

The UNSTOPPABLE

Ruby Bridges

Characters

Circle the character you will play.

**Indicates large speaking role*

***Historians 1 and 2 (H1, H2)**
***Narrators 1 and 2 (N1, N2)**
***Ruby Bridges:** a 6-year-old girl
Michael: Ruby's little brother
Joana: Ruby's little sister
Sheila: a civil rights worker

***Mr. Bridges:** Ruby's father
***Mrs. Bridges:** Ruby's mother
Marshals 1 and 2: men who protect Ruby
Crowd: to be read by a group of students
Parent
Mrs. Henry: Ruby's teacher
Sam: a young boy

The inspiring
true story of a 6-year-old
girl who became
an American hero

By Spencer Kayden



Theme One big idea in this play is that it takes courage to make changes. As you read, look for how Ruby had courage.

LOOK FOR WORD NERD'S 9 TERMS IN BOLD



Prologue

Historian 1: Our play takes place in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1960.

Historian 2: Throughout the South at that time, black people were kept separate from white people.

H1: Black children weren't allowed to attend white schools.

H2: This was unfair because the white schools were better. They had more teachers, bigger classrooms, and newer supplies.

H1: Some people wanted children of all races to go to school together. They thought the schools should be **integrated**.

H2: But many white parents wanted things to stay the same. They planned to **protest** at white schools to stop black students from entering.

H1: In this fight for fairness, one brave girl led the way.

Scene 1

Narrator 1: Ruby is in the small bedroom she shares with her younger siblings.

Ruby: Let's play school. I'm the teacher!

Michael: You always get to be the teacher.

Ruby: I'm the oldest.

Narrator 2: Ruby finds a scrap of paper and the stub of a pencil. She writes the alphabet.

Ruby: I'll point to a letter, and you tell me what it is.

Joana: A, B, C

Ruby: Good.

Michael: D, F

Ruby: Try again.

Michael: E!

Ruby: Yes! E for excellent!

N1: There is a knock at the front door. Ruby's parents answer.

Sheila: Hello, I'm Sheila. I'd like to talk to you about Ruby.

Mr. Bridges: Is something wrong?

Sheila: Not at all. This past spring, Ruby was one of more than 100 black kindergartners to take a placement test.

Mrs. Bridges: Yes.

Sheila: Only six students passed that test. Ruby was one of them.

Mr. Bridges: What does that mean?

Sheila: She can attend first grade at William Frantz Elementary, which is a better school and closer to your home.

Mr. Bridges: Isn't that the white school? Those

folks don't want us there.

Sheila: Sir, a judge has ruled that keeping black children in separate schools is **illegal**. They deserve the same rights as white children.

Mr. Bridges: I heard the governor on the news. He said he'd go to jail before he'd allow black kids in a white school.

Sheila: He may feel that way, but school **segregation** is ending. And your daughter could be one of the first black children to help that happen.

Mr. Bridges: There will be a lot of angry people outside that school. You want my little girl to walk past a shouting mob just to get to class?

Sheila: Sir, we can only get rid of **discrimination** if there are people willing to stand up for what's right.

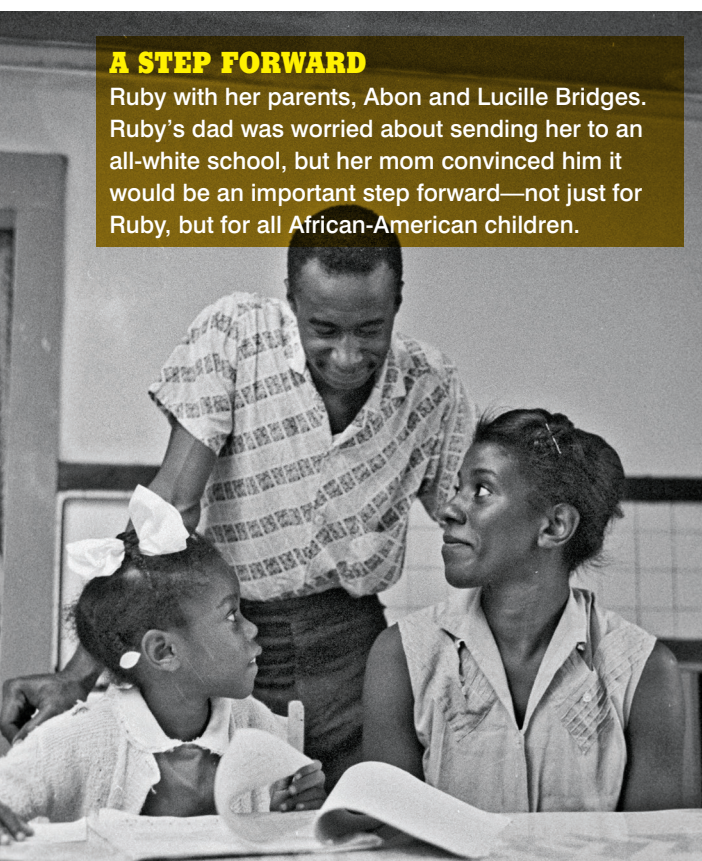
Mr. Bridges: It's one thing to ask me to fight for **equal rights**, but Ruby is only 6 years old!

Sheila: We will make sure nothing happens to her.

Mrs. Bridges: We'll talk it over and let you know.

A STEP FORWARD

Ruby with her parents, Abon and Lucille Bridges. Ruby's dad was worried about sending her to an all-white school, but her mom convinced him it would be an important step forward—not just for Ruby, but for all African-American children.



Sheila: Just think of it—Ruby would be a hero for black children throughout the South.

Scene 2

N2: One night weeks later, Mrs. Bridges is tucking Ruby in.

Ruby: Good night, Mama.

Mrs. Bridges: Good night.

Ruby: Why are you in your work clothes?

Mrs. Bridges: I've got a job tonight. While you are sleeping, I'll be cleaning that big hotel downtown.

Ruby: I wish you didn't have to go.

Mrs. Bridges: Me too, sweetie, me too.

N1: Mrs. Bridges turns out the light and joins Mr. Bridges in the kitchen.

Mrs. Bridges: I can't stop thinking about that William Frantz Elementary. It sure looks nice—big and clean.

Mr. Bridges: I don't think we should send Ruby to a school where she's not wanted.

Mrs. Bridges: The school she's at now is crumbling. The kids are crammed in dirty rooms. There aren't enough desks. The books are falling apart.

Mr. Bridges: You think having shiny new books is going to change her life?

Mrs. Bridges: A better education will lead to better jobs.

N2: Mr. Bridges sighs heavily.

Mrs. Bridges: Remember where I was the day before Ruby was born? I was in the fields with a 90-pound bag of cotton on my back.

Mr. Bridges: No one ever promised us an easy life.

Mrs. Bridges: I'm not talking about easy, I'm talking about opportunities. This could mean a better life for our kids.

Scene 3

N1: One Sunday night that fall, Mrs. Bridges has news for Ruby.

Mrs. Bridges: Ruby, you'll be starting a new school tomorrow.

Ruby: What about my friends?

Mrs. Bridges: You'll make new friends, honey.

N2: In the morning, Mrs. Bridges ties a pretty bow in Ruby's hair.

Mrs. Bridges: Are you ready?

N1: Ruby nervously tugs at the stiff collar of her dress.

Mrs. Bridges: Now, Ruby, there might be a lot of people outside the school, but you don't need to be afraid. I'll be with you.

N2: There is a knock at the door. The Bridges are surprised to see four white men in suits and yellow armbands. Ruby hides behind her father.

Mr. Bridges: Yes?

Marshal 1: We are here to take Ruby to school, sir.

Mr. Bridges: Where is Sheila?

Marshal 2: We're U.S. Marshals. The judge thought it would be safer if we protected your daughter.

N1: Ruby's father turns to her mother.

Mr. Bridges: What if the crowd tries to hurt her? It's not too late to change our minds.

N2: Mrs. Bridges has a pained look on her face.

Marshal 1: We will stay with Ruby all day, ma'am. We will keep her safe.

Mrs. Bridges: All right. Let's go ahead.

RUBY THE BRAVE

Ruby marching down the school steps with U.S. Marshals. Her courage made news around the country, inspiring hundreds of Americans to send her encouraging letters, toys, books, and clothes.



THE CRUEL CROWD

Angry crowds gathered outside the school each day to protest Ruby's arrival. They also taunted the few white parents who continued sending their children to school, like Daisy Gabrielle (right, with her daughter Yolanda and a police protector).



Scene 4

N1: The marshal who is driving grips the steering wheel tightly.

Marshal 2: Mrs. Bridges, let us get out of the car first, then you go. We will surround you and your daughter.

Marshal 1: We want you to look straight ahead and not turn back.

Mrs. Bridges: Yes, sir.

N2: Mrs. Bridges squeezes Ruby's hand.

Mrs. Bridges: You got that, Ruby?

Ruby: Yes, Mama. Look straight ahead and not back.

N1: They pull up in front of the school. There are policemen everywhere.

N2: A huge crowd is gathered behind barricades.

Ruby: Why are those people waving and shouting? Is this a parade?

Mrs. Bridges: No, sweetie. It's not a parade.

N1: When they step out of the car, the shouts grow even louder.

Crowd: Go home! We don't want you! Go home! We don't want you!

N2: Ruby walks between the marshals. Her eyes point straight ahead.

N1: As Ruby enters the school, a white parent sees her and gasps. She grabs her son by the wrist.

Parent: Andrew, come on. We're leaving!

N2: The parent storms out the door. Other white parents stream through the halls and take their children home.

N1: They do not want their children in school with a black child.

Scene 5

N2: Ruby is brought into her classroom. There are no other kids, just a sea of empty desks and chairs.

Ruby (quietly): Are we too early?

N1: A woman comes over and greets them warmly.

Mrs. Henry: You are right on time. I'm Mrs. Henry, your teacher.



LONELY FOR FRIENDS

Ruby loved going to school with Mrs. Henry, but she was lonely for other kids. As soon as she got home, she would run outside to play with friends from her neighborhood.

Ruby: Hello.

Mrs. Henry: Ruby, why don't you sit at this desk in the front, and I'll sit right next to you. Do you like books?

Ruby: Yes, ma'am.

N2: She hands Ruby a beautiful picture book. They spend the day reading, drawing, and singing songs.

H2: At the end of that first day, the crowd outside was even larger and louder. There were reporters and cameras filming.

Crowd: Go home! Stay home! Go home! Stay home!

N1: The marshals bring Ruby home. The police have set up more barricades on Ruby's block. She and her siblings jump rope outside.

Michael: How was school?

Ruby: OK, I guess.

Joana: How many friends do you have?

Ruby: None. I'm the only one in the class.

Michael: Why?

N2: Ruby stares at the policeman standing guard at the end of her street.

Ruby: I don't know.

PAUL SLADE/PARIS MATCH VIA GETTY IMAGES (RUBY & FRIENDS)

Scene 6

H1: Ruby spent the next few months alone in class with Mrs. Henry. She was lonely.

N1: Ruby goes to sharpen her pencil and looks out the window at the empty playground.

Ruby: Where are all the kids?

Mrs. Henry: It's hard to explain. Some people just aren't ready for change.

Ruby: Will I ever have any friends to play with?

Mrs. Henry: Ruby, the other children will come back to school eventually.

Ruby: When?

Mrs. Henry: I don't know, dear. But they'll come.

H2: As the school year goes on, more and more white children return to school.

H1: At first, they are kept away from Ruby. But Mrs. Henry insists they spend time in her class.

N2: Ruby approaches a boy excitedly.

Ruby: Hi, I'm Ruby!

Sam: I'm Sam.

Ruby: Want to draw pictures with me?

Sam: I can't.

Ruby: Why not?

Sam: My mom said not to. Because you're black.

N1: Ruby's eyes grow wide. Suddenly, she understands everything—the angry crowds, the marshals, her empty classroom.

N2: After school, Ruby talks to her mother.

Ruby: All this fuss has been about the color of my skin?

Click here to read this article online!

WRITE TO WIN

Imagine your school is staging a show to honor courageous people in history. Write a letter to convince the principal that Ruby Bridges should be in it. Send it to "Ruby Contest" by April 1, 2017. Ten winners will each receive a copy of *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges. See page 2 for details.

FIND AN ACTIVITY ONLINE!



FAMOUS COURAGE

Ruby's story became legendary, inspiring many writers and artists. Here, grown-up Ruby and former President Barack Obama admire a famous painting of her first day.

Mrs. Bridges: That's right.

N1: Ruby thinks for a moment.

Ruby: Am I really that different from white people?

Mrs. Bridges: No, sweet girl. We are all just human beings. And slowly, things are starting to change. You are helping that happen.

Ruby: How?

Mrs. Bridges: By being the smart, brave girl who marches up the steps to William Frantz Elementary every morning. You are showing the world that you deserve to be there.

Ruby: I just want to learn and have friends.

Mrs. Bridges: You will, Ruby. I promise you will.

Epilogue

H2: Schools in New Orleans gradually became more integrated.

H1: When Ruby started second grade, there were other black students in her school.

H2: She had friends of different races.

H1: But the fight for equality continues even today.

H2: Ruby is now a grown woman with children and grandchildren of her own.

H1: She travels to schools around the country telling her story.

H2: She will never stop working to end racism and make sure that all children are given the chance to succeed. ■

