

## Exemplar Read-Aloud Informational Texts – The Story of Ruby Bridges

**Coles, Robert. *The Story of Ruby Bridges*. Illustrated by George Ford. New York: Scholastic, 1995. (1995)**

Ruby Bridges was born in a small cabin near Tylertown, Mississippi.

“We were very poor, very, very poor,” Ruby said. “My daddy worked picking crops. We just barely got by. 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.

“I remember us leaving. I was four, I think.”

In 1957, the family moved to New Orleans. Ruby’s father became a janitor. 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.

Every Sunday, the family went to church.

“We wanted our children to be near God’s spirit,” Ruby’s mother said. “We wanted them to start feeling close to Him from the start.”

At that time, black children and white children went to separate schools in New Orleans. The black children were not able to receive the same education as the white children. It wasn’t fair. And it was against the nation’s law.

In 1960, a judge ordered four black girls to go to two white elementary schools. Three of the girls were sent to McDonogh 19. Six-year-old Ruby Bridges was sent to first grade in the William Frantz Elementary School.

Ruby’s parents were proud that their daughter had been chosen to take part in an important event in American history. They went to church.

“We sat there and prayed to God,” Ruby’s mother said, “that we’d all be strong and we’d have courage and we’d get through any trouble; and Ruby would be a good girl and she’d hold her head up high and be a credit to her own people and a credit to all the American people. We prayed long and we prayed hard.”

On Ruby’s first day, a large crowd of angry white people gathered outside the Frantz Elementary School. The people carried signs that said they didn’t want black children in a white school. People called Ruby names; some wanted to hurt her. The city and state police did not help Ruby.

The President of the United States ordered federal marshals to walk with Ruby into the school building. The marshals carried guns.

Every day, for weeks that turned into months, Ruby experienced that kind of school day.

She walked to the Frantz School surrounded by marshals. Wearing a clean dress and a bow in her hair and carrying her lunch pail, Ruby walked slowly for the first few blocks. As Ruby approached the school, she saw a crowd of people marching up and down the street. Men and women and children shouted at her. They pushed toward her. The marshals kept them from Ruby by threatening to arrest them.

Ruby would hurry through the crowd and not say a word.

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