

The Story of Ruby Bridges

Lesson Summary

Students will understand the meaning of equality and its importance in the lives of young people. They will explore how segregation affected everyday life and discuss the impacts of inequality. After engaging students in a discussion of equality and segregation, the teacher reads *The Story of Ruby Bridges* to first grade students, modeling a Think Aloud strategy to engage students in the text. The teacher then leads students in discussion of major issues raised by the text. Students demonstrate their understanding of the text by illustrating a scene from the story.

Introduction

In 1960, a federal judge ordered New Orleans to integrate its schools. Four black girls were ordered to go to all-white elementary schools. Ruby Bridges, entering the first grade, was ordered to attend William Frantz Elementary School; the other three girls were sent to a different school. The image of a small girl surrounded by police encouraged a nation to rethink school segregation. Norman Rockwell's iconic illustration of Ruby Bridges remains an important piece of America artwork to this day.

Materials

- Photo handout
- *The Story of Ruby Bridges*
- Norman Rockwell illustration
- Crayons/markers and paper

Procedures

1. Write the word "equality" on the board. Ask students to turn and talk to a partner for one minute about what it means to be equal. After the minute is up, ask a few groups to share what they found and write their responses on the board.
2. Distribute photo handout to students. Define segregation for the students and ask them to find examples of segregation in the pictures. Explain that segregation was part of a larger set of laws called Jim Crow laws. Cite several laws that affected children: separate rooms or sections of restaurants and libraries, separate schools, theaters, lunch counters and public parks, and separate ticket offices and entrances to circuses and other shows. Ask the students if these are examples of equal treatment. Explain that these laws were changed by the government, and say that you are going to read a story about one girl's real life experience.
3. Prepare to read the book by demonstrating the strategies you use to make sense of the text. Show the cover of the book and ask students what they think the book will be about.
4. As you read, model Think Aloud strategies for the students. Select two strategies to use while you read, selecting from this list:

- **Predicting** (*I predict..., In the next part I think..., I think this the character will...*)
 - **Picturing** (*I picture..., I can see...*)
 - **Making connections** (*This is like a..., This reminds me of...*)
 - **Identifying a problem** (*I got confused when..., I'm not sure of..., I didn't expect...*)
 - **Using fix ups** (*I think I'll have to... [reread, or take some other action to help comprehension], Maybe I'll need to... [read on, or persevere in some other way]*)
5. After reading the book, engage the students in class discussion. Ask them to explain the difference between fiction and non-fiction. The following questions might help you to spur some discussion:
- Who was Ruby Bridges?
 - What made Ruby so different from everyone else?
 - How would you feel if you were Ruby?
 - What would you do if you were Ruby in that situation?
 - In what ways has Ruby's strength and courage affected our lives today?
6. Show the students Norman Rockwell's famous painting of Ruby Bridges ("The Problem We All Live With"). Explain that this is a very famous painting. Ask them to turn and talk to a partner for a minute about the picture, identifying the key parts of the picture. Is it the same as the book? Different?
7. Explain to the students that they will be making their own drawings about Ruby Bridges. Tell them that they should choose a part of the story they heard and draw their own representation of it. Distribute art materials and circulate among the students.