**Read the following document and answer the Document Based questions. (Don’t worry about the reading below the questions.)**

**Then, once you’ve finished both readings, create a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting the experiences of Ruby Bridges and Melba Pattillo. How were their experiences different? How were they similar?**

**History - My Story**

**Ruby Bridges Hall**

In November 1960, six-year-old Ruby Bridges Hall became the first African American child to desegregate an elementary school. Although she only lived a few blocks from the William Frantz Elementary school in New Orleans, Louisiana. Marshals had to escort Ruby because of angry segregationist mobs that gathered in front of the school. For an entire year, she was the only student in her class since white parents pulled their children from the school in protest. She wrote about her experiences in her book THROUGH MY EYES.

**ONE YEAR IN AN ALL-BLACK SCHOOL**

When it was time for me to start kindergarten, I went to the Johnson Lockett Elementary School. My segregated school was fairly far from my house, but I had lots of company for the long walk. All the kids on my block went to Johnson Lockett.

What I didn't know in kindergarten was that a federal court in New Orleans was about to force two white public schools to admit black students. The plan was to integrate only the first grade for that year. Then, every year after that, the incoming first grade would also be integrated.

In the late spring of my year at Johnson Lockett, the city school board began testing black kindergartners. They wanted to find out which children should be sent to the white schools. I took the test. I was only five, and I'm sure I didn't have any idea why I was taking it. Still, I remember that day. I remember getting dressed up and riding uptown on the bus with my mother, and sitting in an enormous room in the school board building along with about a hundred other black kids, all waiting to be tested.

Apparently the test was difficult, and I've been told that it was set up so that kids would have a hard time passing. If all the black children had failed, the white school board might have had a way to keep the schools segregated for a while longer.

Several people from the NAACP came to the house in the summer. They told my parents that I was one of just a few black children to pass the school board test, and that I had been chosen to attend one of the white schools, William Frantz Public School. They said it was a better school and closer to my home than the one I had been attending. They said I had the right to go to the closest school in my district. They pressured my parents and made a lot of promises. They said my going to William Frantz would help me, my brothers, my sisters, and other black children in the future. We would receive a better education which would give us better opportunities as adults.

Lucille, my mother, was convinced that no harm would come to us. She thought that the opportunity for me to get the best education possible was worth the risk, and she finally convinced my father.

**MY MOTHER BREAKS THE NEWS**

When September came that year, I didn't start first grade at William Frantz. The lawmakers in the state capital, Baton Rouge, had found a way to slow down integration, so I was sent back to my old school.

All through the summer and early fall, the state legislatures fought the federal court. They passed twenty-eight new anti-integration laws.

The federal court, led by Federal District Court Judge J. Skelly Wright, unyielding in his commitment to upholding the law of the land and his dedication to equal opportunity for all Americans, would block the segregationists again and again.

The anger all across New Orleans convinced Judge Wright that things might grow violent. He asked the U.S. government rush federal marshals to New Orleans to protect the black first graders. There were four of us in all. There was a fifth girl originally, but her parents decided at the last minute not to transfer her. Three of the remaining children, all girls, were to go to a school named McDonogh. I was the fourth child. I was going to integrate William Frantz Public School, and I was going alone.

On Sunday, November 13, my mother told me I would start at a new school the next day. She hinted there could be something unusual about it, but she didn't explain. "There might be a lot of people outside the school," she said. "But you don¹t need to be afraid. I'll be with you."

**NOVEMBER 24, 1960**

My mother took special care getting me ready for school. When somebody knocked on my door that morning, my mother expected to see people from the NAACP. Instead, she saw four serious-looking white men, dressed in suits and wearing armbands. They were U.S. federal marshals. They had come to drive us to school and stay with us all day. I learned later they were carrying guns.

I remember climbing into the back seat of the marshals' car with my mother, but I don't remember feeling frightened. William Frantz Public School was only five blocks away, so one of the marshals in the front seat told my mother right away what we should do when we got there.

"Let us get out of the car first," the marshal said. "Then you'll get out, and the four of us will surround you and your daughter. We'll walk up to the door together. Just walk straight ahead, and don't look back."

I remember looking out of the car as we pulled up to the Frantz school. There were barricades and people shouting and policemen everywhere.

As we walked through the crowd, I didn't see any faces. I guess that's because I wasn't very tall and I was surrounded by the marshals. People yelled and threw things. I could see the school building, and it looked bigger and nicer than my old school. When we climbed the high steps to the front door, there were policemen in uniforms at the top. The policemen at the door and the crowd behind us made me think this was an important place.

**THE FIRST DAY AT WILLIAM FRANTZ**

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 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.

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 everywhere. I guess the police couldn¹t keep them behind the barricades. It seemed to take us along time to get to the marshals' car.

Later on I learned there had been protestors in front of the two 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.

**MY FIRST WHITE TEACHER**

On the second day, my mother and I drove to school with the marshals. The crowd outside the building was ready. Racists spat at us and shouted things like "Go home, nigger," and "No niggers allowed here." One woman screamed at me, "I'm going to poison you. I'll find a way." She made the same threat every morning.

I tried not to pay attention. When we finally got into the building, my new teacher was there to meet us. Her name was Mrs. Henry.

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.

**I HAVE TROUBLE EATING AND SLEEPING**

There were times that winter when I did show stress. Nightmares would come, and I would get up and go wake my mother for comfort.

My mother would raise herself up in bed. "Did you say your prayers before you went to sleep?" she would ask.

If I hadn't, Mama would say, "Honey, that's why you're having a bad dream. Go back now, and say your prayers."

I would do as she said, and then I would sleep. Somehow it always worked.

Another problem that year was lunchtime at school. I often ate in the classroom by myself while Mrs. Henry took her lunch break with other teachers. The marshals sat outside while I opened up my lunch box. As time went on I wouldn't eat. First I blamed it on the fact that my other fixed too many peanut butter sandwiches. Then I began to wish and wish that I could go the cafeteria. . . I was convinced that kids were there. I began hiding my uneaten sandwiches in a storage cabinet in the classroom. In my magical way of thinking, not eating lunch would somehow get me to the cafeteria.

When roaches and mice began to appear in the room, a janitor discovered my old sandwiches. She [Mrs. Henry] was just sorry there were so many days when I hadn't eaten. After that she usually ate with me so I wouldn't be lonely.

**THE END OF FIRST GRADE**

Near at the end of the year, Mrs. Henry and I finally had company. A few white children began coming back to school, and I got an opportunity to visit with them once or twice. Even though these children were white, I still knew nothing about racism or integration. I had picked up bits and pieces over the months from being around adults and hearing them talk, but nothing was clear to me. The light dawned one day when a little boy refused to play with me.

"I can't play with you," the boy said. "My mama said not to because you're a nigger."

At that moment, it all made sense to me. I finally realized that everything had happened because I was black. I remember feeling a little stunned. It was all about the color of my skin. I wasn't angry at the boy, because I understood. His mother had told him not to play with me, and he was obeying her. I would have done the same thing. If my mama said not to do something, I didn't do it.

The next thing I knew, it was June. That incredible year was over. Oddly enough, it ended quietly. I don't remember any special good-byes as I headed off for summer vacation. I was sorry to leave Mrs. Henry, but I somehow thought she would be my teacher again in the fall and forever.

**Discussion Questions**
1. Ruby saw and heard many awful things during the protests outside of her school. Why was the image of a black doll in a coffin particularly terrifying for Ruby?
2. Norman Rockwell painted a picture showing Ruby escorted to school by Federal Marshals. The neatly dressed, pig-tailed little girl is passing a wall with an ugly racial epithet painted on it. Rockwell called this picture "The Problem We All Live With." Why do you think Rockwell chose this title?
3. William Frantz Public School, the once all-white school that Ruby integrated, is now a poorly funded school with mainly African American students. What do you think Ruby Bridges means when she writes, "The kids are being segregated all over again."?
4. Ruby's life changed dramatically because a federal court had ordered two schools in New Orleans to admit black students. On page 55, there is a list of major events in the Civil Rights movement. What other court rulings and laws helped to change people's lives? Can you think of court rulings or laws that have affected your life?
5. Ruby Bridges had to be brave in the face of extraordinary racism. Do you think that the same kind of racism exists today?

*Excerpted from THROUGH MY EYES by Ruby Bridges. Published with permission from Scholastic Inc. All rights reserved.*






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**A True Story**
Ruby Bridges, born in Mississippi in 1954, became the center of a political storm of controversy when she was among the first black children to go to a previously all-white school in New Orleans. Ruby was only six years old when she started attending William Frantz Public School, accompanied by her mother and armed U.S Federal Marshals. The Marshals were necessary because angry mobs formed outside Ruby's school, shouting protests like "Two, four, six, eight. We don't want to integrate!" Many white people were outraged at the school's integration, and most white families pulled their children out of the school. Even the State legislature called for white families to boycott mixed schools. For a year, Ruby was separated from the other children and was the only child in her class. With the help of a loving teacher, Ruby made it through a difficult year and paved the way for many African American children who followed in her footsteps in integrated schools. Today, Ruby Bridges still fights for equal education for all children through her lectures and the Ruby Bridges Foundation.

**Understanding Genre**
The book Through My Eyes is an autobiography. In it, Ruby Bridges tells the story of an important chapter in her own life. Yet Ruby was only six years old when she became a pioneer. Others who are quoted help to tell her story, including her mother, Lucille Bridges, her teacher, Barbara Henry, and her child-psychiatrist, Dr. Robert Coles. Quotes from newspapers and magazines also give a vivid depiction of the ugliness of the protests that took place. Do the quotations and photographs help you envision Ruby's life as it was when she started William Frantz School? Think about your own life now. If you were to write about it, who would you quote? Do you think quotes from others would help give the reader a fuller understanding of what your life is like?

**Place**
New Orleans is best known as a popular tourist destination because of its good food, its unique music, and the famous Mardi Gras carnival. Indeed, Ruby's teacher, Barbara Henry, writes, "I thought New Orleans would be a romantic place, filled with southern hospitality." How did her experiences compare with her expectations?

Although the Supreme Court case ruled that segregation in schools was illegal in 1954, it took a court order, six years later, to integrate the schools in New Orleans. Do the news stories and photographs help you picture New Orleans as it was in 1960's? Do you think New Orleans was much different than the rest of the United States at that time?

**Conflict**
Every day, Ruby Bridges had to pass an angry white mob when she went to school. This mob was angry simply because Ruby was a black girl who was going to an all white school. What does Ruby think of the crowd when she first starts school? How do you think Ruby's feelings about these people might have changed from the time she was a little girl to now? How do you think you would feel about these people, if they lived in your town?

**People in Ruby's Life**
Ruby's mother was eager for her daughter to have better educational opportunities. Her father, on the other hand, didn't want to have his daughter be one of the first black children in an all white school. Why do you think Ruby's father was reluctant for her to go to William Frantz? How do you think he felt when he lost his own job?

Ruby's first-grade teacher, Mrs. Barbara Henry, showed her own brand of courage when she braved possible danger from white extremists, the slights of other teachers, and a racist principal to continue teaching Ruby. She made Ruby feel special and helped her learn many things. Why do you think Barbara Henry fought to bring the white first-graders into the classroom with Ruby?