

## The story of Ruby Bridges

*U.S Deputy Marshals escort six-year-old Ruby Bridges from William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, Louisiana, 1960.*



*"... A federal judge decreed that Monday, November 14, 1960 would be the day black children in New Orleans would go to school with white children. ...My mother was all for it. My father wasn't. 'We're just asking for trouble,' he said. He thought things weren't going to change, and blacks and whites would never be treated as equals. Mama thought I would have an opportunity to get a better education if I went to the new school - and a chance for a good job later in life. My parents argued about it and prayed about it. Eventually my mother convinced my father that despite the risks, they had to take this step forward, not just for their own children, but for all black children.... I would be going to William Franz.*

*The morning of November 14, federal marshals drove my mother and me the five blocks to William Frantz. In the car one of the men explained that when we arrived at the school two marshals would walk in front of us and two behind, so we'd be protected on both sides..... "Ruby Nell," she said as we pulled up to my new school, "don't be afraid. There might be some people upset outside, but I'll be with you." Sure enough, people shouted and shook their fists when we got out of the car, but to me it wasn't any noisier than Mardi Gras, I held my mother's hand and followed the marshals through the crowd, up the steps into the school. The marshals drove my mother and me to school each day. A young white woman met us inside the building. She smiled at me. "Good morning, Ruby Nell," she said, just like Mama except with what I later learned was a Boston accent. "Welcome, I'm your new teacher, Mrs. Henry. She seemed nice, but I wasn't sure how to feel about her. I'd never been taught by a white teacher before.*

*Mrs. Henry took my mother and me to her second-floor classroom. All the desks were empty and she asked me to choose a seat. I picked one up front, and Mrs. Henry started teaching me the letters of the alphabet.*

*The next morning my mother told me she couldn't go to school with me. She had to work and look after my brothers and sister. "The marshals will take good care of you, Ruby Nell," Mama assured me..... After walking up the steps past the angry crowd, though, I was glad to see Mrs. Henry. She gave me a hug, and she sat right by my side instead of at the big teacher's desk in the front of the room. Day after day, it was just Mrs. Henry and me, working on my lessons..."*

Excerpts from Bridges Hall, R. (2000). *The Education of Ruby Nell.*

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Answer the questions:

1-Why is the date November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1960 important in the history of black people and the United States?

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2-How did Ruby's parents feel about it?

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3- What was the father's point of view? What about her mother?

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4- What is the name of the school Ruby was sent to?

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5- Who took Ruby to school on the morning of November 14<sup>th</sup>?

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6-How many marshals escorted her to school?

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7-How did white people feel about her coming to this school?

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8-How did Ruby feel about it?

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9-Who was Mrs Henry? Pick out words that characterize her:

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10- What was the classroom like?

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