

# Ruby Bridges Differentiated Reading Comprehension

We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. This resource on Ruby Bridges contains potentially sensitive and/or upsetting topics that may emotionally impact on students you use it with. It may spark discussion with your class about issues around racial discrimination and inequality. It is your responsibility to consider whether it is appropriate to use this resource with your students. If you do use this resource, it is your responsibility to ensure that appropriate support is available for anyone affected.

# Ruby Bridges

Ruby Bridges was born in Mississippi, USA on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1954. At this time, the US civil rights movement was growing so that African Americans could be treated fairly. Even though she was very young, Ruby was an important part of it.

## The Civil Rights Movement

Many people worked hard to make sure that African Americans could have equal civil rights. Martin Luther King Jr was one special person who spoke about his dreams for a better, fairer future.

During the 1960s, life did become fairer. In 1964, segregation was ended. A year later, all black people were allowed to vote.

## Resilient Ruby

Ruby's family were African American. In America at this time, African Americans did not have equal rights.

For a long time, there had been a rule called segregation. This meant that there were separate places for people, depending on the colour of their skin. There were different swimming pools, parks and even schools for black and for white people.

In 1954 (when Ruby was born) the US Supreme Court made a new rule. It said that all schools must desegregate, which is the opposite of segregate. It said that children should be able to go to any school.

In 1960, Ruby was six years old. She started at William Frantz Elementary School. It used to be a school just for white children, but now things had changed. The school was close to her home, but Ruby had to travel by car with her mother. American police officers, called Marshals, helped them to get into school safely and quickly. There were many people protesting because they were angry about desegregation.



Ruby and the US Marshals

Some teachers would not teach Ruby, and some children did not want to be in her class. However, Ruby's first teacher was glad to teach her. She was called Mrs Henry, and she was white. She and Ruby learned together in a classroom at school, although Ruby didn't have any classmates at first. Sometimes, Ruby was unhappy, but she did not miss one day of school in her first year.

### Did You Know ...?

Nearly 40 years later, Ruby was reunited with Mrs Henry on a TV show.

Ruby stayed at that school and soon other children, who were black and white, joined it. Ruby made friends, finished high school and got married. When she was older, she started a charity called the Ruby Bridges Foundation. Its aims are to promote tolerance and respect of all people.

In 2001, she was awarded a medal for helping her country. We will always remember Ruby Bridges for her bravery and resilience.



# Questions

1. When was Ruby Bridges born? Tick one.

- 8<sup>th</sup> September 1994
- 8<sup>th</sup> October 1954
- 18<sup>th</sup> September 1954
- 8<sup>th</sup> September 1954

2. What was the name of the unfair rule in America that had lasted a long time?

Tick one.

- civil rights movement
- separation
- segregation
- desegregate

3. Why were many people working hard as part of the civil rights movement?

Tick one.

- because they wanted more money
- because they wanted to vote
- because they wanted African Americans to be treated fairly
- because they wanted Ruby to go to school

4. Which places were segregated? Tick two.

- roads
- parks
- swimming pools
- cars

5. Which school did Ruby attend?

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6. Find and copy a word that tells us that Ruby's teacher felt happy about teaching her.

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7. Why do you think that Ruby sometimes felt unhappy at school? Explain your answer.

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# Answers

1. When was Ruby Bridges born? Tick one.

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- because they wanted Ruby to go to school

4. Which places were segregated? Tick two.

- roads
- parks
- swimming pools
- cars

5. Which school did Ruby attend?

**William Frantz Elementary School**

6. Find and copy a word that tells us that Ruby's teacher felt happy about teaching her.

**glad**

7. Why do you think that Ruby sometimes felt unhappy at school? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think she felt unhappy because she didn't have any friends and other children didn't want to be in her class. Also, some teachers didn't want to teach her.**

# Ruby Bridges

Ruby Bridges was born in Mississippi, USA on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1954, during the growing US civil rights movement. Six-year-old Ruby played an important part of it.

## The Civil Rights Movement

The aim was to make sure that African Americans had equal civil rights. The leader was Martin Luther King Jr. In 1963, he gave a famous speech that started, 'I have a dream...'.

It did make a difference. In 1964, segregation of all places was banned. A year later, all black people were allowed to vote.

## Resilient Ruby

Ruby moved to the city of New Orleans when she was very young. Ruby's family were African American. There had been a long history of unfair treatment of African Americans; one policy at the time was called segregation. This meant that there were separate swimming pools, cinemas, and even schools for black and for white people.

In 1954, the US Supreme Court made a rule that all schools must desegregate. It said that children should have the right to attend any school.

In 1960, Ruby passed a test and joined William Frantz Elementary School. Before the new rule, it had been a school only for white children. Although it was within walking distance of her home, Ruby had to be driven there and back. She was helped into the school building by US Marshals (a type of police officer) because many local white people were very angry. They did not want an African American child to join a school where there were lots of white children.



Ruby and the US Marshals

Ruby's first day was difficult. There were many people protesting when she and her mother arrived. There was only one teacher who was willing to teach her, a lady called Barbara Henry.

Mrs Henry was a young, white teacher who had been teaching abroad. Unlike many other white Americans, she was supportive of the change.

The first year at school was hard for Ruby: she had no classmates and had to eat lunch by herself. Sometimes she was unhappy, but she did not miss one day's attendance.

### Did You Know ...?

Nearly 40 years later, Ruby was reunited with Mrs Henry on a TV show.

After a while, the lives of many African-American people improved because of the civil rights movement. Ruby grew up and started the Ruby Bridges Foundation, which aims to promote tolerance and respect. She still works to improve equality. In fact, she has been awarded a medal for helping her country. Ruby Bridges will always be remembered for her bravery and resilience.



# Questions

1. What did six-year-old Ruby Bridges play an important part of? Tick one.

- the US Supreme Court
- Mississippi, USA
- the growing civil rights movement
- school

2. What was the name of the unfair treatment of African Americans?

Tick one.

- New Orleans
- segregation
- US Marshals
- Martin Luther King Jr.

3. What did Ruby have to do before she started school?

Tick one.

- She had to take a test.
- She had to give a speech.
- She had to buy a bag.
- She had to write her name.

4. Match each statement to the correct person.

Mrs Henry

Martin Luther King Jr

Ruby Bridges

The US Marshals

... moved to the city of New Orleans.

... gave a famous speech in 1963.

... helped Ruby get to school safely.

... was the only one who was happy to teach Ruby.

5. Fill in the missing words. After a \_\_\_\_\_, the lives of \_\_\_\_\_ African-American people \_\_\_\_\_ because of the civil rights movement.



6. Look at the **Did You Know...?** section. **Find and copy** a word which describes 'coming together after being apart'.

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7. In what way was Mrs Henry different from the other teachers?

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8. Do you agree that Ruby Bridges was brave and resilient? Why?

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# Answers

1. What did six-year-old Ruby Bridges play an important part of? Tick **one**.

- the US Supreme Court
- Mississippi, USA
- the growing civil rights movement**
- school

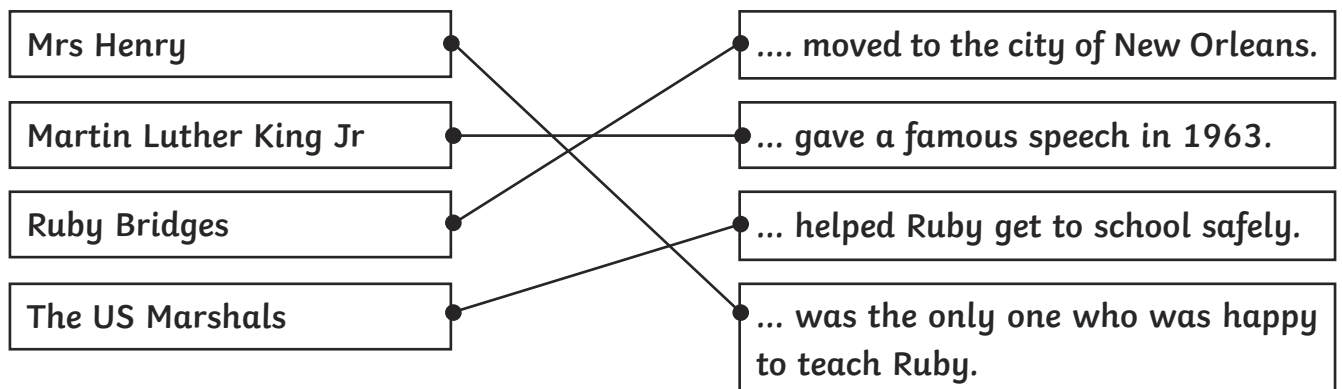
2. What was the name of the unfair treatment of African Americans? Tick **one**.

- New Orleans
- segregation**
- US Marshals
- Martin Luther King Jr.

3. What did Ruby have to do before she started school? Tick **one**.

- She had to take a test.**
- She had to give a speech.
- She had to buy a bag.
- She had to write her name.

4. Match each statement to the correct person.



5. Fill in the missing words. After a **while**, the lives of **many** African-American people **improved** because of the civil rights movement.

6. Look at the **Did You Know...?** section. Find and copy a word which describes 'coming together after being apart'.

**reunited**

7. In what way was Mrs Henry different from the other teachers?

**She was the only teacher who was willing to teach Ruby. Also accept: she was supportive of the change to desegregation.**

8. Do you agree that Ruby Bridges was brave and resilient? Why?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Yes, I agree because she had a hard time at school and she had no classmates and had to eat by herself. However, she still went to school every day.**

# Ruby Bridges

On 8<sup>th</sup> September 1954, Ruby Bridges was born in Mississippi, USA. During this decade, the US civil rights movement was growing and, incredibly, six-year-old Ruby played an important part of it.

## The Civil Rights Movement

The main aim was to make sure that African Americans had equal civil rights. It was led by Martin Luther King Jr, who gave a famous speech that started, 'I have a dream...'.

It did make a difference. In 1964, segregation was outlawed in schools, public places or jobs. A year later, all black people were allowed to vote.

## Resilient Ruby

Ruby and her family had moved to the city of New Orleans, Louisiana, when she was very young. Ruby's family were African American. In America at that time, there had been a long history of unfair treatment of African Americans; one policy at the time was called segregation. This meant that there were separate swimming pools, cinemas, toilets, building entrances and even schools, depending on if you were black or white.

The year that Ruby was born, 1954, was the year that the court made a rule that all schools must desegregate, which means any child should have the right to attend any school.

In 1960, when it was time for Ruby to start school, she had to take an exam. This was because the Louisiana school district had said that African American children should be tested to see if they were as able as children at all-white schools.

Ruby passed and was able to join the previously all-white William Frantz Elementary School. It was conveniently within walking distance of her home. However, for the first year of school, Ruby had to be driven there and helped into the building by US Marshals (a type of police officer). The reason was that many local



Ruby and the US Marshals

white people were very angry; they did not want an African American child to attend school with white children. Therefore, the Marshals protected her from any trouble.

Ruby's first day was upsetting for her. By the school gates, there were many people protesting. Ruby had no other classmates because many white children didn't want to be in her class. Most of the teachers refused to teach her. There was only one teacher who gladly would – Barbara Henry.

Mrs Henry was a young, white teacher who was from a different part of America where segregation was not so common. Unlike many other white Americans, she was supportive of the change. Together, they learned and worked in one classroom in the school. Ruby played and ate alone during that first year, but she did not miss one day's attendance.

### Did You Know ...?

In 1999, Ruby was reunited with her former teacher, Mrs Henry, on a TV show. After that, they gave speeches together to teach people about their experiences.

Gradually, thanks to the civil rights movement, the lives of many African-American people improved. Ruby continued at school, making friends and eventually graduating from a fully desegregated high school.

Today, Ruby is still making a difference. She started the Ruby Bridges Foundation, which aims to promote tolerance and respect. She has met two US presidents and been awarded a medal for helping her country. She will always be remembered for her courage and resilience at such a young age.



# Questions

1. What is Ruby Bridges' date of birth? Tick one.

- 8<sup>th</sup> September 2004
- 8<sup>th</sup> October 1954
- 8<sup>th</sup> September 1954
- 8<sup>th</sup> October 1954

2. Look at the section with the title 'Resilient Ruby'? This suggests that Ruby Bridges... Tick one.

- thought school was difficult but still went every day.
- thought school was hard and stopped going.
- thought school was fun and loved it all.
- hated school.

3. Give three examples of places that were separate during segregation.

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4. What does the author mean when they say William Frantz Elementary School was 'previously all-white'?

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5. Fill in the missing words. In \_\_\_\_\_, all black people were given the \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Using the text, give two ways that explain why Ruby's first day was upsetting for her. Explain your answer.

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7. 'Most of the teachers refused to teach her. There was only one teacher who gladly would – Barbara Henry.' What impression does this give us of Ruby's teacher, Mrs Henry?

It tells us that she was

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8. Do you think Ruby Bridges was brave when she was six? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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# Answers

1. What is Ruby Bridges' date of birth? Tick one.

- 8<sup>th</sup> September 2004
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2. Look at the section with the title 'Resilient Ruby'? This suggests that Ruby Bridges... Tick one.

- thought school was difficult but still went every day.
- thought school was hard and stopped going.
- thought school was fun and loved it all.
- hated school.

3. Give three examples of places that were separate during segregation.

**Three answers from a choice of: swimming pools, cinemas, toilets, building entrances, schools**

4. What does the author mean when they say William Frantz Elementary School was 'previously all-white'?

**It means that it used to be a school that was only for white children during segregation.**

5. Fill in the missing words. In 1965, all black people were given the right to vote.

6. Using the text, give two ways that explain why Ruby's first day was upsetting for her. Explain your answer.

**Two answers from a choice of: By the school gates, there were many people protesting. Ruby had no other classmates because many white children didn't want to be in her class. Most of the teachers refused to teach her.**

7. 'Most of the teachers refused to teach her. There was only one teacher who gladly would – Barbara Henry.' What impression does this give us of Ruby's teacher, Mrs Henry?

**It tells us that she was happy to teach Ruby and she was not angry about desegregation.**

8. Do you think Ruby Bridges was brave when she was six? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

**Pupils' own responses, using evidence from the text, such as: I think she was brave when she was six because she went to a school which was upsetting for her, but she still went every day and didn't miss any school. She had to play and eat alone, but she still went.**