



SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

## ***THE STORY OF RUBY BRIDGES***

By Robert Coles

### **LITERACY CONNECTIONS**

By Jim Bentley

#### **Publisher's Summary**

“Six-year-old Ruby Bridges is the first black child to attend an all-white elementary school in New Orleans. Escorted by federal marshals, she faces angry protestors with courage and dignity as she becomes the focus of hatred and prejudice.”

#### **Authority Connections, Primary Text**

##### **Lesson 1**

1. Ruby's daddy picked crops. He lost his job when the people who owned the land started using machines. Do you think they had the *authority* to use those machines?
2. Did it seem fair that Ruby's daddy lost his job and her family had to move?
3. Do you think there should be *laws* against using machines to pick crops?
4. When Ruby was a little girl, black and white children couldn't go to school together. It wasn't fair. And it was against our nation's laws. Who had the *power* and the *authority* to send Ruby to a “white” elementary school?
  - Answer: the judge
5. Did anybody in the story use *power without authority*?
  - Answer: Some people wanted to hurt her; the city and state police didn't help Ruby.
6. Did anybody use *power with authority*?
  - Answer: The president of the United States ordered federal marshals to walk with Ruby; federal marshals carried guns and protected Ruby.
7. How did *authority* help Ruby?
  - Answer: It kept her safe; it forced people to share their schools with Ruby; it helped her get her “property” in the form of an education; it helped settle the argument of whether or not black kids could go to white schools; and it helped keep the people outside the school in order so that Ruby could be safe and learn.

##### **Lesson 2**

1. Do you think the rule that kept Ruby from going to a “white” school was good or bad? Why?
2. Do you think the rule that let Ruby go to a “white” school was good or bad? Why?
3. Why did the president of the United States have to send federal marshals to walk Ruby to school?
  - Answer: Unfortunately, the state and city police didn't help Ruby get to school safely. They'd made a mistake by not following the rules or listening to the judge who said Ruby should go to a white school.

4. Why do you think some of the city or state police didn't want to help Ruby?
  - Answer: Some of the police were probably racist.
5. Is there a rule that you would like to make about school? What is it? Do you think it would be a good rule for everybody?
6. Think of a rule you have to follow and you would like to change. How would you change the rule? Would your change make the rule better for everybody?

### Lesson 3

1. Who were some people in the story that held a *position of authority*?
  - Answer: the judge who ordered Ruby to go to a white school; Ruby's parents; the president of the United States; federal marshals; and Mrs. Henry, the teacher.
2. A teacher is a person who holds a position of authority. If your teacher had to be gone for a week and you could "hire" a new teacher to take his/her place, what would be some things you would look for?

### Lesson 4

1. What were some of the good things (*benefits*) that happened when Ruby went to a white school?
  - Answer: She finally got the same education as white kids; she got to meet new friends and have new experiences; and she changed a bad law and helped end desegregation.
2. What were some bad things (costs) that happened when Ruby went to a white school?
  - Answer: People got mad; Ruby was in danger; and it cost money to have federal marshals walk Ruby to school.

### Lesson 5

1. Do you think it was a good *solution* for Ruby to go to a white school? Explain.

### Lesson 6

1. What were some *powers* the judge had in the story? What were some *powers* the President of the United States had? What were some *powers* the federal marshals had? What were some *powers* Mrs. Henry had? What were some *powers* Ruby had?
  - Answer: The judge could order Ruby to go to a white school; the president could tell federal marshals to protect Ruby and take her to school; the marshals could carry guns and keep the angry people away from Ruby to keep her safe; Mrs. Henry could teach Ruby and try to make sure she was okay; and Ruby could forgive the angry people and pray that they would learn to accept her.
2. What were some *duties* the judge had in the story? What were some *duties* the president of the United States had? The federal marshals? Mrs. Henry?
  - Answer: The judge had to help end the problem of segregation because it was against the nation's laws; the president had to enforce the rules and make sure that Ruby could in fact go to a white school even though the city and state police didn't want to help; the marshals had to protect Ruby's life; Mrs. Henry had to teach Ruby even if she was the only student in the class; Ruby had to obey the rules of the nation and her school and she felt she had the moral duty to forgive people for their mistakes.

3. Were there any limits placed on Ruby in the story?
  - Answer: She was no longer allowed to go to a segregated school; couldn't walk to or from school without federal marshals; and was not allowed to break the school rules.
4. If police are supposed to make sure people follow the laws, why do you think some of them didn't want to help Ruby?
  - Answer: Some were probably racist.

## Lesson 7

1. If you could talk to Ruby Bridges, what would you want to ask her?
2. Do you think Ruby would have made a good class helper? Why?

## Responsibility Connections, Primary Text

### Lesson 1

1. Ruby's daddy picked crops. When he lost his job, he had the *responsibility* to find a new one to take care of his family. What did he do?
  - Answer: He moved his family to New Orleans and became a janitor.
2. What were some *responsibilities* Ruby had in the story?
  - Answer: Respect even the people's feelings who didn't like her; tell the truth to Mrs. Henry when she asked her why she talked to the crowd; forgive people for saying bad things; and work hard in school even though she was the only child in class.
3. Describe Ruby's *beliefs about right and wrong ways to act*. What did Ruby do to show you what kind of person she was?
4. The federal marshals had a *responsibility* to keep Ruby safe. What might have happened if they didn't do their job?
  - Answer: Ruby might be hurt by the angry people.
5. What are some *responsibilities* of a teacher? A fireman? A policeman? A parent?

### Lesson 2

1. What were some *problems* Ruby faced when she went to her new school?
  - Answer: protesters; kids not wanting to be her friends; angry people threatening her safety
2. What were some *benefits* of Ruby going to a new, "white" school?
  - Answer: helped change a bad law that segregated children; helped people become more tolerant and accepting of others; she possibly received a better education; she felt proud of herself for being brave
3. What were some *costs* of Ruby going to a new, "white" school?
  - Answer: scary experience; being alone; being treated badly by mean people; having to make new friends; leaving old friends and teachers; having safety threatened

### Lesson 3

1. A lot of people didn't want Ruby to come to the new school. How would you solve the *problem* of all those angry people?
2. What's a problem in your school that you'd like to help solve? How would you solve that problem?

#### **Lesson 4**

1. Did Ruby have more than one responsibility at the same time in the story?
2. Which responsibility do you think was more important: forgiving all those mean people or getting an education?

#### **Lesson 5**

1. If you were Ruby, would you have wanted to go to the new, “white” school?
2. If your parents told you that you would be moving to a new school where people didn’t want you, how would you feel? What would you do to prepare yourself to go?

#### **Lesson 6**

1. Who was responsible for protecting Ruby?
  - Answer: federal marshals; the president of the United States
2. Who was responsible for making Ruby feel threatened?
  - Answer: angry protesters; people who didn’t want their kids in school with a black child
3. Ruby forgave the protesters and mean people. Would you? Why or why not?

#### **Lesson 7**

1. Why do you think the angry protesters wanted to keep Ruby out of their school?
2. Do you think the angry protesters liked or disliked Ruby?
3. Why do you think the angry protesters treated Ruby the way they did?
4. Where do you think the angry protesters and mean people learned to act the way they did? Who do you think taught them?