



**TOPIC:** The Story of Ruby Bridges

**GRADES:** 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grades

**STANDARD(S):** See pages 3 & 4

## INTRODUCTION

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This lesson is designed to integrate the concepts of civic education and civic responsibility across the curriculum, using Robert Coles's *The Story of Ruby Bridges*.

**Book summary:** For months, six-year-old Ruby Bridges must confront the hostility of white parents when she becomes one of the first African-American girl to integrate the public schools in New Orleans in 1960.

## OBJECTIVES

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- Students will understand the meaning of equality and how it is protected by the United States Constitution.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the concepts fundamental to politics and government by identifying characters in the book that embody authority, responsibility, justice, and privacy.
- Students will gain knowledge of Ruby Bridges and the contribution she made to the civil rights movement in the United States.
- Students will gain an understanding of vocabulary associated with equality and civil rights.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

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- How did the actions of Ruby Bridges and her family shape the history of the United States?
- How does the United States Constitution protect an individual's right to equality under the law?
- Does the book emphasize the concepts of civic virtue and common good?

## ACTIVITIES

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**Teacher's Note:** Before the lesson, the teacher should read *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles (or watch the video of the book being read here: <https://youtu.be/U8D4ldGY41s>) several times to:

- Become familiar with the text;
- Choose vocabulary words to be examined;
- Identify where you will stop and ask for predictions;
- Determine background knowledge required to fully understand the story;
- Develop questions for the read aloud; and
- Anticipate student responses.

*The book is also available for purchase [here](#). Suggested vocabulary: courage, federal marshal, mob, judge, segregation, desegregate)*

**Reading:** Before the read-aloud, conduct a picture walk through the book:

- **Cover:** Ask children what comes to mind when they first look at the cover ... Where do you think the girl is going? How old do you think the girl might be? What do you think the people are doing in the background? Looking at the girl's face, what do you suppose she is thinking?

- **Title Page:** What do you think is happening in this illustration? Where do you think the people are going?
- **Dedication Page:** Ruby's mother says "Our Ruby has taught us all a lot. She became someone who helped change our country. She was part of history." At the end of the lesson, students should be able to discuss and explain what her mother meant by these statements.
- Conduct an interactive read-aloud of *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, stopping frequently to clarify what is happening in the story and asking students to make predictions, discuss new vocabulary, and make personal connections.
- Conduct an author study examining who Robert Coles was and his relationship to Ruby Bridges and her family.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

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- ***We the People: The Citizen and The Constitution, Unit 4 – How Does the Constitution Protect Our Basic Rights?, Lesson 19: How Does the Constitution Protect Your Right to Equal Protection of the Laws?***
  - **Introduce important terms**, including: Assembly, Expression, Petition, Press, Speech, Discrimination, Tolerant, Boycott, Segregate, Civil Rights Act of 1964, Civil War Amendments, Equal Protection Clause, Equal Protection of the Laws, and Fourteenth Amendment.
  - Discuss with students how the terms are illustrated in *The Story of Ruby Bridges*. Suggested questions for discussion include:
    - Did the Fourteenth Amendment end discriminatory practices against African-Americans?
    - How were the Constitutional rights of Ruby Bridges and other African-American children violated by local government in New Orleans?
    - How were freedom of speech and freedom of assembly shown in *The Story of Ruby Bridges*?
- **Foundations of Democracy**
  - **Authority**
    - What characters in the story used authority?
    - What characters in the story used power with authority, and where did they get their authority?
    - What characters in the story used power without authority?
    - The judge ordered Ruby Bridges and three other black girls to go to white elementary schools. What are some of the benefits and costs of this decision?
  - **Responsibility**
    - The President ordered Federal Marshals to escort Ruby into the school building. What responsibilities did the Federal Marshals have?
    - What characters in the story had responsibilities? Make a list of the characters and their responsibility, and to whom did they owe the responsibility?
    - Did some of the characters have competing responsibilities? What were the competing responsibilities?
  - **Justice**
    - Do you think that Ruby Bridges was treated fairly in the story?
    - Think about problems of "Distributive Justice," problems of "Corrective Justice" and problems of "Procedural Justice." Discuss how these problems of justice were demonstrated in *The Story of Ruby Bridges*.
    - Do you think any of the characters in the story should be punished for their actions?
  - **Privacy**
    - Do you think that issues related to privacy are addressed in this book? Explain your answer.

## WRITING

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- Students use photo analysis as a prompt for writing.

- Students use the district-wide writing process to complete the activity.
- Students select one of the three pictures below and analyze it using the Photo Analysis Guide (*found at end of lesson plan*). Students should study the photograph for a minimum of 2 minutes. Students form an overall impression first, and then examine the photograph for details. Suggest that students divide the photograph into four sections and study each area to see what additional details they notice.
- Remind students that good writers think about what they want to write before beginning.
- Students write about what they have observed in the photograph and then write from the point of view of one of the people in the image. What is the character thinking and feeling? What events happened before the picture was taken? What happened after the photograph was taken? Students could put themselves into the image and describe what they would be thinking and feeling.
- Students partner with a classmate to read, edit and revise their writing.

## **MATERIALS NEEDED**

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- Copy of *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles.
- Class set of *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution*, Elementary Level
- Class sets of *Foundations of Democracy* text Authority, Responsibility, Justice and Privacy.
- Easel and chart paper
- Copies of the Photograph Analysis Guide.
- Copies of the photographs for analysis.
- Writing paper and pencils.

## **STANDARDS:**

### **International Reading Association / National Council of Teachers of English**

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- (1) Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
- (3) Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
- (4) Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
- (5) Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- (6) Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
- (9) Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.
- (11) Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
- (12) Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

**STANDARDS:**  
**National Council for the Social Studies**

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- (II) Time, Continuity and Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves over time.
- (III) People, Places and Environments: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places and environments.
- (V) Individuals, Groups and Institutions: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups and institutions.
- (VI) Power, Authority and Governance: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority and governance.
- (VIII) Science, Technology and Society: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of relationships among science, technology and society.
- (X) Civic Ideals and Practices: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.

**PHOTO ANALYSIS SELECTIONS**

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**Photograph 1:**  
(Norman Rockwell / “The Problem We All Live With”)



**Photograph 2:**  
(Courtesy AP/World Wide Photos)



Photograph 3:



### PHOTOGRAPH ANALYSIS GUIDE

<b>OBSERVATION</b>	<b>KNOWLEDGE</b>	<b>INTERPRETATION</b>
<p>What do you <b>see</b> in the photographs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Describe the people and objects that you see.</li><li>• What is the setting?</li></ul>	<p>What background information do you have about this period or event?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you need to gather additional information before writing?</li></ul>	<p>What can you conclude from what you see?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What thoughts, ideas, and conclusions do you want to include in your writing?</li></ul>

*This lesson plan was adapted from a plan developed by Barbara Ashby, MLS, We the People Programs, Rhode Island Michael Trofi, State Coordinator*