

Lesson Plan: Ruby Bridges



Ruby Bridges, age six
United Press International Photograph, Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

Introduction

Students are encouraged to develop a deeper understanding of the African American Freedom Struggle through the experiences of Ruby Bridges (born 1954). Ruby made history as a young pioneer in the fight to desegregate schools in the 1960's. In this lesson, students learn about the importance of character and individual action. Through the activities, students will explain how heroes from long ago and the recent past have made a difference in others' lives.

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Subject: English Language, U.S. History

Grades: K-2, 3-5

Teaching Standard: History/ Social Science 2.5

Essential Question

What can you do to make the world a better place?

Sub Questions

- What are civil rights?
- What are the characteristics of a hero?
- Why was Ruby Bridges a hero?

- How can you become a hero?
- How do heroes make a difference in others' lives?

Lesson Activities

[Part One: The Young Hero: Ruby Bridges](#)

[Part Two: Standing Up for Others](#)

Part One: The Young Hero: Ruby Bridges

Instructions

Opening Activity: Ask students to name some of their heroes. You may want to write down the names on chart paper.

Discussion: Guide a discussion about the meaning of “hero.” Help students to understand that heroes are not only superheroes, but everyday people who stand up for what is right or who help someone in need.

Classroom Activity:

1. Introduce vocabulary items: hero, segregation, civil rights. Ask students to define these words. Clarify the meaning of these words.
2. Read aloud the book *The Story of Ruby Bridges* written by Robert Coles and illustrated by George Ford. OR listen to the *story read aloud*.
3. Post photos around the room from *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges. Under each photo place a piece of paper with the words, “Ruby is a hero because...” Ask students to fill in words or phrases below the photo. Photos are on pages 17, 19, 23, 62.
4. Ask students to work in pairs to create an idea web. They will place Ruby in the center and link her circle to other circles with examples of her heroic deeds. You may want to start a model entitled “Ruby the Hero,” with the class. Students may use the words and phrases from the photo activity to create their web.
5. Ask students to use a Venn diagram to compare themselves to Ruby Bridges using the following categories: gender, age, school, heroic deeds.

Materials

- *The Story of Ruby Bridges* written by Robert Coles, illustrated by George Ford; *The Story of Ruby Bridges read aloud*.

- *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges; [Through My Eyes read aloud](#)
- [Remember: The Journey to School Integration](#) by Toni Morrison
- Encyclopedia: [Brown v. Board of Education](#)

Part Two: Standing Up for Others

Instructions

Activity: Ask students to share an example of when a friend has helped them. Discuss what it means to be a good friend.

Discussion: Reflecting on Ruby’s story, ask students to think of examples of friends who supported Ruby. Examples may include her teacher, Mrs. Henry, people who sent letters, and her neighbors on France Street. You may want to use photos and quotes from [The Story of Ruby Bridges](#) and [Through My Eyes](#) to support the discussion.

Create: Write the following quotes from [Through My Eyes](#) on the board. Ask students to choose a quote and draw a picture to illustrate the ideas.

- “When we left school that first day, the crowd outside was even bigger and louder than it had been in the morning. There were reporters and film cameras and people everywhere.”
- “My father heard about the trouble at school. That night when he came home from work, he said I was his ‘brave little Ruby.’”
- “I will always remember how our neighbors on France Street helped us through the winter. They came by all the time to see how we were doing. They were nervous about the racial tension in the city, but they also wanted to support us.”
- “Being Mrs. Henry’s only student wasn’t a chore. It was fun and felt sort of special. She was more like my best friend than just an ordinary teacher. She was a loving person, and I knew she cared about me.”

Optional Activities/Assignments:

- Have students dramatize the story of Ruby Bridges with one student narrating and others pantomiming.

- Ask students to write about themselves doing a heroic deed or helping a friend. Ask the students to draw an accompanying picture.
- Watch the film *Ruby Bridges: A Real American Hero*, (ca. 90min) produced by Disney in 1998.

Materials

- *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, written by Robert Coles, illustrated by George Ford
The Story of Ruby Bridges, read aloud
- *Through My Eyes*, by Ruby Bridges,
Through My Eyes, read aloud