

Ruby Bridges Lesson Plan

Through My Eyes

MESSAGE TO ABC READERS (History of Ruby Bridges)

For our children, racial tensions and struggles to achieve civil rights may sound like ancient history. But, as you know, our collective struggle to overcome injustice of all kinds is ongoing.

President Obama stands upon the shoulders of many courageous people of conscience who walked before him. Their names and stories are in our history books – Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Brown vs. Board of Education, three civil rights workers slain while helping register black voters in the South, four little girls killed while they attended Sunday school – as well as a 6 year old girl named Ruby Bridges.

This is the story of one brave little girl who became an *UPstander*. Ruby and her family lived in New Orleans in the 1950's. During that time, Ruby attended a segregated, all black school for kindergarten. This was the way school was conducted for many generations in the South.

Following the 1954 Supreme Court case Brown vs. Board of Education, school districts all over the South were ordered to end their policy of racially segregated schools. A federal court in New Orleans ordered two white public schools to integrate in 1960. The plan was to integrate only the first grade for that year – and only black kindergarten students had to pass a difficult test in order to attend the previously all white school. The test was designed so that no one would pass it. Despite others' efforts to keep black students out, Ruby Bridges was one of only five students to pass the test.

The drama that unfolded on black and white TV screens all over the nation that fall was powerful. Ruby Bridges was one of four first grade girls attending their new school under the protection and safety of laws upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States of America. Day after day, the girls heard shouts of racial epithets from an angry crowd of white protesters at their school. They were escorted through angry crowds by Federal Marshals who were there to provide protection for the girls. In spite of it all, these little girls persevered.

The selection of these ABC books honors those who had the courage to *stand tall* for equality and social justice – whether they were a young eloquent minister, a seamstress “too tired of giving in” who fought for her seat on a bus, or an innocent, six year old child striving to achieve an equal education.

Clearly, intolerance and injustice continues today. We hope that by encouraging discussion of past intolerance and injustice, we can help guide our students toward actions that will build a more caring, just, inclusive, tolerant and safe school community for all.

GOALS and ASSETS

1. Goals
 - a. Discuss ways to be inclusive and accept differences by practicing UPstander techniques to promote a sense of belonging.
 - b. Role model responsible ways to accept differences in the digital world.
2. Assets: This book supports assets from 7 of the 8 categories:
 - a. Support - #1 Family Support, #3 Caring Adults, #5 Caring School Climate
 - b. Positive Values - #26 Caring, #27 Equality and Social Justice
 - c. Social Competencies - #33 Interpersonal Competence, #34 Cultural Competence, #36 Peaceful Conflict Resolution
 - d. Positive Identity - #37 Personal Power, #39 Sense of Purpose, #40 Positive View of Personal Future and #41 Positive Cultural Identity
 - e. Empowerment - #8 Youth as Resources, #10 Safety
 - f. Boundaries and Expectations - #3 Adult Role Models, #16 High Expectations
 - g. Commitment to Learning - #21 Achievement Motivation, #22 School Engagement, #24 Bonding to School

The focus of this lesson is celebrating that we are all different and thoughtfully examining our own biases, prejudices, and stereotypes. Striving to take action to actively welcome and include everyone at school helps build a safer and more caring school climate. We can provide the tools when students experience put downs, bucket dipping experiences, or cold pricklies that oftentimes include derogatory labels and stereotypes about race, religion, sexual orientation, and gender. This month's book and lesson open doors to a deep and rich discussion about intolerance and injustice that many students experience today.

PATH

Conversation Starter for Kinder - 2nd graders

We all have different favorite things, different traditions, different ways of celebrating, and different ways of solving problems. The thing we have in common is that we are all different. Unfortunately, differences are often used to divide us.

- a. Conversation Starter
 - a. Think back and remember the first time you noticed someone was different. (Examples: language, food, chopsticks for food, glasses, what someone wore, skin color)
 - b. What are their thoughts and feelings after this exercise? Do you notice similarities and differences?

- c. ABC readers Review background information from “Welcoming Schools” (at the end of this document) and decide if you will bring up to classrooms
- b. Introduce Ruby Bridges <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKyQV0-z6HE>
 - a. The history surrounding Ruby Bridges is summarized at the beginning of this doc. This is a great way to provide context to her time in history.
- c. Chicken and Cat (See back page): One day the chicken goes on his laptop and discovers that members of the cat species commit the highest rate of crime
<http://psychlearningcurve.org/stereotypes-bias-prejudice-and-discrimination/>
- d. Read the Book *Ruby Bridges Goes to School*

STRATEGIES

Discuss the book and then complete the desired activity.

- a. Discussion
 - a. How did Ruby feel about her experience? How would you feel if you were Ruby Bridges and had her first grade experience? How was Ruby an UPstander? Who stood up for her/ Who were her UPstanders? Who were the caring adults in her life? How did Ruby feel about her teacher, Mrs. Henry? What words would you use to describe Ruby? What effect does Ruby’s experience have on your life today?
- b. Activity: **Web of Support** Talk about how Ruby had a web of support helping her with this historic time in her life. Now they will make a web of support for their classroom.
 - a. Have them all make one large circle by standing shoulder to shoulder. The first person holds on to the end of a ball of yarn and shares her/his names of people they live with, people they see daily, and people in their community with words of affirmation describing this support (kind, generous, determined, fair, equitable, etc.)

PATH

Conversation Starter for 3 - 5 graders

We all have different favorite things, different traditions, different ways of celebrating, and different ways of solving problems. The thing we have in common is that we are all different. Unfortunately, differences are often used to divide us.

- e. Conversation Starter -
 - a. Think back and remember the first time you noticed someone was different. (Examples: language, food, chopsticks for food, glasses, what someone wore, skin color). The first step on your journey to ending racism is different for each person. One good step is to understand your own attitudes about skin color and where they began. Another good step

is to talk with people about race and racism with people whose skin color is different than your own.

- b. What are your thoughts and feelings? What are the similarities? For this older group, extend the conversation...
 - i. Would you be comfortable talking with your friends about skin color and what it means in their daily lives? Why or why not?
 - ii. What are a few questions you'd like to ask of someone of a different skin color, religion,?
- b. ABC readers Review background information from “Welcoming Schools” (at the end of this document) and decide if you will bring up to classrooms
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<http://psychlearningcurve.org/stereotypes-bias-prejudice-and-discrimination/>
- e. Discuss Types of Bullying Addressed in the book relating to the bigotry and illegal behaviors that today are classified as “Hate Crimes”. Though most don't partake in these crimes, people still hold onto stereotypes, prejudices, or discriminate others.
 - a. ***Stereotypes***: widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing. Define it as a generalized idea about a thing or person. For example, all flowers are yellow.
 - b. ***Prejudice***: an opinion or some ideas about someone based on appearance without knowing that person (*thoughts*).
 - c. ***Discrimination*** is when we *act* on negative opinions or attitudes and deny people fair treatment based on our prejudices. Discrimination is bullying someone with words, exclusion, or physical attacks.
- f. Read the Book ***Through My Eyes*** with the script
 - a. Ask students to be the readers. Cut up the script and ask the students to read and show each page.

STRATEGIES

- a. Discussion
 - a. How did Ruby stand tall?
 - b. Who was in her web of support? Who were her caring adults?
 - c. What effect does Ruby's experience have on your life today?
 - d. What injustices do you see happening today in our school, community, or world?
 - e. What can one person do/say to make a difference as an UPstander?

- f. How can you be an UPstander in your community? What kind of agreements can we work toward to make sure we show caring towards another?
- b. Activity - Web of Support Activity: **Web of Support** Talk about how Ruby had a web of support helping her with this historic time in her life. Now they will make a web of support for their classroom.
- a. Ask the students to think about one thing they can say or do if they saw a person being treated unfairly.
 - b. Have them all make one large circle by standing shoulder to shoulder. The first person holds the ball of yarn and shares his/her commitment to action with the group. (I will say hello to people on my way to school.) While holding onto the end of the yarn, toss the ball to another person. Each person will have a chance to answer the question and toss the ball of yarn to someone else.
 - c. Have them hold one end of the yarn as they toss the ball so it criss-crosses the room. This creates a web of support.
 - d. Tell the students let's see how well we can support each other. Show them a balloon and name it Jane. Jane came to school today feeling rather deflated. Blow balloon up a little. But after she arrived she started to feel welcome: like she belonged. She felt noticed and supported by all of the wonderful commitments you made as you built this web of support. Blow up balloon fully.
 - e. Toss Jane into the web and try using the web of support for 5 bounces.
 - f. What happened? What did you discover about teamwork as you played this game? What are the successes or do you need to make your web stronger? How can the lessons learned today make your school a place where all students feel like they belong?

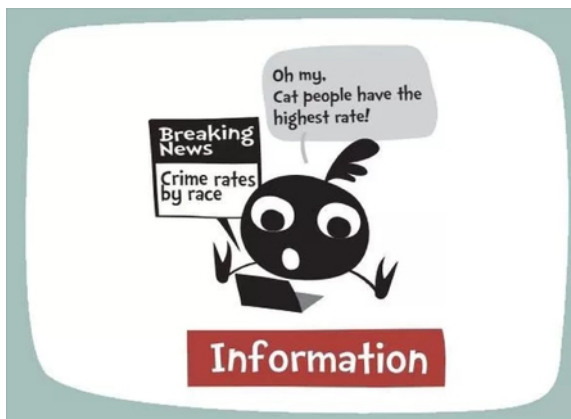
WELCOMING SCHOOLS BACKGROUND DATA

KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE RESEARCH ON REDUCING PREJUDICE

When does stereotyping and prejudices start?

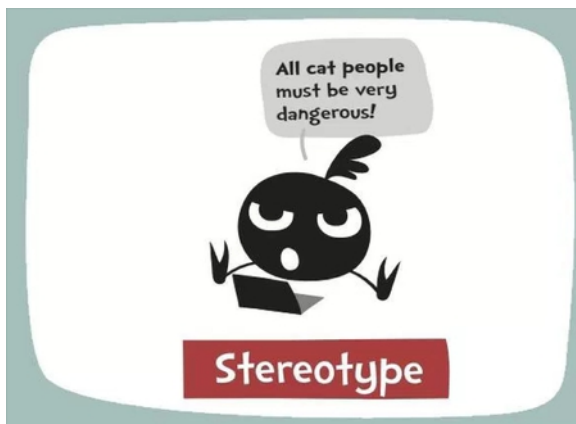
- Babies notice race as early as 3-6 months (*Infants living in a homogenous neighborhood show preferences to faces from their own racial group while infants in heterogeneous environments do not.*)
- Children start applying stereotypes at a very young age (*Between the ages of 3-5, children began to categorize people by race and express bias based on race.*)
- Preschoolers use racist language intentionally (*Children as young as preschool are able to use racist language to create social hierarchies, evoke emotional reactions by victims, and produce harmful results.*)
- Elementary school students understand that stereotypes can lead to discrimination (*By age 7, about 30% of children understand that stereotypes lead to discrimination.*)

- Everyone is susceptible to implicit biases. (Most Americans, regardless of race, display an implicit - or unconscious - White/anti-black bias. By 6 years, children demonstrate implicit biases about race.)



It all starts when we get outside information about people of different groups from some kind of source, whether it be your family, media, or even your own experience. We gain ideas about these particular group members, and these ideas allow us to create certain expectations of them.

Take this chicken in the comic for example. One day, the chicken goes on its laptop and discovers that members of the cat species commit the highest rates of crime.



Let's say the chicken connects crime with being "dangerous." The chicken now establishes a [stereotype](#) as it takes the adjective of being dangerous and completely overgeneralizes an entire group. In this situation, the chicken says, "All cat people must be very dangerous!"



As you can see, the chicken notices a customer, which is a cat, and takes a rather dramatic moment to pay attention to the customer. This relatively fixed change in perspective is known as [bias](#).



Poor kitty! The chicken has an undeserved, negative attitude towards the cat and mentally grumbles at its customer. At this point, it's important to notice that the chicken does not display an obvious action towards the cat... yet. This unfair attitude is called [prejudice](#).



While prejudice is what I think, [discrimination](#) is what I do. The chicken acts on its prejudice of the entire cat species and chooses to engage in discrimination by physically kicking out the harmless customer. All of these concepts often work together to create interesting results, and it isn't uncommon to see people hold certain stereotypes. How can we explain this behavior? What can we do to prevent it?

SCRIPT:

(Pg. 7) Ruby was born in a small cabin in rural Mississippi. “We were very poor, very, very poor,” Ruby said. “My daddy worked picking crops. There were times when we didn’t have much to eat. The people who owned the land were bringing in machines to pick the crops, so my daddy lost his job, and that’s when we had to move.”

(Pg. 8) In 1957, the family moved to New Orleans. Ruby’s father became a gas station attendant. Her mother took care of the children during the day. After they were tucked in bed, Ruby’s mother went to work scrubbing floors in a bank.

(Pg. 10) Read the first paragraph on this page. Even though the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled in 1954 that public schools could no longer be segregated or separate for black and white children, the schools were still segregated at the time Ruby and her family moved to New Orleans. With this system, black children did not receive the same education as white children. Black children were given old, used, out of date books. The black segregated school buildings were not well care for and often teachers hadn’t finished college.

(Pg. 30 & 31) In 1960, a New Orleans judge ordered four black girls to go to two white elementary schools in that city. Three of the girls – Leona, Tessie and Gail – were sent to McDonough Elementary School. Ruby was sent to first grade in the William Frantz Elementary School. The men you see in this picture with the students are like police for the federal government called Federal Marshals. It was their job to escort the girls to school and make sure they were safe. The crowds here (page 31) are people that didn’t want these girls to come to their school – simply because they were different – they were black, not white.

(Pg. 17) On Ruby’s first day, a large crowd of angry white people gathered outside the Frantz Elementary School. They carried signs that said they didn’t want black children in their school. People called Ruby names; some wanted to hurt her. They were trying to bully her and keep her from going to school.

(Pg. 19 & 15) It was the President of the United States who ordered these Federal Marshals to walk with Ruby into the school building. They carried guns in case the

crowd got out of control, but they didn't have to use them. Every day for weeks that turned into months, Ruby walked to school through angry crowds with the Marshals protecting her. Ruby would hurry through the crowd and not say a word.

(Pg. 23) The white people in the neighborhood would not send their children to school with Ruby, because they didn't want their white children to be around a black child. After Ruby got inside the building every day, she was all alone in her classroom except for her teacher, Mrs. Henry. She had no other children in her classroom. (Read what her teacher wrote about her at the bottom of the page.)

(Pg. 36) In Ruby's words, "The first week of school was very tense with all the crowds of people out front. Here I am all ready to go to school. Soon it was Thanksgiving and I had a week off! I had fun playing with my friends in the neighborhood."

(Pg. 40) "After Christmas, my teacher and I settled into a routine. Being Mrs. Henry's only student wasn't a chore. It was fun and I felt special. She was like my best friend. We did everything together – reading and word puzzles, spelling and math. I couldn't go outside, so we did jumping jack exercises in the classroom."

(Pg. 51) Near the end of the school year, some white students slowly joined Ruby at Frantz Elementary. They would come and visit Ruby in her classroom. Then it was June and school was over. Ruby said good-bye to Mrs. Henry and went home for her summer vacation.

(Pg. 53) By second grade, there were no longer any angry crowds of white people waiting for Ruby outside of school. Second grade found Ruby in an integrated classroom with both white and black children. The school had been successfully desegregated.

(Pg. 56) Ruby went on to graduate from Frantz Elementary School and high school in New Orleans. Today, she is married to a building contractor and has four sons. She spends her time traveling around the country talking to people about her experiences in first grade and what it was like to be a part of change in our country's history.

Time Line

President Harry Truman orders integration of armed forces

Barbara Johns speaks out at Moton High School, asking for equal education



Little Rock, Arkansas, schools are integrated

Mack Parker is lynched in Mississippi

1948



1951

1954

Supreme Court says no to school segregation in *Brown vs. Board of Education*

1955

Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on the bus

Montgomery bus boycott begins

Emmett Till is lynched

1956

Segregation on Alabama buses ends by order of the Supreme Court

1957



1959

Freedom Rides



Civil Rights Act of 1964 becomes law

Marches for integration in St. Augustine, Florida

Freedom Summer education and voter registration project

Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama

Jimmy Lee Jackson assassinated

Reverend James Reeb assassinated

March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama



1960

1961

1962

1963

1964

1965

1966

1968

Ruby Bridges begins school in New Orleans, integrating that city's elementary school system

Student sit-ins begin at Woolworth lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina

James Meredith integrates the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss), entering the university only under the protection of federal marshals

Birmingham crusade; police attack children with fire hoses and dogs

Birmingham church bombing; four young girls killed

Medgar Evers assassinated

March on Washington

James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner assassinated

Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party goes to convention

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wins the Nobel Peace Prize

Viola Liuzzo assassinated

Malcolm X assassinated

Voting Rights Act of 1965 becomes law

Vernor Dahmer assassinated

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. marches in Cicero, Illinois

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. assassinated

Ruby Bridges



Ruby moved with her parents to New Orleans at the age of 4. In 1960, when she was 6 years old, her parents volunteered her to participate in the integration of the New Orleans School system.

Day after day she was escorted through angry crowds by federal marshals who were there to provide protection for her. No other child would attend school with her, so she had to spend her whole 1st Grade year alone with the teacher.

Her first day at school was so special that it was commemorated in a painting by Norman Rockwell.

Black History Month

February is **Black History Month**. The election of President Obama shows how much our country has changed since Ruby Bridges went to school.

During this month think about the following:-

- How would you feel if you were Ruby Bridges ?
- What effect does Ruby's experience have on your life today?
- What injustices do you see happening today in our school or community
- What can you do to make a difference as an UP-stander?



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