

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Ruby Bridges & Bravery

## Changing the Course of History

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. Until the middle of the 1960s, the United States had laws that treated black and white people unequally. These laws said that black people could not eat in the same parts of restaurants or drink from the same water fountains as white people. Black people had to sit in the backs of buses, while white people could sit at the front. Black people and white people had to be separated in public places like parks, libraries, bathrooms and schools. This separation of a group of people from another is called segregation. When all types of people are allowed to be included it is called integration—this is the opposite of segregation. When a school is integrated, it means that all students are allowed to go there, no matter the color of their skin.

Notes

2. A court is a place where questions about laws are debated and decisions about laws are made. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the United States. It decides whether the US government and state governments are acting in a way that's fair. The Constitution is the document that explains the rights that people in the US have and the way the government should work. The Supreme Court decides whether or not laws follow the Constitution. If it decides that a law does not, that law will go away. When the Supreme Court makes a decision, all of the other courts in the US must follow it. In 1954, the year Ruby Bridges was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, the Supreme Court ruled that the separation of white and black students did not follow the ideas in the Constitution. The Supreme Court said that all public schools had to become integrated.

Notes

3. Even though the Supreme Court told schools to integrate in 1954, schools in the South, which included Louisiana where Ruby Bridges lived, did not listen. They continued to keep black students out of white schools. Finally, in 1960, the courts told schools in New Orleans that they had to end segregation. The schools gave hard tests to only black students, not to white students, and said that the black students could only attend if they passed them. They hoped that the black students wouldn't pass these extra hard tests so that the schools could continue segregation.

Notes

4. Ruby and five other black students in New Orleans passed the tests and were given the chance to attend all-white schools. On November 14, 1960, Ruby had her first day at the William Frantz elementary school. The US government knew that many white people in New Orleans were angry about integration, and it might be unsafe for Ruby to go to school. To protect her, President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent guards, people whose job it is to protect someone or something, to New Orleans. These guards are also called marshals. The marshals picked up Ruby at her house, drove her to school and walked with her into the building.

Notes

5. When Ruby arrived, a mob—a large group or crowd—of white people was standing outside and screaming mean, cruel things at Ruby. Some held signs saying that they were against integration. Some chanted the mean rhyme, “Two-four-six-eight, we don’t want to integrate.” When Ruby saw the mob, she didn’t understand that the people were trying to keep her out of the school. She thought they were celebrating Mardi Gras, a carnival that takes place in New Orleans each year.

Notes

6. When you are brave, you don’t feel or show any fear. When you are confident, you are sure of something. Being bold is similar—it means you are willing to take risks and don’t show fear. Ruby was frightened by certain things the mob did, but overall, she looked brave and confident as she walked into the school. One of the guards who was protecting Ruby said, “She marched along like a little soldier.”

Notes

7. When Ruby arrived at William Frantz, white parents took their children out of the school because they didn't want them to be in class with a black girl. Ruby was the only student in her first grade class. Her teacher, Mrs. Henry, was white. Ruby spent all day in Mrs. Henry's classroom because it wasn't safe for Ruby to go to the cafeteria or playground. But Ruby's community slowly accepted integration. When Ruby got to second grade, she was no longer the only student in her class. There were other black and white students. This was a good effect, or result, of Ruby integrating the school. However, some bad things happened to Ruby's family because they sent Ruby to William Frantz. Ruby's father lost his job. Ruby's mother was turned away from the grocery store, and her grandparents were forced to leave their farm.

Notes

8. When you have compassion, you understand how other people are feeling when they're going through hard times, and you want to help them. When Ruby Bridges grew up, she showed compassion by starting the Ruby Bridges Foundation. The goal of the foundation is to end racism, or the bad treatment of people because of the color of their skin. Ruby does this by teaching children the importance of respecting people and appreciating people's differences.

Notes