

Interactive Read-Aloud

Third Grade

SARAH: All right, guys, today we are going to read a book. Like I told you yesterday, we read about Martin Luther King Jr., and we stopped right when Martin Luther King Jr. was walking with a bunch of children to go to school. Because he was fighting for equal rights for everyone, and he finally got some of those laws to be changed.

So today we're gonna read a story about a little girl who was part of that change. And this story is the story of Ruby Bridges. Who's ever heard of Ruby Bridges before?

All of you? What do you guys already know about her?

STUDENT 1: She's black.

STUDENT 2: People had to walk her to school because of her skin color.

SARAH: OK. She had to be escorted to school. Anything else?

STUDENT 3: I think that this book is kinda gonna be like Martin Luther King Jr.

SARAH: How so?

STUDENT 3: Because maybe she's gonna—when she grows up, maybe she's gonna try to change some laws too.

SARAH: OK. Maybe she's going to be inspired to make some changes in the world?

All right, well, let's read her story.

“Ruby Bridges was born in a small cabin near Tylertown, Mississippi. ‘We were very poor. Very, very poor,’ Ruby said. ‘My daddy worked picking crops. We just barely got by. There were times when we didn't have much to eat...’”

“...they went to church. ‘We sat there and prayed to God,’ Ruby’s mother said, ‘that we’d all be strong, and that we’d have courage, and we’d get through any trouble. And Ruby would be a good girl, and she’d hold her head up high, and be a credit to her own people, and a credit to all the American people. We prayed long, and we prayed hard.’”

So, I’m thinking her mom feels nervous, too.

STUDENT 4: I think that when she goes—Ruby Bridges goes to her new school, people might not want her there, because I think it might be a white kids’ school.

STUDENT 5: I think that definitely some white kids are gonna go to different schools because Ruby went to their school.

SARAH: You think they might leave because of her?

STUDENT 6: I think, um, since Ruby Bridges is black, she might get attention, like, everyone will stare at her, because she’s the only black kid in the school.

SARAH: When you say attention, are you thinking she’s gonna get good attention or bad attention?

STUDENT 6: Bad attention.

SARAH: “On Ruby’s first day, a large crowd of angry white people gathered outside the Frantz Elementary School...”

“...Mrs. Henry would question Ruby in order to find out if the girl was really nervous and afraid, even though she seemed so calm and confident. But Ruby kept saying she was doing fine. The teacher decided to wait and see if Ruby would keep on being so relaxed and hopeful, or if she’d gradually begin to wear down, or even decide that she no longer wanted to go to school.”

STUDENT 2: I wonder why people, if they pull their kids out of school, why they still stand outside the school and yell at her.

SARAH: That's a good question. I wonder that, too. They've already moved their kids out of the building, and yet they're still there every morning, protesting her.

STUDENT 7: When she grows up, she's gonna change the laws.

SARAH: You think she's gonna become one of those people that helps change laws, too, when she gets older?

STUDENT 6: How does she keep calm even though every single day, people yell at her and people with guns have to protect her? I wouldn't want that.

SARAH: No. She must have a very strong character. She must be very brave.

"Then, one morning, something happened. Mrs. Henry stood by a window in her classroom..."

"...Ruby said the prayer she repeated twice a day, before and after school: 'Please, God, try to forgive those people. Because even if they say those bad things, they don't know what they're doing. So you could forgive them, just like you did those folks a long time ago, when they said terrible things about you.'"

And that's where the book ends. That's an interesting choice of an ending.

STUDENT 9: I think there was a life lesson in this book.

SARAH: What do you think the life lesson is?

I agree with you. I think there is a lesson to be learned from Ruby Bridges.

STUDENT 8: The lesson is that you should treat people the way you wanna be treated.

STUDENT 4: I think the life lesson is, it doesn't matter what color your skin is.

SARAH:

One of the things I want you to guys to take away from this type of nonfiction book is that a nonfiction text can be expository or narrative in structure. Think about this book compared to the book we read on Martin Luther King Jr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s book was a biography about him that was very structured like you're used to seeing nonfiction. There was a table of contents, there were captions, there were dates, there were lots of facts. This story about Ruby Bridges is also nonfiction, it's also a biography about her life—but it's told as a story. It's told in narrative form.

So when you're reading nonfiction books, you might have nonfiction that's informational, like this book about monkeys that's written in that familiar kind of nonfiction structure you're used to, or books that are told in a narrative, like some of the Jonathan London books that we've read that were nonfiction, and this story about Ruby Bridges.