

Walking Tall

How did Ruby Bridges make history 50 years ago?

Fifty years ago, a little girl named Ruby Bridges arrived at her new elementary school. The school was in New Orleans, Louisiana.

As she walked toward the school's front doors, an angry crowd of people shouted at her. United States **marshals** walked with her. A marshal is an officer. They were there to protect the first grader. That's because the people didn't want Ruby to go inside. But the 6-year-old walked into the school anyway. As she did, she marched into history books.



Bettmann/Corbis

Ruby Bridges started first grade in 1960.

The day was Nov. 14, 1960. On that morning, little Ruby became one of the first African Americans to attend an all-white elementary school in the South.

Before then, the law in many states said that black children could not attend the same schools as white children. People of different races also had to use separate public restrooms. It was called **segregation**. That is when people of different races are kept separate.

U.S. leaders worked to end segregation. They helped bring **civil rights** to all Americans. Those are the rights to be treated equally. A few months before

Ruby started school, a federal court ordered an end to school segregation in New Orleans.

By the time Ruby started the second grade, there were no more angry people outside her school. There were other African American students in her class. Today, children of all races go to school together.

Bridges says she was never scared to go to school during the first grade. "I wasn't really afraid," she told *WR News*. "I didn't really know what was going on at the time, and I loved school."

Meet Ruby Bridges

WR News student reporter Kaelin Ray recently asked Ruby Bridges how it feels to make a difference.

Kaelin Ray: What was your first day at the school like?

Ruby Bridges: My first day I spent sitting in the principal's office, so it was very confusing.

KR: How does it feel to know that you are a part of U.S. history?

RB: I'm [very] proud of that fact. My mother was really happy about me being able to attend that school. My father was more concerned about my safety.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What happened to the state segregation law in Louisiana a few months before Ruby started school?

- A A state court said that public bathrooms must be segregated.
- B A federal court ordered that school segregation must end.
- C Some U.S. marshals helped Ruby enter the segregated school.
- D U.S. leaders worked to bring civil rights to all Americans.

2. Which of the following does the author describe first in the passage?

- A The author describes the laws of segregation.
- B The author describes how Ruby Bridges feels to be a part of U.S. history.
- C The author describes Ruby Bridges' first day of school.
- D The author describes how Ruby's second grade year was.

3. The passage implies that

- A Ruby and her family were very brave
- B Ruby and her family did not understand what was happening
- C Ruby and her family were worried about her safety
- D Ruby and her family were happy to have U.S. marshals help them

4. Read the following sentence: That morning, Ruby became one of the first African Americans to attend an all-white elementary school in the South.

In this sentence **attend** means

- A to wait a long time
- B to be present
- C to shout angrily
- D to be confused

5. What would be another good title for this passage?

- A Ruby Bridges in the Principal's Office
- B Ruby Bridges Loves History Books
- C Ruby Bridges and Her First Day of School
- D Ruby Bridges, American Hero

6. Why were United States marshals walking Ruby to school?

7. What word would the author probably use to describe Ruby Bridges?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Ruby Bridges says that she wasn't scared to go to school as a first grader _____ she didn't really understand what was going on.

- A but
- B because
- C and
- D although

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

An angry crowd of people shouted at Ruby outside her elementary school because they wanted the school to remain all-white.

Who? an angry crowd of people

(did) What? _____

Where? _____

Why? _____

10. Read the vocabulary word and definition below and complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

Vocabulary Word: segregation (seg · reg · a · tion): separation based on differences.

10a. Read the sentences below and underline the word **segregation**.

1. In the United States in the 1950s, segregation laws meant that blacks and whites did not eat in the same restaurants.
2. There was segregation of boys and girls at the overnight camping trip.
3. The segregation of food on a plate is important to some people to enjoy their meal.
4. At the animal shelter, there is segregation of the cats from the dogs because many times cats and dogs do not get along well.
5. Most people agree that segregation of people by race is wrong.

10b. Which image shows a group of things that has a history of segregation?



11. If an International Children’s Chorus has kids from 10 different countries singing together, is that segregation? Why or why not?

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 660

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: The passage recounts the events around Ruby Bridges being the first African American student to attend an all-white elementary school in the American South. The passage ends with a short interview with Ruby Bridges, reflecting on the events of 1960.

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6. Why were United States marshals walking Ruby to school?

Suggested answer: The United States marshals were there to protect Ruby from the angry crowd of people who did not want her to go inside the school. [paragraph #2]

7. What word would the author probably use to describe Ruby Bridges?

Suggested answer: The author would probably describe Ruby as strong or brave because she was willing to be the first black child in an all-white school. [paragraphs #2, 3]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Ruby Bridges says that she wasn't scared to go to school as a first grader _____ she didn't really understand what was going on.

- A but
- B because**
- C and
- D although

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

An angry crowd of people shouted at Ruby outside her elementary school because they wanted the school to remain all-white.

Who? an angry crowd of people

(did) What? **shouted at Ruby**

Where? **outside her elementary school**

Why? **because they wanted the school to remain all-white**

10. ReadWorks recommends that you teach this vocabulary word to the whole class out loud using the four steps listed below.

Vocabulary Word: segregation

Step 1: Introduce the word

Teacher writes the word on the board and divides it into syllables: (seg · reg · a · tion)

- a. Teacher says: "This word is segregation. What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "segregation."]

Step 2: Provide a child-friendly definition

- a. Teacher says: "Segregation means separation based on differences."
- b. Teacher says: "In the text the author states that there was a law in many states that black and white people had to go to different schools and use different public restrooms, and that this separation was called segregation. In the text the separation was based on differences of race or color. Segregation means separation based on differences."
- c. Teacher says: "What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "segregation."]

Step 3: Practice the word

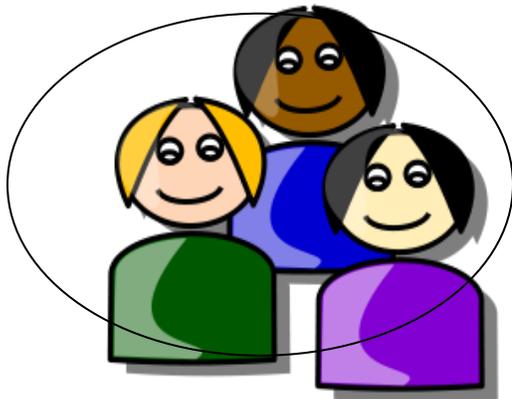
Teacher provides examples and additional opportunities to repeat the word. Read the 1st sentence out loud to your students. Begin reading it again and when you come to the vocabulary word prompt students to say the vocabulary word out loud. Then, finish reading the sentence out loud to your students.

- 10a.**
1. In the United States in the 1950s, segregation laws meant that blacks and whites did not eat in the same restaurants.
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 5. Most people agree that segregation of people by race is wrong.

Step 4: Check for student understanding

This step can be completed as a whole class activity or as an independent practice.

- 10b.** Which image shows a group of things that has a history of segregation?



- 11.** If an International Children's Chorus has kids from 10 different countries singing together, is that segregation? Why or why not?

Suggested answer: No, because they are in the same group, even though they are different.

Suggested Additional Vocabulary: protect, separate, civil rights, concerned