

# The Problem We All Live With

## Overview:

Students will consider what freedoms they have as individuals. They will look at the painting, *The Problem We All Live With* by Norman Rockwell and analyze the illustration in regards to civil rights. A class discussion will allow for students to not only talk about the composition of the painting, but also to analyze the objects and clues in order to decode the story of Ruby Bridges and its relevance to American history. The students will then design a piece of artwork commemorating a civil rights hero or addressing a problem they feel they are faced to live with today in America.

*Five 50 minute class periods:*

- **Class 1 – Presentation and Think Sheet;**
- **Class 2 – Drafting, revision;**
- **Classes 3-5 – Work to complete illustration and class critique**

## Enduring Understandings/ Essential Questions:

1. As Americans, we are protected under law and guaranteed equal social opportunities regardless of race, religion or other individual characteristics. The American Civil Rights Movement began in the 1950s when a mass of individuals and groups came together to protest racial segregation and discrimination.
2. Ruby Bridges was a courageous young girl in the 1960s that was faced with the problem of racism. Although the law allowed her the same education as any child, she faced angry white people on her way to school who called her names and some wanted to hurt her. The President of the United States ordered federal marshals to walk 6 year old Ruby into the school building because they were concerned about her safety. Ruby continued to go to school to learn and gain the same education as white children.
3. The elements of art are building blocks used to create a work of art and the principles of design describe the way artists use the elements of art within their artwork. By analyzing the elements and principles, students may decode visual meaning and intention of the artist.
4. Many people continue to protest for rights they feel are unjust.
  - How does the illustration *The Problems We All Live With*, by Norman Rockwell relate to history?
  - What are civil rights?
  - Why did the US government need to send federal marshals to walk Ruby Bridges to school in 1960?
  - How were the elements and principles of design used to make this illustration successful?
  - Describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within our culture, illustrated during this time.
  - Who was Ruby Bridges? Who are other civil rights activists or heroes from our past?
  - What problem are you faced to live with and how can you make a visual narrative about it?

## Objectives:

- Students will view the reproduction of *The Problems We All Live With* by Norman Rockwell
- Students will view and analyze the composition, and design elements and principles of *The Problems We All Live With*, by Norman Rockwell
- Students will consider the historical and cultural events of the time that the illustration was created.
- Students will brainstorm problems they are currently faced with, complete a Think Sheet, and create a work of visual art that demonstrates an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use.

## Background:

Norman Rockwell began to work for *Look* magazine and felt a new freedom to correct editorial prejudices from work he had previously done for *The Saturday Evening Post*. He wanted to depict the story of Ruby Bridges as she had been escorted by four U.S. marshals to her first day of school at an all-white school in New Orleans. The reviews of the published work were a mix of praise and criticism.

### GRADE

9-12

### THEME

Four Freedoms, Civil Rights

### LENGTH

Five 50 minute class periods

### DISCIPLINE

Art

### VOCABULARY

Composition (Dynamics, triangular, Rule of Thirds, etc.); Elements and Principles of Design; Emphasis; Media; Mood; Symbol; Technique; Thumbnail Sketch; Visual Inventory

# Materials:

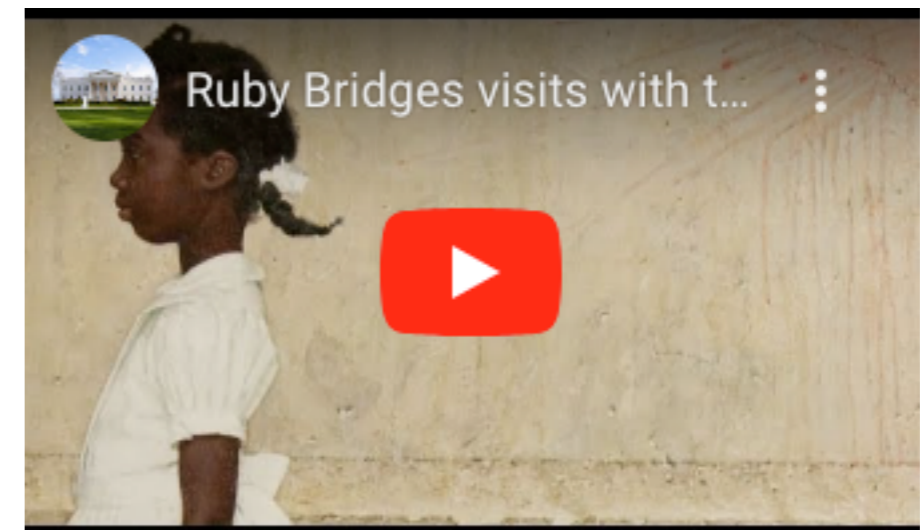
## Multimedia Resources:



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)  
*The Problem We All Live With*, 1963  
Illustration for *Look*, January 14, 1964, pp. 22-23  
Oil on canvas  
Norman Rockwell Museum Collection, NRM.1975.01



**A Conversation with Ruby Bridges Hall**  
Norman Rockwell Museum



**Ruby Bridges Visits the President and her Portrait**

## Classroom Supplies

- Large easel with paper pad and pen, or board to record brainstorming ideas on Think Sheet
- (Worksheet given by the instructor to plan thumbnail drawing) Worksheet: The Problem I Live With Think Sheet (5-8)

## Suggested resources on Civil rights including but not limited to:

- *Ruby Bridges Goes to School* by Robert Cole
- *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges
- *Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom: My Story of the Selma Voting Rights March* by Elspeth Leacock and Susan Buckley
- *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer; Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement* by Carole Boston Weatherford







# Activities:

## Class 1

1. The tables, stools and students will be arranged in a manner conducive to conversation. The reproduction of *The Problem I Live With* by Norman Rockwell will be posted in a central location so that all students can see the illustration.
2. The lesson will begin by asking the students if any of them have seen the illustration before. As a group, the instructor will record the items students recognize in each of the image, taking a visual inventory, pointing out only what they see, not what they perceive. By doing this, the students will analyze the work and find clues and symbols to help read the visual image, revealing American history and culture.
3. The instructor will ask if anyone can associate the image with anything in particular regarding the American culture and its history. A discussion about civil rights and Ruby Bridges will allow for personal interpretations as well as historically accurate facts about the 1960's. Conversation about other civil rights activists or heroes is welcomed.
4. The instructor will read the description from the [Norman Rockwell Digital collection](#) to share with the students. The students will be asked what they think it would have been like to live during the 1960s with the tensions of the civil rights. The discussion will morph, and be carefully facilitated, into other civil rights occurrences and activists. The students will be asked to brainstorm a list of problems they feel they have endured personally, or that our nation has been faced with recently. The instructor will record a list on easel paper, or a board; this list will be a point of departure for students to plan a project of their own.
5. Students will be given the worksheet, *The Problem I Live With Think Sheet (9-12)* to complete, and then share with a peer.

## Class 2

6. The students will develop a sketch and begin to consider what media would best emphasize the message they are trying to convey or the individual they will be honoring in their artwork.
7. The instructor will circulate around the room and be available for each student if they need to talk about their ideas and material needs. Suggestion for revisions regarding composition and design will be considered.
8. The last ten minutes of class will be dedicated to the group coming together to share their ideas in order to gain a greater brainstorming opportunity. Each student will be asked to explain the media they feel is best suited for their project. Throughout the project, the students will be encouraged to talk with the instructor and their peers regarding their thoughts, ideas, and frustrations with their project asking for help or feedback.

## Class 3 – 5

9. Three more classes will be allotted to the completion of the project. Once most of the students have finished, the group will come together, again, to conclude the project by presenting their artwork during a group critique to gain further feedback from their peers about their personal piece. Ask each student to present their project and explain their thoughts. Once the artist has spoken, comments from classmates will be allowed. The comments must be given in a respectful manner, demonstrate critical thoughts and be relevant to the project.

# Assessment:

- Students will be evaluated on their participation in the discussion (informal checks of understanding through questions) and completion of the Think Sheet.
- Students will complete a Think Sheet.
- Students will confer with their peers and the instructor upon completion of the thumbnail sketch and Think Sheet for feedback, suggestions and consider any revisions before moving on to begin the final illustration.
- Students will select media, techniques, and processes; analyze what makes them effective in communicating their ideas; and reflect upon the effectiveness of their choices.
- Students will analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place (history and culture) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.
- Students will participate in a group critique, then prepare and hang their illustration for display.

# Standards:

This curriculum meets the standards listed below. Look for more details on these standards please visit: [ELA](#) and [Math Standards](#), [Social Studies Standards](#), [Visual Arts Standards](#).

## — Applied Standards

VA:Cn11.1.HSI

Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.

VA:Cr1.1.HSI

Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.

VA:Cr2.1.HSI

Engage in making a work of art or design without having a preconceived plan.

VA:Cr2.2.HSI

Explain how traditional and non-traditional materials may impact human health and the environment and demonstrate safe handling of materials, tools, and equipment.

VA:Cr3.1.HSI

Apply relevant criteria from traditional and contemporary cultural contexts to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for works of art and design in progress.