

Ruby Bridges

Ruby Bridges was born in Mississippi, USA on 8th September 1954, during the growing US civil rights movement. Six-year-old Ruby played an important part of it.

The Civil Rights Movement

The aim was to make sure that African Americans had equal civil rights. The leader was Martin Luther King Jr. In 1963, he gave a famous speech that started, 'I have a dream...'

It did make a difference. In 1964, segregation of all places was banned. A year later, all black people were allowed to vote.

Resilient Ruby

Ruby moved to the city of New Orleans when she was very young. Ruby's family were African American. There had been a long history of unfair treatment of African Americans; one policy at the time was called segregation. This meant that there were separate swimming pools, cinemas, and even schools for black and for white people.

In 1954, the US Supreme Court made a rule that all schools must desegregate. It said that children should have the right to attend any school.

In 1960, Ruby passed a test and joined William Frantz Elementary School. Before the new rule, it had been a school only for white children. Although it was within walking distance of her home, Ruby had to be driven there and back. She was helped into the school building by US Marshals (a type of police officer) because many local white people were very angry. They did not want an African American child to join a school where there were lots of white children.



Ruby and the US Marshals

Ruby's first day was difficult. There were many people protesting when she and her mother arrived. There was only one teacher who was willing to teach her, a lady called Barbara Henry.

Ruby Bridges

Mrs Henry was a young, white teacher who had been teaching abroad. Unlike many other white Americans, she was supportive of the change.

The first year at school was hard for Ruby: she had no classmates and had to eat lunch by herself. Sometimes she was unhappy, but she did not miss one day's attendance.

Did You Know ...?

Nearly 40 years later, Ruby was reunited with Mrs Henry on a TV show.

After a while, the lives of many African-American people improved because of the civil rights movement. Ruby grew up and started the Ruby Bridges Foundation, which aims to promote tolerance and respect. She still works to improve equality. In fact, she has been awarded a medal for helping her country. Ruby Bridges will always be remembered for her bravery and resilience.



Questions

1. What did six-year-old Ruby Bridges play an important part of? Tick one.

- the US Supreme Court
- Mississippi, USA
- the growing civil rights movement
- school

2. What was the name of the unfair treatment of African Americans?

Tick one.

- New Orleans
- segregation
- US Marshals
- Martin Luther King Jr.

3. What did Ruby have to do before she started school?

Tick one.

- She had to take a test.
- She had to give a speech.
- She had to buy a bag.
- She had to write her name.

4. Match each statement to the correct person.

Mrs Henry	... moved to the city of New Orleans.
Martin Luther King Jr	... gave a famous speech in 1963.
Ruby Bridges	... helped Ruby get to school safely.
The US Marshals	... was the only one who was happy to teach Ruby.

5. Fill in the missing words. After a _____, the lives of _____ African-American people _____ because of the civil rights movement.

6. Look at the **Did You Know...?** section. **Find and copy** a word which describes 'coming together after being apart'.

7. In what way was Mrs Henry different from the other teachers?

8. Do you agree that Ruby Bridges was brave and resilient? Why?
