

**5th Grade Curriculum Guide Book Summary**

**Book Title: The Story of Ruby Bridges**

**Author:** Robert Coles

**Main characters:** Ruby Bridges

**Executive summary:** As the first African American girl to attend an all-white school in the south, Ruby Bridges bravely faced racist crowds and threats to go to first grade at William Frantz Elementary School.

**Detailed summary:** Ruby Bridges was born in Tylertown, Mississippi. Her family was very poor. They moved to New Orleans in 1957. Ruby’s parents both worked very hard. Her father was a janitor and her mother watched children during the day and cleaned floors at a bank at night.

The family was very strong in their faith. They went to church every Sunday. At that time, black children were not allowed to go to the same school as white children. A judged ruled that it was against U.S. law to segregate the schools. He ordered Ruby to attend first grade at William Frantz Elementary School. Ruby’s family prayed that everything would go well for Ruby in the new school and that they would all have courage to face any trouble.

On her first day of school when Ruby was just six years old, she walked into the school under the protection of federal marshals. Crowds of angry white people gathered outside the school. Some held signs that read, “Whites Only.” People yelled mean, racist things to Ruby. Some people even wanted to hurt her, just because she was black.   
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Each day she bravely walked to school with the marshals through the angry crowds. She held her head up and didn’t say a word.

Because the white people were so angry, they refused to send their children to school. So Ruby was in class alone all day. She was happy to be learning, and the teacher, Mrs. Henry, thought she worked hard. Mrs. Henry was amazed at how calm Ruby was after walking through the crowds on her way to school. She was surprised that Ruby even wanted to go to school at all.

One morning, Mrs. Henry looked out the window and saw Ruby talking to the crowd. That seemed to make the crowds even angrier. When Ruby got into the school, Mrs. Henry asked what she said to them. Ruby told her teacher that she wasn’t talking, she was praying for them. She said a prayer for the people who hated her. Each day, Ruby said that prayer, asking God to forgive the people for their hatred.

Later that year two white boys joined Ruby at school and then more children went to school. Their parents realized it was wrong to “take the law into their own hands,” and that their own children were being cheated out of an education. Eventually even the mobs outside gave up. Today all children have equal access to public education regardless of the color of their skin.