

# Close Reading of The Problem We All Live With

## Overview:

Students will examine the illustration, *The Problem We All Live With*, noticing the details within the context of the painting. They will look closely at the details within the painting, sharing these details. They will make supported inferences from these details, including Norman Rockwell's purpose and message.

## Enduring Understandings/ Essential Questions:

1. People were not always treated equally.
  2. People, young and old, help to bring about change in our country.
  3. We can learn about the history of our country not only from people who study the events that took place in the past, but also from people who participated in these events.
- Why are some people treated differently than others?
  - In what ways can people help to bring about change?
  - How do we learn about events that happened in the past?
  - Are all accounts of a historical event the same?

## 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:

In the 1960s, particularly following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and the intensification of American military activity in Vietnam, long-held beliefs and cultural norms shifted dramatically in America. Attitudes about race, sexuality, and gender roles were challenged as diverse social groups united to fight for civil rights and protest the Vietnam War.

After resigning his forty-seven year tenure with *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1963, Norman Rockwell embraced the challenge of creating imagery that addressed the nation's pressing concerns in a pared down, reportorial style. *The Problem We All Live With* for *Look* magazine is based upon an actual event, when six-year-old Ruby Bridges was escorted by U.S. Marshals to her first day at an all-white school. While the neutral title of the image invites interpretation, Rockwell's depiction of the vulnerable but dignified girl clearly condemns the actions of those who protest her presence and the issue of desegregation. Letters to the editor were a mix of praise and criticism, but that did not stop Rockwell from pursuing his course.

In September 1960, years after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling stating that separate was not equal in America's public schools, four African American students were selected to begin the integration process in the public elementary schools of New Orleans, Louisiana. One six year old, Ruby Bridges, was assigned to a first grade class at the William Franz Elementary School. The integration of the schools was not welcome by many white Americans in the south, and parents refused to have Ruby in their child's class. As a result, she was the only student in the first grade class taught by Boston native, Barbara Henry. For many months, angry parents protested her attendance at the school.

Norman Rockwell's painting, *The Problem We All Live With*, shows a young African American girl symbolizing Ruby Bridges being escorted to school by U.S. Marshals despite the barrage of racial slurs and threats. The young girl who posed is Lynda Gunn, Rockwell's neighbor in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where he lived for his last twenty-five years.

### GRADE

6-8

### THEME

Four Freedoms, Civil Rights

### LENGTH

This activity will take one 30-45 minute period.

### DISCIPLINE

Social Studies; Language Arts: Reading; Language Arts: Speaking and Listening

### VOCABULARY

Discrimination; Segregation; Equal; Fair; Civil Rights Movement; Jim Crow laws; Rosa Parks; Martin Luther King, Jr.

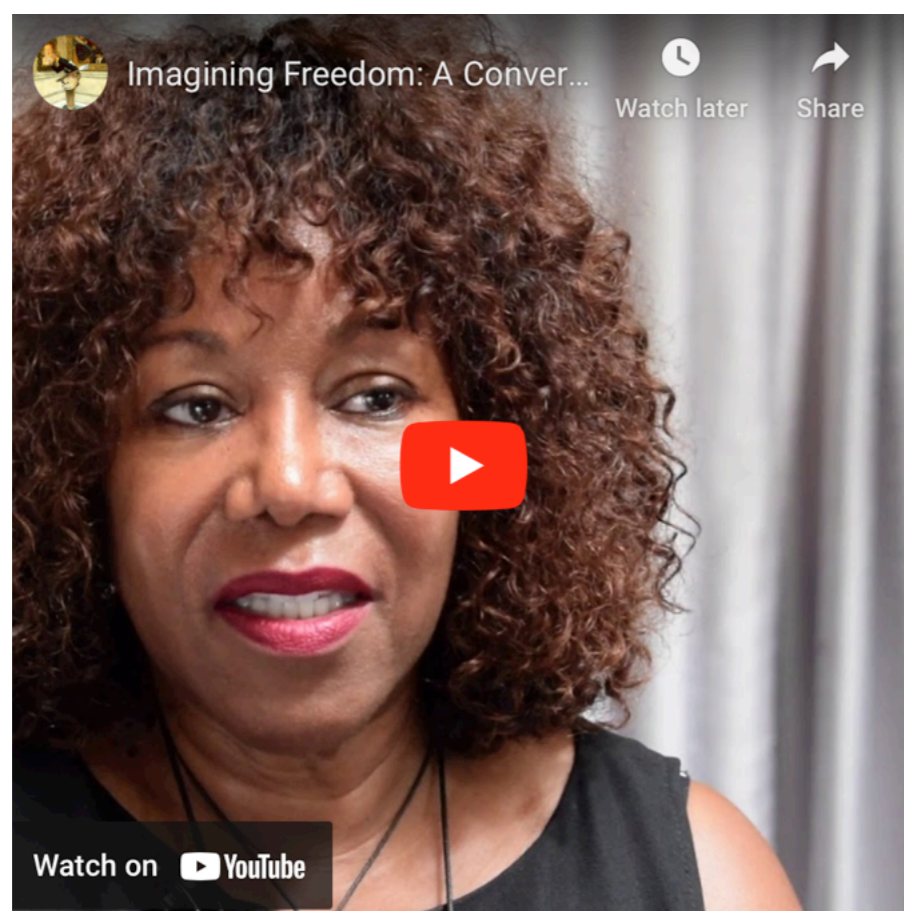


## Materials:

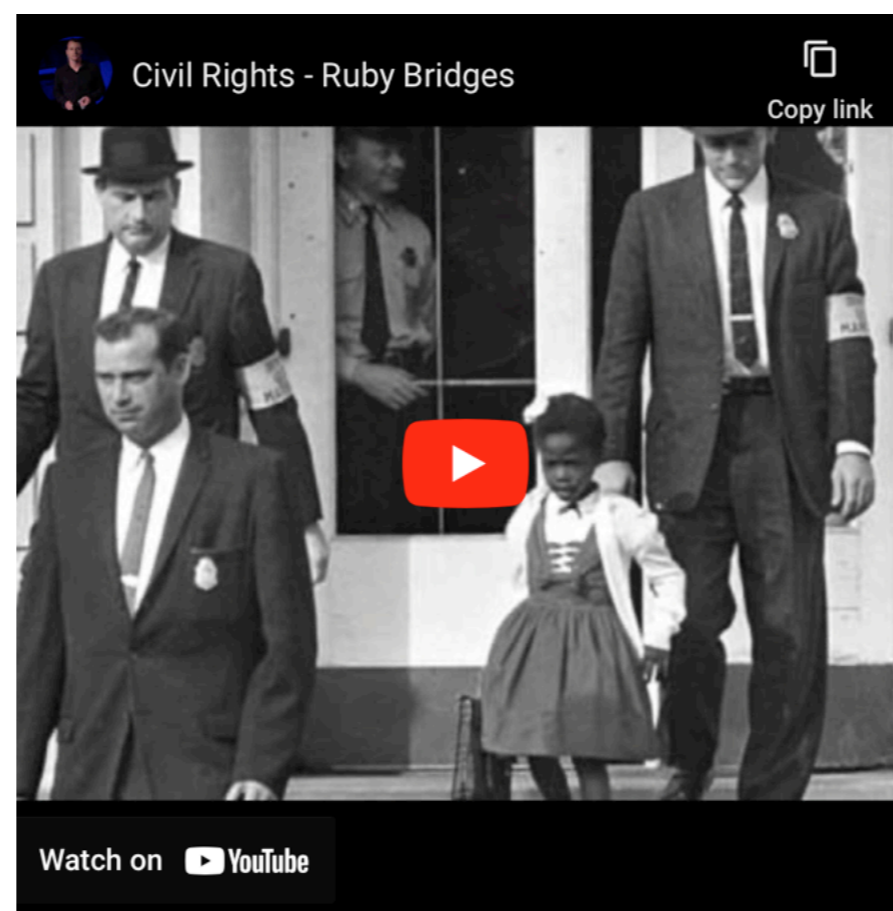
## Multimedia Resources:



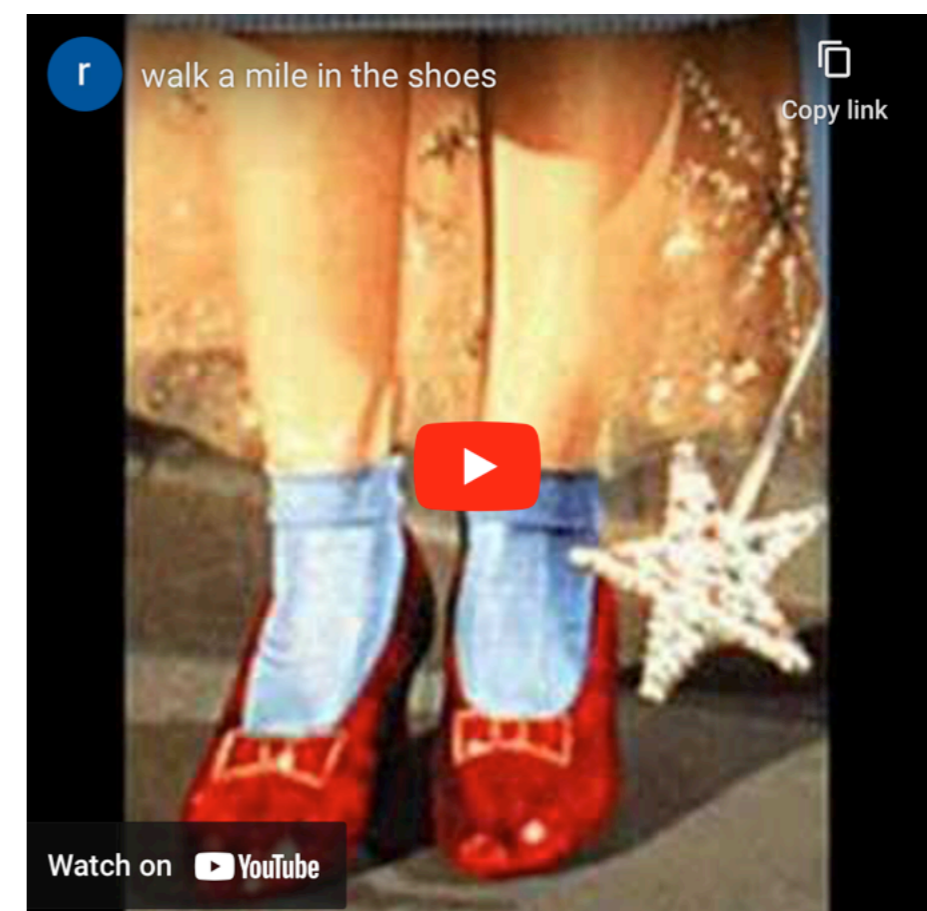
Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)  
*The Problem We All Live With*, 1963  
Illustration for *Look*, January 14, 1964, pp. 22-23  
Oil on canvas  
Norman Rockwell Museum Collection,  
NRM.1975.01



A Conversation with Ruby Bridges Hall  
Norman Rockwell Museum



Civil Rights - Ruby Bridges



Walk a mile in the shoes

## Classroom Supplies

- Chart paper with T-Chart labeled "What I See"/"What I think" (can infer)
- Marker
- Jim Crow Laws (These laws were enforced until 1965.)







## Activities:

- Display the illustration of *The Problem We All Live With*.
- Ask students to look carefully at the illustration. Give them a few minutes to do this.
- Turn and Talk: When you feel enough time has passed, have students turn to a person sitting beside them. Ask them to share with each other some of the things they notice in the illustration. As they are sharing, listen in to their conversations.
- Have partners share some of the things they noticed in the picture. Record their responses on chart paper. (Elicit what was heard during partner talk that are not shared or share them for the students)
- Turn and Talk: When everyone has an opportunity to share, have students turn to face their partners again. Tell them to talk to their partner about what they are thinking based on the details they noticed.
- Have partners share their thoughts. Record responses on the T-chart. Elicit details from the picture to support their thinking.
- New observations may be contributed as they look closer and are thinking about the details. Add them to the appropriate column on T-Chart.
- If you have not already done so, share the origin of the painting and its name. Have students reflect on the purpose of the message that Mr. Rockwell would want them to understand, and what the message means to them.
- Optional Activity: Read *Through Her Eyes* by Ruby Bridges to the class.

## Assessment:

- Did everyone participate?
- Are students basing their thinking on the details?
- Do student responses to the illustration reflect the relevance of personal interest and perspectives as well as civic virtues/principles which were in conflict during this movement?
- Do students' responses reflect relevant thinking about the significance of the illustration in today's world?

# 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](#).

## – Reading: Literature

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.9

Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.9

Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.9

Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new.

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## – Speaking & Listening

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.2

Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grade 6 Language standards 1 and 3 [\[link to="CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6">here\[/link\]](#) for specific expectations.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.2

Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.6

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grade 7 Language standards 1 and 3 [\[link to="CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.7">here\[/link\]](#) for specific expectations.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.2

Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grade 8 Language standards 1 and 3 [\[link to="CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8">here\[/link\]](#) for specific expectations.)

## – Applied Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.7

Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.1

Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.7

Compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium's portrayal of the subject (e.g., how the delivery of a speech affects the impact of the words).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.1

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.7

Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.

D1.1.6-8.

Explain how a question represents key ideas in the field.

D1.2.6-8.

Explain points of agreement experts have about interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a compelling question.

D1.3.6-8.

Explain points of agreement experts have about interpretations and applications and disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a supporting question.

D1.4.6-8.

Explain how the relationship between supporting questions and compelling questions is mutually reinforcing.

D1.5.6-8.

Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration the different opinions people have about how to answer the question.

D2.Civ.10.6-8.

Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.

D2.Civ.9.6-8.

Compare deliberative processes used in a wide variety of groups in various settings.

D2.His.1.6-8.

Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.

D2.His.2.6-8.

Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity.

D2.His.3.6-8.

Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.

D2.His.4.6-8.

Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.5.6-8.

Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed over time.

## – Applied Standards

D2.His.5.6-8.

Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed over time.

D2.His.6.6-8.

Analyze how people's perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created.

D3.1.6-8.

Gather relevant information from multiple sources while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.

D3.2.6-8.

Evaluate the credibility of a source by determining its relevance and intended use.

D3.3.6-8. Identify evidence that draws information from multiple sources to support claims, noting evidentiary limitations.

D3.4.6-8. Develop claims and counterclaims while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both.

D4.2.6-8.

Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with relevant information and data, while acknowledging the strengths, and weaknesses of explanations.

D4.5.6-8.

Critique the structure of explanations.