INTRODUCTION

In *Ruby’s Wish* Shirin Yim Bridges brings us the fictionalized story of her grandmother’s childhood in China at a time when the opportunities for girls were limited. Young Ruby finds this situation unfair, and through her gentle persistence, changes things for herself—and for future generations. Ruby is a strong and admirable character, and your second through fourth grade students are going to like her.

*Ruby’s Wish* introduces your class to many facets of Chinese culture and helps them discover that history is not only about the big events, but also, even more importantly, about the small, personal things that happen in people’s lives. The book will empower them to believe that each of them can make a difference, in their own lives and the world that surrounds them. *Ruby’s Wish* and the activities suggested in this guide connect your students to language arts, reading and writing, social studies, history, and art curricula.
GENERAL OVERVIEW

THIS TEACHER’S GUIDE CONTAINS:

Eight Pre-Planned Activities for Students

1. Pre-Reading
2. Language Arts/Reading
3. Vocabulary
4. Social Studies: Oral History
5. History
6. Creative Writing/Poetry
7. Creative Writing/Calligraphy
8. Visual Arts
1 PRE-READING

Show your class the jacket of Ruby’s Wish. Tell them the book is the story of a little girl growing up in China during the later part of the 19th century. Ruby has a very special wish—a wish for something to happen in her future. Have the class speculate what that wish might be. What would they wish for the future? Ask the children to write their guesses in their notebooks. They should also enter a wish of their own. Remind them that the wish should not be for something material. Let them keep their guess and their wish a secret.

After the class has read the book, have the children return to their wish-notes. Did anyone come close to guessing what Ruby wished for? Give them a chance to examine their own wishes once more. If they want to change them as a result of what they learned about Ruby’s wish, they should do so.

In discussion, point out that while Ruby had a wish, she also worked hard toward making her wish possible. What can your students do to bring their own wishes closer?

1 STANDARDS

Language Arts/Reading
- Previews text
- Makes, confirms, and revises simple predictions about what will be found in texts
- Establishes a purpose for reading
- Understands the author’s purpose
- Knows themes that recur across literary works
- Makes connections between characters or simple events in a literary work and people in his or her life

2 LANGUAGE ARTS/READING

As the children read the story and look at the illustrations, have them write in their journals about some of the old Chinese customs that are different from customs today. For example: roles of men and women, family relationships and structure, types of clothing, etc.

2 STANDARDS

Language Arts/Reading
- Makes connections between characters or simple events in a literary work and people in his or her life
- Uses prior knowledge and experience to understand and respond to new information

Language Arts/Writing
- Writes in response to literature

3 VOCABULARY

Your students will come across vocabulary words in Ruby’s Wish that are unfamiliar to them. Some of those words are listed below. Create cards for these new words. At the top of a 3x5 index card write “Ruby’s Wish”. In the middle of the card write the new vocabulary word. On the reverse side, write the meaning of the word. Add the new words to your vocabulary word box and display them on your word wall.

- rice
- birds
- magnificent
- terrapins
- embroidery
- university
- bamboo
- porcelain
- calligraphy
- cockerels
- prosperity

3 STANDARDS

Language Arts/Reading
- Uses a variety of context clues to decode unknown words
- Understands level-appropriate vocabulary

Social Studies: Oral History

Reading about Ruby opens up a period of history, a country, and a culture to your students. Their own grandparents’ stories can do the same. Ruby’s story should make your children curious to learn about their grandparents’ stories. Invite them to satisfy that curiosity with an oral history project.

A good deal of the work for this will have to be done by each child at home. It will involve phone calls, e-mails, and letters, and it’s likely that the children will need their parents’ help. We’ve included a letter you can send home to encourage parental involvement in this project.

Grandparent Interviews

To begin, have your students brainstorm questions they can use to interview their grandmothers and grandfathers. Using some of the details in Ruby’s Wish as a jumping off point, make a list of possible questions, such as the ones below:

- Where did you live when you were my age?
- Where did you go to school? What did you study? What was your best subject? What was your worst?
- What kind of clothes did you wear? How were they different from the clothes kids wear today?
- How many children were in your family?
- What was your favorite thing to do?
- What big world events do you remember from your childhood?
• Did you know what you wanted to do when you grew up? Did you do it?
• How were things different for boys and girls when you were growing up?
• In what year were you my age?

(Note: We’ll use the answer to this last question later on in the guide.)

The children should then interview their grandparents and create a “My Grandparents and Me” chart. Here is a sample:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Grandparents and Me</th>
<th>My Grandma</th>
<th>My Grandpa</th>
<th>Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hometown</td>
<td>Havana, Cuba</td>
<td>Miami, Florida</td>
<td>New York City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of family</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best subject</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Worst subject</td>
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<tr>
<td>Favorite thing to do</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Grandparents’ Stories

Expand your class’s oral history project with stories. Remind students that history is not made up of only facts and details, but is also a collection of the stories of people who live in different times and different places. Students or their parents may be able to make tape recordings of grandparents telling favorite stories from their childhoods. Some grandparents might be able to create video recordings, as well. Others might narrate stories that children can write down. Or parents can tell an old family story. The children should present their work to the entire class in an oral presentation or a written narrative.

Grandparents’ Photos

The photographs at the end of Ruby’s Wish reveal a new dimension to the story. They are an important part of the book’s meaning and message. Have your students bring in photographs of their grandparents when they were children, along with current photos. Each child should make a photo poster to show his or her grandparents, then and now, along with his or her own photograph. The posters should be displayed throughout the classroom.

Language Arts/Writing
• Uses text organizers
• Uses pre-writing strategies to plan written work
• Writes narrative accounts
• Uses strategies to write for a variety of purposes
• Writes biographical compositions

Language Arts/Listening and Speaking
• Makes basic oral presentations
• Organizes ideas for oral presentations
• Listens to classmates and adults
• Understands that language reflects different regions and cultures

Language Arts/Viewing
• Understands different messages conveyed through visual media

Behavioral Studies/Art in Culture
• Knows that language, stories, folktales, music, and artistic creations are expressions of culture

Art Connections
• Knows how ideas are expressed in various art forms
• Knows how visual elements are used in various art forms

History
• Understands family life today and how it compares with family life in the recent past
• Knows a family history through several generations
HISTORY

In their interviews with their grandparents, your students found out what year their grandparents were the same age as them. Now have them research that year—the year Grandma turned nine or the year Grandpa turned eight—and discover:

- Best movies of the year
- Popular radio or TV shows
- Who won the World Series
- Hot toy
- Hit songs
- Who was President
- Important world event
- Prices of stamps, milk, bread, and gasoline
- Other things

The children will find many of the answers at the following website www.dmarie.com/timecap/final.asp.

They can also go to the Google website: www.google.com and type in a specific phrase such as “World Series 1958,” or date such as August 25, 1956, or just a year, and see what comes up.

Each student should use his or her findings to create a page for the class’s “Then and Now” Newspaper. We’ve provided a template for this page that you can use for each student’s contribution.

Children should study newspapers to learn about banners, headlines, datelines, by-lines, etc. Their articles should imitate these newspaper forms as closely as possible.

On the top half of the page, we’ve left space for an article. Here your students should report on a world event that happened during their researched year.

The second half of the page is divided into columns for the students to report on popular subjects—books, movies, music—showing what made the headlines then and what makes them now.

The various pages should be put together to create a classroom paper.

CREATIVE WRITING/POETRY

There is a well-known saying: the pen is mightier than the sword. Discuss the meaning of this with your students. Then show how the short poem that Ruby wrote for her teacher was the beginning of a large and important change in her family and in her life. She achieved her wish largely because she wrote the poem.

Have your children write a poem about something in their lives or in the world that they would like to change. They might return to their wish and write their poem about that. A good poetic form for young writers is haiku. Haiku is an unrhymed three-lined verse form with 5 syllables in the first line, 7 in the second, and 5 in the third. Start them out with “A wish for the world.” Have them read their poems aloud, then display the poems on the bulletin boards throughout the room.

STANDARDS

Language Arts/Reading
- Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts
- Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts
- Understands structural patterns or organizations in informational texts

Language Arts/Writing
- Uses a variety of strategies to plan research
- Uses electronic media to gather information
- Uses strategies to edit and publish written work
- Writes expository compositions

Language Arts/Writing
- Writes in response to literature
- Writes narrative accounts, such as poems and stories
- Writes for different purposes

Language Art/Listening and Speaking
- Contributes to group discussions
- Listens to classmates
- Makes basic oral presentations
Chinese is written in a pictographic alphabet, very different from English. Each symbol stands for a word.


To find more Chinese pictograph characters visit the website www.chinapage.com/flash/love.html.

Children should practice writing some of the symbols, copying them closely. Then they should write a simple story integrating some of the Chinese characters with English. They might even try to create pictographs to represent some of the other words in their story.

And each child should sign his calligraphy story with a pictograph for himself or herself. (You might point out Ed Young’s name on the cover of his book. Although it is written in English, it mimics the Chinese character style.)

### VISUAL ARTS

Ruby tells her grandfather: “When it is the Lantern Festival, the girls are given simple paper lanterns, but the boys have red lanterns in the shapes of goldfish, cockerels, and dragons.”

The Lantern Festival or Yuanxiao Jie is a traditional Chinese festival, celebrated on the 15th day of the first month of the Chinese New Year. It is the last day of the two week long Chinese New Year celebration. Adults and children make and display the paper lanterns they create. The most beautiful lantern wins a prize.

Give all your students a chance to have beautiful lanterns – by making their own.

### Make a Chinese Lantern

**Materials**
- 12x18 white construction paper
- Gold foil paper
- Colorful wrapping paper, tissue paper, and thin colored paper
- White glue
- Water
- Paint brush
- Stapler

**Directions**
1) Tear (do not cut) the wrapping paper, tissue paper, and thin colored paper into approximately 2-inch squares.
2) Thin the glue slightly with a little water.
3) Using the paintbrush to spread the glue, randomly paste the torn paper onto the construction paper, making sure the entire piece of construction paper is covered.
4) Cut two 1x18-inch strips of the gold foil paper.
5) Holding the construction paper the long way, paste the gold foil along the top edge and the bottom edge.
6) Fold the decorated paper in half the long way.
7) Make 4-inch cuts across the fold every 1 inch. Be careful not to cut through to the edge.
8) Unfold the paper and bring the short sides together. Staple along the top, middle and bottom.
9) Cut a strip of paper and staple it across the top for a handle

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<table>
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<tr>
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<th>STANDARDS</th>
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<td>• Knows the differences among visual characteristics and purposes of art</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Uses visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Uses a variety of basic art materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Knows that history, culture, and the visual arts can influence each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Knows how different media, techniques, and processes are used to communicate ideas</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Knows the holidays and conventions of different cultures</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Understands that the daily life of a culture is reflected in its art</td>
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</table>
Dear Parents,

I wanted to let you know about a new project our class is starting. We are reading and studying a book called Ruby's Wish by Shirin Yim Bridges, illustrated by Sophie Blackall. We are using this book to open the door into each of our own cultures and traditions. In the next few weeks, your child will be asking you questions about your family's history and wanting to contact his/her grandparents to learn more from them. I hope you'll be able to share with them—and with us—photographs, stories, and more that come out of your background.

I eagerly invite you and your children's grandparents to participate in this project.

Some of the things you can do to help:

• Visit the class and tell family stories to us.
• Bring in a favorite ethnic food for us to try.
• Teach the class to say some words in your cultural language.
• Teach us a family or cultural song.
• Bring in traditional clothing.
• Share old family photographs.

Signed:_________________________

(date)

Child's Name:__________________________________________

Please check one:

___ I would love to participate in the project. This is how I can help:


___ Sorry, I am unavailable to participate.

Signed:________________________________________________

About the Author and Illustrator

Shirin Yim Bridges comes from a family of writers and artists. She has lived in many countries around the world—Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, England—and now lives in Illinois. This is her first children’s book.

Sophie Blackall is an Australian illustrator whose work has appeared in many newspapers and magazines, including the New York Times. She lives in Brooklyn, New York, with her husband and two small children.