

Through My Eyes

by Ruby Bridges

Social Studies

Genre

An **Autobiography** is an account of events in a person's life that is written in that person's own words.

Text Feature

A **Time Line** is a diagram of several events arranged in the order in which they took place. A time line helps to organize information in an easy, visual way.

Content Vocabulary

unconstitutional

banned

boycott

segregation

*Ruby Bridges was six years old in November 1960, and she was about to make history. A judge had recently ruled that it was **unconstitutional** for African American students to be **banned** from attending the same school as white students. Ruby Bridges was the first black student to attend William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans. Here's an account in her own words of her first day at her new school and of the events that followed:*

Once we were inside the building, the marshals walked us up a flight of stairs. The school office was at the top. My mother and I went in and were told to sit in the principal's office. The marshals sat outside. There were windows in the room where we waited. That meant everybody passing by could see us. I remember noticing everyone was white.



The artist Norman Rockwell painted this picture called *The Problem We All Live With*.

All day long white parents rushed into the office. They were upset. They were arguing and pointing at us. When they took their children to school that morning, the parents hadn't been sure whether William Frantz would be integrated that day or not. After my mother and I arrived, they ran into classrooms and dragged their children out of the school. From behind the windows in the office, all I saw was confusion. I told myself that this must be the way it is in a big school.

That whole first day, my mother and I just sat and waited. We didn't talk to anybody. I remember watching a big, round clock on the wall. When it was 3:00

and time to go home, I was glad. I had thought my new school would be hard, but the first day was easy.

When we left school that first day, the crowd outside was even bigger and louder than it had been in the morning. There were reporters and film cameras and people everywhere. I guess the police couldn't keep them behind the barricades. It seemed to take us a long time to get to the marshals' car.



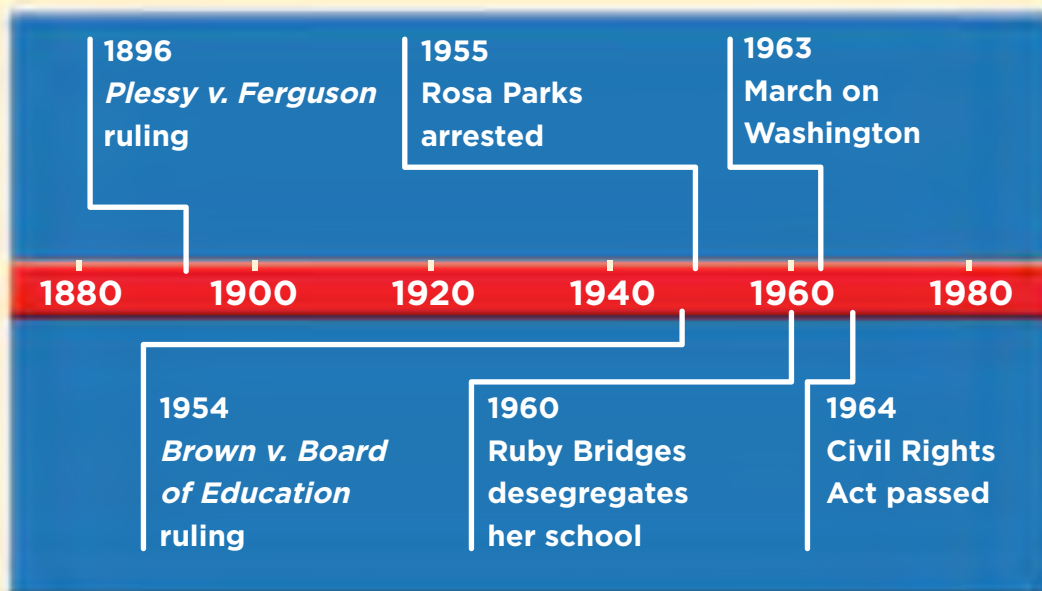
Entering the school with U.S. Marshals

Marching Through History



Reading a Time Line

One way to review events from history is to organize them on a time line.



Later on I learned there had been protestors in front of the integrated schools the whole day. They wanted to be sure white parents would **boycott** the school and not let their children attend. Groups of high school boys, joining the protestors, paraded up and down the street and sang new verses to old hymns. Their favorite was “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” in which they changed the chorus to “Glory, glory, **segregation**, the South will rise again.” Many of the boys carried signs and said awful things, but most of all I remember seeing a black doll in a coffin, which frightened me more than anything else.

After the first day, I was glad to get home. I wanted to change my clothes and go outside to find my friends. My mother wasn't too worried about me because the police had set up barricades at each end of the block. Only local residents were allowed on our street. That afternoon I taught a friend the chant I had learned: “Two, four, six, eight, we don't want to integrate.” My friend and I didn't know

what the words meant, but we would jump rope to it every day after school.

My father heard about the trouble at school. That night when he came home from work, he said I was his “brave little Ruby.”

The next day brave Ruby and her mother drove to school with the marshals. Here's more of Ruby's amazing story, in her own words:

When we finally got into the building, my new teacher was there to meet us. Her name was Mrs. Henry. She was young and white. I had not spent time with a white person before, so I was uneasy at first. Mrs. Henry led us upstairs to the second floor. As we went up, we hardly saw anyone else in the building. The white students were not coming to class. The halls were so quiet, I could hear the noise the marshals' shoes made on the shiny hardwood floors.

Mrs. Henry took us into a classroom and said to have a seat. When I looked around, the room was empty. There were rows of desks, but no children. I thought we were too early, but Mrs. Henry said we were right on time. My mother sat down at the back of the room. I took a seat up front, and Mrs. Henry began to teach.

I spent the whole first day with Mrs. Henry in the classroom. I wasn't allowed to have lunch in the cafeteria or go outside for recess, so we just stayed in our room. The marshals sat outside. If I had to go to the bathroom, the marshals walked me down the hall.



on the steps of William Frantz Elementary School

My mother sat in the classroom that day, but not the next. When the marshals came to the house on Wednesday morning, my mother said, “Ruby, I can’t go to school with you today, but don’t be afraid. The marshals will take care of you. Be good now, and don’t cry.”

I started to cry anyway, but before I knew it, I was off to school by myself.

Ruby Bridges finished the school year, and she returned in the fall. As years passed and Ruby continued in school, the fight for civil rights continued as well. In 1995 Ruby and Mrs. Henry decided to work together. Now they visit classrooms around the country, sharing what they have learned.

Ruby tells students that schools can bring people together. Ruby and Mrs. Henry are no longer a class of two.



Mrs. Henry and Ruby Bridges

Connect and Compare



1. Use the time line on page 415 to find how many years separate the arrest of Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Act.
Reading a Time Line
2. How is reading Ruby Bridges’s own words different from reading about her experience from a secondary source? **Evaluate**
3. Think about “Through My Eyes” and *Goin’ Someplace Special*. How are the experiences that Ruby Bridges and Tricia Ann went through similar? How are they different? **Explain.**

Reading/Writing Across Texts



Social Studies Activity

Research a person involved in the civil rights movement. Write a summary of his or her life. Include a time line of important events in the life of this person.



Find out more about civil rights at www.macmillanmh.com

Writer's Craft

Facts and Opinions

The first sentence, or lead, in a news article tells the most important fact. Details telling when, where, and why something happened appear later in the story. Include only **facts** and avoid words that show your **opinions**.

My lead sentence presents the most important fact.

After I wrote the lead, I presented only facts.

Write a News Article

Civil Rights Celebration

by Sunny C.

PHILADELPHIA, 2008 Students observed a special day of learning about the civil rights movement during the first civil rights celebration at Smith Middle School. The event was on February 20, after lunch in the auditorium.

The celebration began with a video about the 1963 March on Washington that showed Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech. The guest speaker, Mr. Ellis, who walked in the march, had many eyewitness stories. He talked about what it was like to grow up with segregation and of his involvement in the movement. There was also an art exhibit called "Heroes of Freedom," which covered the auditorium with colorful student drawings of famous leaders.

Students who attended the celebration said it was inspiring. Principal Thompson thanked the teachers, parents, and students who helped with the event. She said it was the perfect way to celebrate the victories and heroes of the civil rights movement.



Your Turn

Find an event happening in your school or community, like a play, that interests you. Attend this event and take notes of your observations. Write a news article telling others about it. Remember to grab your readers' attention with an interesting lead. Present important facts later in the article. Use the writer's checklist to check your writing.



Writer's Checklist

- Ideas and Content:** Did I write about an event I attended in my school or community?
- Organization:** Does my lead present the most important fact? Did I include enough supporting details in the rest of the article?
- Voice:** Did I state the **facts** and avoid **opinions**?
- Word Choice:** Did I choose the right words?
- Sentence Fluency:** Did I provide a variety of sentence types?
- Conventions:** Did I check to be sure that all pronouns agree with their antecedents? Did I proofread for spelling errors?