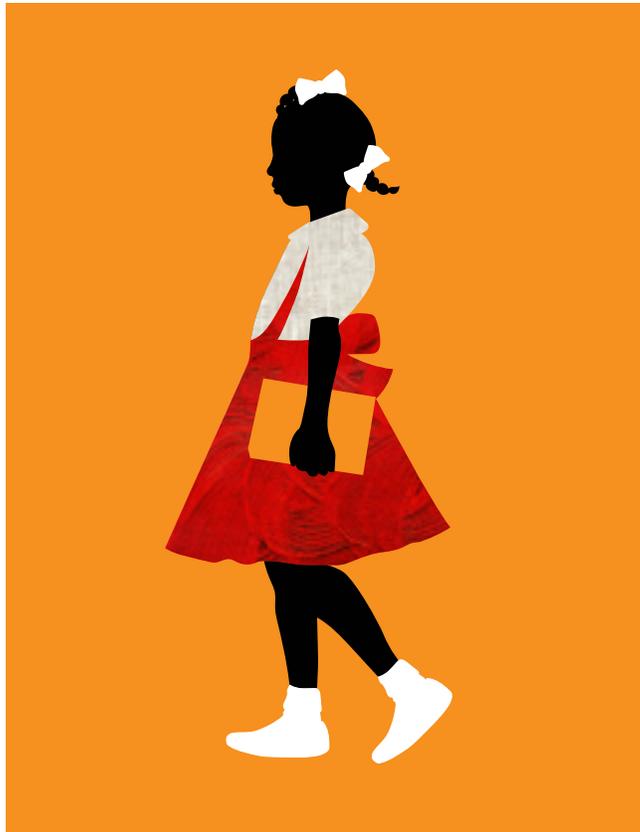


RUBY

THE STORY OF RUBY BRIDGES

STUDY GUIDE



Adapted by Christina M. Ham
Music by Gary Rue

Directed by Sarah Walker Thornton

Plot, Characters, and Setting pg 3

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SchoolFest student matinees and the accompanying materials fulfill the following standard objectives:

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.RL.11-12.1-3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.RL.11-12.7 Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry),

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS *cont.*

evaluating how each version interprets the source text (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist).

SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

6.13 Describe the role of major civil rights leaders and significant events occurring during the modern Civil Rights Movement.

- Objective 6.13.2: Identify major civil right leaders during the modern Civil Rights Movement.
- Objective 6.13.3: Identify significant events occurring during the modern Civil Rights Movement associated with major civil rights leaders.

7.11 Describe examples of conflict, cooperation, and interdependence of groups, societies, and nations, using past and current events.

- Objective 7C.11.1: Describe examples of conflict, cooperation, and interdependence of people living in the same community.
- Additional content to be taught: Tracing the political and social impact of the modern Civil Rights Movement from 1954 to the present, including Alabama's role.

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

TH.Re7.1 Perceive and analyze artistic work.

TH.Re8.1 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

TH.Re9.1 Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

TH.Cn10.1 Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

TH.Cn11.1 Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

PLOT

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* to end segregation in public schools, a major win for the American Civil Rights Movement. Despite this landmark ruling, the South continued to resist integration for the next six years.

When a young Ruby Bridges first started school in New Orleans in 1959, she attended an all-black kindergarten. The next year, a federal court ordered Louisiana to integrate, and she was chosen along with five other first grade students to enroll in formerly all-white elementary schools. Ruby was the only one placed in William Frantz Elementary, and on November 14, 1960, she arrived at school escorted by four federal marshals. She walked past crowds of screaming protestors and barricades just to get to the front door. She spent that entire first day sitting in the principal's office as angry parents pulled their white children out of school.

Ruby was finally admitted to class the next day with the only teacher at William Frantz willing to instruct her – Barbara Henry. When Ruby walked in to take her seat, she discovered she was the only child there.

At six years old, Ruby Bridges became a national civil rights hero. Her family's courage and perseverance in the midst of public outcry would help spark a movement for equity and justice that is still fought today.

***Ruby: The Story of Ruby Bridges* features new music by Christina Ham and Gary Rue and a cast of performers from Montgomery Public Schools.**

CHARACTERS

Older Ruby: 17 years old

Younger Ruby: 6 years old

Lucille Bridges: Ruby's mother

Michael Bridges: Ruby's younger brother

Milton Bridges: Ruby's younger brother

Joana Bridges: Ruby's younger sister

Mrs. Barbara Henry: Ruby's new teacher at William Frantz, a previously all-white school

Yvonne Gabriel: William Frantz pupil

Tessie Prevost: Student integrating McDonough No. 19 School

Gail Etienne: Student integrating McDonough No. 19 School

Leona Tate: Student integrating McDonough No. 19 School

Greg Thompson: White student at McDonough No. 19 School



Six-year-old Ruby Bridges being escorted from school by U.S. Marshals.

Marshals: Security sent by the federal government to escort Ruby into William Frantz

Jill: Ruby's friend

Diana: Ruby's friend

White Students

Protestors

Chorus

SETTING

Ruby takes place between 1960 and 1961. The action shifts between Ruby's home, outside of William Frantz Elementary, and a William Frantz Elementary classroom.

ABOUT CHRISTINA HAM

Christina Ham is an internationally renowned playwright. Her work has been produced by companies such as Arena Stage, The Goodman Theatre, and the Tokyo International Arts Festival. You may have seen her plays *Four Little Girls: Birmingham 1963* and *Nina Simone: Four Women* at ASF last season. Ham was named one of the 20 most produced playwrights in the 2018-2019 season by American Theatre Magazine, and she is a recipient of the Marianne Murphy Women & Philanthropy Award in Playwriting. She writes work for both adults and young people and most recently worked as a writer for Netflix's *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* and Amazon's *THEM: Covenant*. This past summer, ASF's production of her play *Four Little Girls: Birmingham 1963* was taken on tour to perform in Washington D.C. for members of the Black Congressional Caucus with a post-show discussion led by Congresswoman Teri Sewell and Congressman John Lewis.



Christina Ham, playwright of
Ruby: The Story of Ruby Bridges

ABOUT SARAH THORNTON

Sarah Walker Thornton is the Artistic Director of the Cloverdale Playhouse in Montgomery, Alabama, and a product of the Montgomery Public School system, having graduated from Booker T. Washington Magnet High School. She has a BFA in theatre from Wright State University and an MFA in theatre from Alabama Shakespeare Festival/University of Alabama. After moving to New York, Sarah helped found and run the BAMA Theater Company, an Equity Shakespeare company, while continuing her career as a professional actor and director both regionally and in NYC. As a teacher, Sarah has led several acting workshops at places such as the Alabama School of Fine Arts, Montclair University, Rutgers University, Wingspan Arts in NYC, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Auburn University in Montgomery, Booker T. Washington Magnet High School, and Wetumpka High School, and she runs the educational component of the Playhouse. She is also a playwright and most recently adapted Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. Sarah is a proud member of the Actors' Equity Association.



Sarah Thornton, director of
Ruby: The Story of Ruby Bridges

This is your third time in an ASF production. How do you balance a full rehearsal schedule with school and everyday life?

Rehearsal schedules can DEFINITELY get crazy, but for me it's mainly about using my time wisely. Free time at school is never really free time for me. I know that I don't have the same opportunity after hours to do work that could have been completed at school like everyone else. Besides, after rehearsals and performances, I just want my bed! As for basketball games, concerts, or parties, I'm usually late because of rehearsals or performances. Sacrifices come with being a part of productions, but I don't want to miss out on opportunities in my teenage years by limiting myself.

How does it feel to play an iconic civil rights hero like Ruby Bridges?

What weighed heaviest on me was the responsibility of making sure every audience member at every show left having learned something. But that same weight motivates me in every rehearsal. I'm beyond proud to be portraying this young leader, and I hope my performance sheds a never dimming light on her life and legacy.

What is it like to be in an ensemble made up entirely of actors from Montgomery Public Schools?

It gives me pure bliss knowing that we have such amazingly talented students in our school system. My heart is filled with such delight knowing that Alabama Shakespeare Festival's staff saw enough in our students to think to give us this opportunity.

What do you hope audiences take away from this production?

My hope is that everyone who sees this production will realize that no matter your age, YOU CAN BE THE CHANGE!



Faith Gatson, a student from Booker T. Washington Magnet High School, plays Older Ruby

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PRE-SHOW QUESTIONS

1. *Ruby* takes place in 1960 – during the height of the American Civil Rights Movement. What do you already know about the Civil Rights Movement? Who were other key figures in the movement? What social conditions and tensions do you think the Bridges family lived under during this time?
2. *Ruby* tells the story of a young girl and her family struggling to stand up and do what is right in the face of public backlash. Have you ever had to stand up to your peers or community over what is right? How did you cope with people's anger or negative responses? How did you push yourself to keep going?

POST-SHOW QUESTIONS

1. *Ruby* is performed almost entirely by Montgomery Public School students. How would the play have been different if it was performed by professional adult actors? How did seeing your peers tell the story add to the performance?
2. Much of the play is underscored by Double Dutch chants and children's games like "Around the Mulberry Bush." How do these childhood chants and games contrast with the events happening in the play? Why do you think the playwright chose to include them? How would the play have been different without them?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. **At Your Desk:** Throughout the play, an older version of Ruby often appears alongside her six-year-old self, providing a present-day perspective. Consider the state of the world the adult Ruby Bridges lives in now. Write a letter to young Ruby in 1960 from yourself today. What words of encouragement can you offer her? What should you tell her about how the world has changed? How has her activism and the activism of other Civil Rights leaders changed the world for the better? What are the problems that still persist in our society that she will grow up to live with?
2. **On Your Feet:** Ruby Bridges is one of many women in the Civil Rights Movement who fought for equality for the black community. Split into groups of 3-5 and research another female leader in the movement. How did she contribute to the Civil Rights Movement? What sacrifices did she have to make along the way? How is she remembered today – is she well known? Share your findings with the class in a 5-minute presentation. You may use a power-point, poster board, or any other presentation style, but you are encouraged to include an artistic element to represent your leader's story. You could write a poem, perform a scene, create an illustration – use your imagination!