

Teaching Synthesizing in Grades 3–5

The Story of Ruby Bridges by Robert Coles

Overview and Rationale

This powerful story tells of six-year-old Ruby Bridges, who is at the forefront of the school desegregation movement in the 1960s. Every day, Ruby bravely walks through crowds of angry protesters to pursue her education. When white families pull their children from the school, Ruby studies alone with her teacher. The book sends messages about the power of faith, perseverance, and forgiveness.

Lexile Framework: 730L

Grade-Level Equivalent: 5.4

Guided Reading Level: O

What the Text Says	What I Say
"... I was four, I think." (p. 1)	<i>The gist here is that Ruby Bridges had a hard childhood. She grew up poor with almost no food. When her dad lost his job, she had to move.</i>
Ruby's mother went to work scrubbing floors in a bank. (p. 2)	<i>The text is mostly about how hard Ruby's parents worked.</i>
"We wanted them to start feeling close to Him from the very start." (p. 2)	<i>Now I know that religion was also important to Ruby's family.</i>
And it was against the nation's law. (p. 4)	<i>The important idea here is that schools were segregated, even though this was against the law.</i>
Ruby Bridges was sent to first grade in the William Frantz Elementary School. (p. 5)	<i>The important idea here is that Ruby is about to be the only black girl in a white school.</i>
We prayed long and we prayed hard. (p. 6)	<i>At first I thought that Ruby's family would not want her to go to this school, but now I think they saw it as an important opportunity.</i>
... a large crowd of angry white people gathered outside the Frantz Elementary School. (p. 8)	<i>The most important word here is angry. This gives me some hints that things might be difficult for Ruby.</i>
The city and the state police did not help Ruby. (p. 8)	<i>The key information here is that Ruby is alone in her struggle; not even the cops seem to protect her.</i>
The marshals carried guns. (p. 8)	<i>At first I was nervous for Ruby, but now I'm getting the sense that this is dangerous. The marshals carrying guns shows me that things are violent.</i>
Ruby experienced that kind of school day. (p. 11)	<i>Before I thought that the crowds were there just for the first days of Ruby's school, but now I see the violence went on for months.</i>
Ruby would hurry through the crowd and not say a word. (p. 11)	<i>At first I thought Ruby might try to sneak into school without people seeing her. But here I learn that Ruby walked proudly to school—slowly, dressed nicely.</i>
The white people in the neighborhood would not send their children to school. (p. 12)	<i>I'm getting more evidence of how strongly people reacted—that people kept their white children home from school just because of Ruby.</i>

What the Text Says	What I Say
... she was all alone except for her teacher, Miss Hurley. (p. 12)	<i>I'm really curious about how Miss Hurley reacts to Ruby. Will she welcome Ruby, or will she be cruel like the others?</i>
... with a big smile on her face, ready to get down to the business of learning. (p. 12)	<i>Now I'm really seeing how important school is to Ruby and to her family. It doesn't bother her that she's all alone.</i>
"... She seemed as normal and relaxed as any child I've ever taught." (p. 12)	<i>Now I understand that Miss Hurley was a supportive teacher to Ruby, who appreciated her hard work and personality.</i>
... in an empty classroom, an empty building. (p. 12)	<i>This sentence makes me wonder how long they will keep the school open, if there is only one student in it.</i>
"Sometimes I'd look at her and wonder how she did it," said Miss Hurley. "How she went by those mobs and sat here all by herself and yet seemed so relaxed and comfortable."	<i>I'm really getting the idea that Ruby is a strong little girl, who is brave and determined.</i>
... or even decide that she no longer wanted to go to school. (p. 14)	<i>I'm seeing the respect that Miss Hurley has for Ruby. She truly cares about how Ruby is doing.</i>
Then one morning, something happened. (p. 16)	<i>The way the author wrote this makes me think that it's something bad.</i>
She seemed to be talking to them. (p. 16)	<i>At first I thought that someone was going to try to hurt Ruby, but now I'm thinking that Ruby is going to try to calmly talk to the crowd.</i>
The marshals were frightened. (p. 18)	<i>Now I understand just how tense this moment is.</i>
Then Ruby stopped talking and walked into the school. (p. 18)	<i>I'm really seeing how brave and determined Ruby is, to talk to this crowd. I also really want to know exactly what she said to the crowd and how they reacted!</i>
Ruby became irritated. (p. 21)	<i>I'm surprised by Ruby's reaction. Why is she irritated by what Miss Hurley said?</i>
... she was already in the middle of the angry mob. (p. 21)	<i>Wow. Now I really see how kind Ruby is. All these months, she says prayers and kind words to the people who have treated her with hate and violence. This part also reminds me how important religion is to Ruby, just like I learned at the start of the book.</i>
<i>Just like You did those folks a long time ago when they said terrible things about You.</i> (p. 22)	<i>The key idea here is forgiveness. Not only is Ruby brave and determined, but she can forgive the people who hate her. It seems by ending this book with Ruby's prayer, the author sends the message of how important it is to forgive people.</i>