow Car

Do you think the cartoonist was using his drawing to say that segregation protected equality? Why or why not? Explain.



Civil Rights and Desegregation



After hundreds of years of resistance to slavery and decades of protest against post-Civil War discrimination, changes finally began to occur quickly. In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation in public schools violated the U.S. Constitution. This ruling, known as ***Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas***, overturned the 1896 Supreme Court ruling known as *Plessy v. Ferguson* that allowed “separate but equal” segregation. Nonetheless, whites resisted the change in the laws requiring that Civil Rights activists – both African American and white – continue their protests.

One of the most famous moments of protest happened in December of 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat in the “colored section” of a bus to a white passenger. Parks’ arrest (see below) spurred a huge bus boycott in Montgomery. This bus boycott (see right), with Martin Luther King as one of its leaders, lasted for more than a year until the bus companies agreed to desegregate.

However, white resistance to desegregation continued, and so did the Civil Rights protests. Over the spring and summer of 1961 more than 1,000 volunteers from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and The Congress of Racial Equality – both African American and white students – began to make bus trips through the South to prove that desegregation on public transportation should be allowed. Finally, in 1964, President Johnson signed the **Civil Rights Act of 1964** which outlawed any discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin.

