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## Exploring Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Social Studies Through Historical Fiction Using Google Lit Trips

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EXPLORING ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING  
SOCIAL STUDIES THROUGH HISTORICAL FICTION USING GOOGLE LIT  
TRIPS

by

KRISTIN BIDER

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Elementary Education  
in the College of Education  
and in the Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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Thesis Chair: Sherron Killingsworth Roberts, Ed.D.

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## **Abstract**

There is a new generation of students entering our school systems called “Digital Natives”; students who are more technologically inclined than their teachers. With the new cohort of students, it is becoming problematic for teachers to implement engaging lessons. Because social studies is not a state tested subject, teachers and administrators find it very difficult to retrieve the time and the passion for the subject in the everyday classroom. One new Google application called Google Lit Trips is an appealing way to teach social studies for the new generation of students. Prior research on Google Lit Trips showed that this application is well suited for creating lessons that can satisfy standards for a multitude of subjects, and in a way that catches the students’ attentions. After I completed research on the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner, how teachers can integrate social studies into their classroom, and Google Literature Trips; I studied many virtual field trips of various books or novels. These Google Literature Trips allows teachers to utilize Google Earth to pin locations of importance for students in order to gain a visual, while simultaneously exploring educational activities. Then, I created my own Google Lit Trip. Before teachers participated in exploring the Google Lit Trip I created, a survey was conducted on the five teachers; getting their perceptions of technology, social studies education, and Google Lit Trips. They were then asked to read the picture book *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995). The computer application was then shown to teachers to get their opinions on its perceived effectiveness. A post-survey was then conducted on the teachers’ perceptions of the Google Literature Trip. The results of the teachers’ discernments of the teaching tool proved it to be an effective application to use in the classroom to enhance cross-curricular education from technology, art, reading, and most importantly for this thesis, social studies. Future research

should be conducted on students' perceptions, and whether or not it sustains engagement, and whether or not their knowledge of the subject matter improves.

## **Dedications**

To my parents and sister, who have loved and supported me throughout my academic career; and who are always giving me that extra push to better myself each and every day.

To my friends, who are my second family, and some of the best cheerleaders.

Lastly, to my wonderful Thesis Chair, with whom I never would have been as motivated to push through the tough times of writing a thesis.

I cannot thank these people enough, and I am blessed to have them in my life.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This thesis seeks to explore how teachers might enhance elementary education through the use of Google Lit Trips using historical fiction with elementary students. Being an Elementary Education major, with a great deal of field hours in elementary schools, I know it is becoming increasingly difficult to find time or be allowed the time to teach social studies. Not because teachers do not want to teach social studies, but because social studies is not part of high-stakes testing. The lack of social studies is not the only obstacle teachers face, but additionally teachers are also presented with the problem of having to teach students who are often more technologically savvy than they are. There are so many programs such as Google Earth, which is a virtual globe, map and geographic information program; and also Google Lit Trips, which use Google Earth to explore a novel, sometimes referred to as a bookmap (Cavanaugh & Burg, 2011, p. 1). With all these programs available and the increase of digitally knowledgeable students, it can create challenges for teachers to stay relevant to the ways digital natives learn or may learn best. Yet it also poses the question of whether or not students are really digital learners; they may use technology well and understand how to use it, but are their learning skills just as effective? In other words, do our students know how to use technology to help them learn? (Bennett, Maton & Kervin, 2008, p. 778)

As an intern currently, I am very intrigued by the lack of social studies education occurring in our classrooms today. I know that many teachers would love to incorporate more social studies into their classrooms, but barriers (e.g., time constraints, due to other tested subjects being prioritized in the curriculum) are making it difficult. Therefore, many teachers are

utilizing historical fiction in language arts to make up for this deficit. Using these cross curricular lessons are something that I personally believe are a great idea for teachers; which is essentially combining, or crossing subjects. For example, combining language arts and social studies instruction through historical fiction is a great way to address both contents in a natural way. More specifically, students are encouraged to read great literature; so what if these books are pertinent to the subject matter they are learning in social studies? Historical fiction, coupled with Google Lit Trips seems to be a viable option. To further enhance their knowledge of the social studies concepts in books, I thought, what if there are virtual field trips, such as Google Lit Trips that students can take? Google Lit Trips seem to be a viable option to enable students to visualize the plot as the book unfolds, to make it so students who are just physically sitting in their classroom, or at home, can be transported mentally and emotionally to the world of the book. I think this is such an interesting idea and that is why I personally chose to do my thesis on examining teachers' perceptions after a Google Lit Trip experience using historical fiction.

I chose to focus on Google Lit Trips because I think that the ideas presented may be very important information for any teacher who wants to make social studies and historical fiction come alive for their students using technology as a platform. Social studies is a dwindling subject (Heafner, Lipscomb & Rock, 2006, p. 145), (which is a vital component of a well-rounded education to produce well-educated citizens, one of the ultimate goals of teachers. Without it, we lose much of the information that is key to our society, functioning in our society, and making our society better for humanity. Having a tool like Google Lit Trips allows teachers to make learning exciting, especially now that students are all coming from a background that is more familiar with technology, even more so than some teachers. Knowing that technology can

be used as such an effective teaching tool, I realized how important the current resources are, which is another reason I am writing this thesis.

In crafting my thesis, I first I would like to study how teaching is affected by the new incoming students that are part of a digitally native community (Wehrli, 2009, p. 2). The National Educational Technology Standards (ISTE, 2008, p. 1) states that teachers need to “facilitate and inspire student learning and creativity” using technology. Is new software, such as Google Earth and Google Lit Trips, affect how teachers are teaching? Is it a hindrance or an enhancement, even though it is now becoming part of the curriculum? Examining teachers’ perceptions may help determine this technological tool’s impact and effectiveness.

Next, I want to study and report how teachers might use Google Earth and Google Lit Trip apps. I want to be able to share my research on how they work and how they can be used in the classroom, as either a supplemental tool or essential tool for education. More importantly for my thesis, I want to learn how these applications might be used to study historical fiction in order to enhance social studies.

Lastly, I will create my own Google Lit Trip using a popular and award-winning historical fiction picture book: *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995). After creating my Lit Trip, I will find means to assess its effectiveness with fifth grade school teachers, by going to a classroom and giving teachers a pre-survey to assess their perception on technology and Google Literature Trips. After having the teachers explore using my Google Lit Trip, I would like to give them a post-survey and see how they think it will affect student learning, and how they would incorporate it into their classroom instruction. Using the data yielded from the pre-survey

and post-survey, I would like to see how effective of a tool Google Lit Trips are for teaching historical fiction.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter will provide summaries of salient research concerning digital natives, strategies for teaching historical fiction, and Google Earth and Google Lit Trips. The literature review will begin broadly, with discussing digital natives and narrow to focus on research that may exist about using Google Lit Trips in education. Knowing the challenges faced with teaching digital natives, affects the teaching strategies used to teach historical fiction, Google Earth and Google Lit Trips can be used as effective teaching strategies to enhance student learning in all subjects, especially historical fiction. Digital natives is a term referring to a generation of students that have grown up in an environment that is technology focused, the generations that grown up using iPads and laptops before even entering school. The section on strategies for teaching historical fiction focuses on best teaching practices for teachers to use when trying to implement social studies and historical fiction lessons in the classroom. Finally, Google Earth and Google Lit Trips will focus on what those programs are and how they can be used efficiently in the classroom.

### **Digital Natives**

Technology is a fairly new concept in classrooms, and sometimes it can be used as a tool to enhance lessons or other times it can be a tool for distraction (e.g., finding a student texting a friend in class or more interested in the entertainment component of technology, rather than the educational component). Especially now that students are part of the “NetGen, technology immersed students” (Wehrli, 2009, p. 2), teachers find their roles in using technology increasingly difficult to understand with students entering the classroom sometimes with more

knowledge than they possess about technology. Through my research, I have found that teachers currently are finding it difficult to see where the fine line is between having technology as an enhancement or a distraction. Bryan Wehrli believed that technology can be either a “fence or a bridge.” (Wehrli, 2009, p. 1) This means that technology can either hinder learning or be a connecting factor for students’ interests. While according to Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Brush, Strycker, Gronseth, Roman, Abaci, vanLeusen, Shin, Easterling, and Plucker, research is showing that “the appropriate use of technology by teachers can have positive academic benefits” (2012, p.400). Students in this Digital Native generation actually have a visual cortex 20% larger than an average brain 20 years ago (Soma, 2009). This means that the more visuals they have, could enhance their learning. In fact, research shows that having visual imagery allows students to comprehend what they are reading, especially through informational texts like social studies (Hibbing & Rankin-Erikson, 2003, p. 758). How can teachers prepare to teach students that are digitally native, even more so than they are? That is a difficult question to answer. In the article “Digital Natives? New and Old Media and Children’s Outcomes” the authors claim that students are “active, experiential learners, natural multi-taskers, using a range of digital devices and platforms simultaneously to drive their own informal learning agendas.” (Bittman, Rutherford, Brown, Unsworth, 2011, p. 161) This makes being a teacher extremely difficult, but through technology, we can use it as a “bridge” (Wehrli, 2009) to enhance student learning and make sure we allow all of our students an opportunity to be engaged in our lessons, that way other forms of technology will not be used as a distraction.

## **Social Studies and Historical Fiction**

“Using historical fiction to teach social studies is a viable teaching strategy that helps students conceptualize the past” (Wasta & Lott, 2006, p.3). This is a statement that I personally agree with, and have experienced myself through my education, in my history classes; learning history was a lot more interesting when presented within historical fiction. Enhancing the use of historical fiction for the new generations is an even better concept. Using technology as a means of teaching is a great way to enhance learning; it can be used as a supplemental tool to help visualize what is being taught, especially when students are trying to grasp concepts about time periods long before their time. Technology can be used to help students envision and empathize with the past to ensure they get the most effective historical teachings. According to Goudvis and Harvey (2012), the best way to teach historical fiction; which is set in the past, from actual events, with characters that are fictional, is to focus not on teaching for memorization, but make sure students have the opportunity to delve into the information using quality literature to enhance their reading and thinking skills. One of their “four generative practices for Social Studies Education” (Goudvis, Harvey, 2012, p. 54) is to use historical fiction picture books to allow students to infer important ideas by getting those visuals, as I have mentioned previously, is vitally important to social studies education. In the article “The Return of Historical Fiction”, Mary Taylor Rycik and Brenda Rosler (2009) both agree that the visuals in picture books, as well as the use of technology, are important in teaching social studies because these allow education to be more student-centered and allows students to be more interested in learning because technology is making it more relatable for them.



## **Social Studies Education and Google Apps**

The final topic dealing with my thesis research is Google Earth and Google Lit Trips. Both are programs provided through satellite images on the internet that can be used to enhance student knowledge of material. One article presented information on teachers using Google Earth to help students envision a lesson on oil spills around the world. Through Google Earth, they were able to type in locations and actually visualize the current spills and the surrounding waters. Google Earth allows students to “access additional information, such as historic imagery, panoramic photos, locations of national parks, and ecosystem data” (Guertin & Neville, 2011, p. 1). According to the article, having all this additional knowledge makes information easier for students to digest when learning and studying concepts that can sometimes get lost in translation. Other articles focus specifically on Google Lit Trips, which use the concept of Google Earth with their satellite images captured over time to allow students to go on a virtual field trip in the past or present of a book’s setting and plot. In Jill Castek and Jessica Mangelson’s article (2008), they compared Google Lit Trips to road trips for books. They highlighted the point that experiencing and creating Google Lit Trips allow for higher order thinking skills such as “interpreting, analyzing, comparing, and explaining” (2008, p. 40) to be used with students’ reading experiences.

This is further explained in the article “The Power of the Mashup” (Boss and Krauss, 2007) where they delve into what Google Lit trips really do, and that is make literature come alive for students. The creator of Google Lit Trips, Jerome Burg, believed that using Google Earth to guide his students on a virtual field trip helped him use the “Eight Essential Learning

Functions: ubiquity, deep learning, making things visible and discussable, expressing ourselves/sharing ideas/building communities, collaboration, research, project management, and reflection/iteration.\" (Boss & Krauss, 2007, p. 13). Narrowing the scope of subjects to historical fiction, Ilene R. Berson and Michael J. Berson (2011) explain that students are able to visualize the “evolution of the plot” and it is helpful in order to “integrate visual representations” (p. 111). The Bersons also report that Google Lit Trips make social studies education a “hands-on exploration” (Berson & Berson, 2011, p. 111) that makes teaching historical fiction and social studies relevant to students in today’s world. The article provides visuals of assignments that teachers can use with the Lit Trip, and it also shared the visuals provided in the Lit Trip of places mentioned in the book, allowing students to understand and process textual information faster; it also allows students to make connections to books and locations they are learning about to make it more relatable and therefore make descriptions more engaging to learn and imagine through Google Lit Trips. I have looked at the Google Lit Trip created by Carol LaRow for the book My Brother Sam is Dead, and looking at how she infused discussion questions, webquests and supplemental information into the Google Earth image of the setting in the novel, I believe it was just as entertaining as informational for me to “travel” through. (n.d.)

These three topics are interesting separately, but certainly go hand-in-hand when trying to teach social studies concepts through historical fiction. Knowing that teaching has to be implemented differently with the new generation of students in the classroom, known as digital natives; and knowing that to effectively teach social studies and historical fiction research has shown that technology and books are essential; and finally knowing that Google Earth and Google Lit Trips are two helpful resources to help engage and teach our digital natives about

social studies and historical fiction, this thesis seeks to combine two essential effective teaching resources: children's literature and technology. After all of my research, I strongly believe that Google Earth and Google Lit Trips can be used as an effective teaching tool to help students understand a subject that is often slighted in today's schools, social studies.

This literature review in Chapter 2 has provided research to support that teachers are finding it increasingly difficult to teach students who are coming into school with more technological knowledge than them. Research further supports that technology nowadays can enhance education, or hinder it.

When referring to education, specifically social studies education, most teachers feel that it is a dwindling subject in schools, because it is not assessed on its own, it is part of the literacy assessment of the standardized tests that the state has students take. This means that the subject is not taught in depth, as it should be. Historical fiction is a way that teachers like to implement social studies education, and they believe it is an effective way to include it in their classes. If teachers could gain more of an awareness of how social studies is currently represented on the reading FCAT, according to the Florida Department of Education's FCAT 2.0 Reading Test Item Specifications (2010, p.4), they could gain better understanding of the importance of teaching thematically because social studies is subsequently being tested through reading. Coupling historical fiction with nonfiction is a great teaching strategy to include in schools. Google Earth is a fairly new Google application that allows the user to see places on the Earth by satellite view; additionally, Google Lit Trips uses Google Earth to allow students to have a virtual field trip, through the use of a book. Teachers get to highlight places of significance in the book, and

students can do activities, visit links, do discussion questions, etc. in accordance with the book and the location of significance. Not only does this couple reading and historical fiction, but it also connects nonfiction into the lesson.

Chapter 3 follows and provides the steps of methodology that was used for this thesis. Chapter 4 contains the results of the Google Lit Trip (GLT) creation, as well as the results of pre and post-surveys of fifth grade teachers who explored a GLT that I created based on the book, *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995). The last chapter provides discussion of this study as well as the benefits, disadvantages, and the important educational implications of Google Lit Trips in elementary classrooms.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

In order to effectively explore whether Google Lit Trips might serve as a useful tool to enhance students' learning regarding social studies through historical fiction, I created a Google Lit Trip of my own. Before allowing the five fifth grade teachers to explore using the Lit Trip, I gave them a pre-survey, located in Appendix C, of their opinions concerning technology being used for instruction in the classroom and on their knowledge of Google Lit Trips. After allowing them to read the historical picture book *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995). I invited the teachers use the new application. After our exploration, I gave them a post-survey, located in Appendix D, to see if their perceptions of technology in the classroom had shifted or remained unchanged, if they thought Google Literature Trips would be an effective teaching tool for social studies, and finally how they might use or not use the Google Literature Trips in their classrooms. This chapter will provide the process that I used for this research project.

#### **IRB Process**

In order to be allowed to complete my research I had to go through the IRB process. Although it seemed daunting at first, I was able to complete the task. I first attained oral permission from a group of five fifth grade teachers at a central Florida elementary school. I was assigned to their school as an intern, and developed a positive relationship with my cooperating teacher who was a part of this team. Once their consent was gained, I applied for official IRB approval. I attached a copy of my proposal, a screenshot of the teachers' written approval, and a few other applications through the website. Within a short while, I was informed that I should

get the approval of the principal before I started. After I got the principal's official approval that was needed, I was allowed to begin my exciting research. See Appendix A for IRB approval.

### **Pre and Post Survey for the Teachers**

In order to properly gain insight into the teachers' perception of technology, social studies, and Google Lit Trips I made a pre and post survey for them to complete before and after they interacted with the Google Lit Trip. In making this survey, my thesis chair and I brainstormed the kinds of information we hoped to obtain. In the pre-survey, we wondered about: how teachers thought the new generations of students affected their classroom, how they used technology, how important technology is to teach, how important they thought social studies education was, how they implemented social studies lessons, and lastly, if they have ever heard of Google Lit Trips. With these questions we hoped to understand how teachers use technology, and whether they thought it was a pivotal subject for the 21st century learners. We also hoped to understand how important social studies is, in today's classroom and how teachers are teaching it. The last piece of information we wanted to know is if these teachers had the knowledge of the Google Lit Trip technology. The pre-survey is as follows;

### ***The Story of Ruby Bridges***

#### **Pre-Survey**

1. As an educator, how do you feel about students entering school, and your classroom often being extremely technologically inclined? How does that change instruction? Rate 1-4. 1 having no effect, 2 having a little effect, 3 having some effect, and 4 having a lot of effect.

2. How much do you encourage the use of technology in your classroom? Rate 1-4. 1 being not a lot, 2 being just a little, 3 being most of the time, and 4 being all of the time.

3. On a scale of 1-4, four being extremely important, three being somewhat important, two being a little important, and one being not important at all. How would you rank the importance of technology use in the classroom? Why?

4. Have you ever heard of the application Google Lit Trip?

5. How do you teach social studies in your classroom?

6. On a scale of 1-4, how important is social studies education? Why? One being not important, two being somewhat important, three being important, and four being very important.

For the post-survey, we wondered if they thought the Google Lit Trip enhanced the content covered in *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1994), the usefulness of the application, how they would implement it in the classroom, what learners would benefit from using it; and

finally, whether it would positively or negatively affect student learning. With this survey we wanted to know teachers' genuine perception of Google Lit Trips, and whether or not they felt it enhanced instruction and student learning. We also wanted to know how they would use the application and what learners would benefit from using it in the classroom. The survey is as follows;

### ***The Story of Ruby Bridges***

#### **Post-Survey**

1. Do you think the Google Lit trip enhanced the instruction of the content involved in the picture book *The Story of Ruby Bridges*? Rate 1-4. 1 being very little, 2 being somewhat, 3 being a good deal, and 4 being a lot.
  
2. On a scale of 1-4, how would you rank the usefulness of a Google Lit Trip for social studies education through historical fiction? (1 being not useful at all, 2 being a little useful, 3 being useful, and 4 being extremely useful) Why?
  
3. If you were to use a Google Lit Trip in your classroom, how would you use it?
  
4. What type of learners, if any, would benefit from the use of Google Lit Trips?



5. Do you think student learning would be positively or negatively affected by the use of Google Lit Trips in the classroom? Why?

With these pre and post surveys I was able to gain a great deal of insight as to whether these teachers thought Google Lit Trips might serve as an effective teaching tool.

### **School Demographics**

I was assigned to the elementary school wherein I did my research as a junior intern. The elementary school is located in Orange County, Florida. It has 540 students currently enrolled, with a student-teacher ratio of 15:1. In the fifth grade level, there are 83 students with- 70% of the student population being white, 18% being Hispanic, 7% Black, 5% Asian, and 1% other. Out of their student population, only 9% are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

### **Participant Background**

Out of the five teachers who participated, one was African American, one Hispanic, and three White; one of the participants was male, and the rest female. Two out of the three teachers have been teaching for almost thirty years, while the other three are within their first 5 years. As far as technology goes, most of the teachers try to incorporate it into their classroom because they understand the importance of technology in preparing 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. All of the teachers believed social studies is an important subject, but agreed that it tends to get neglected because it is not tested individually on FCAT.

## **Creating a Google Lit Trip**

There is a great deal of work that goes into creating a Google Lit Trip. When I created my own, I wanted to make it as factual and usable as possible, even though I was creating it for a presentation; I wanted to be able to use it in my future classroom. I first had to start by going to the Google Lit Trip site <http://googlelitrrips.org>; here I found access to other Google Lit Trips teachers had created. After downloading Google Earth, I was able to view a few. By viewing some that were already created I was able to get an idea how I wanted mine to look, and what activities I wanted to include.

The next step was finding out how to create one myself. Google has a tutorial online, but it was not creating a Google Lit Trip for teaching, it was more creating one for a sightseeing trip to different parts of the world. I consulted my thesis chair, and she gave me a name of a professor at the University of Central Florida that happened to know a great deal about Google Lit Trips and technology. I contacted that professor, and she informed me of an online tutorial she had created; <http://googleearthlitrrip.wikispaces.com/>. With this tutorial I was able to figure out the proper steps in creating my own Lit Trip.

The first step was to pick a book and download Google Earth; both of which I had already done. The next step was to create a storyboard, an outline of the book. In the story, there has to be breaks in the story, places where it would make sense to stop and explain information to students. From there, in the outline it is important to make a title for the different breaks in the story, where it is decided to stop and explain information to students. From the title, create a brief summary of that section in the book, and decide what location would be most

appropriate for that break. The next step is to come up with visuals, links, or activities students should be completing at each stop. Once all this information is recorded, creating the Google Lit Trip will be much more efficient. Now that locations are decided on, use Google Earth to locate that location and create a “pin.” That pin is later going to be a discussion box that students read and complete the activities within it.

When you pin the location Google Earth allows you to type in the text box, to create the discussion box that will appear to students. Using the storyboard, fill in the text box with the title of the location, links, pictures, activities, and the brief summary that has already been created with the outline. After doing this with all the sections previously created in the storyboard, it is time to record the tour. Once you create the pins, they must be put in a folder, just like any word document. Once all the pins are in the folder, there is a little camcorder button underneath the folder that just needs to be pressed and it will record the tour, going from pin to pin, giving students a little time to read and complete the discussion box with the activities, etc. Students can also pause the tour by pressing the space bar, if they need more time to complete the assignments.

Chapter 3 was all about the methodology of the whole project. It had the method of everything from the IRB approval process to the pre and post surveys the teachers filled out, and the reasoning behind the questions selected to ask them. From that process it describes participant background and the school demographics, to get a more accurate idea of who was answering the survey questions. Lastly, it describes the method of how to create a Google Lit Trip, and everything that goes into its creation.

Chapter 4 delves into the specifics of my Google Lit Trip, and everything I decided to include in my pins and discussion boxes. It proceeds to explain my meeting with the group of fifth grade teachers and the results of their survey responses. Chapter 5 focuses on the results of the study and where I want to take it from here.

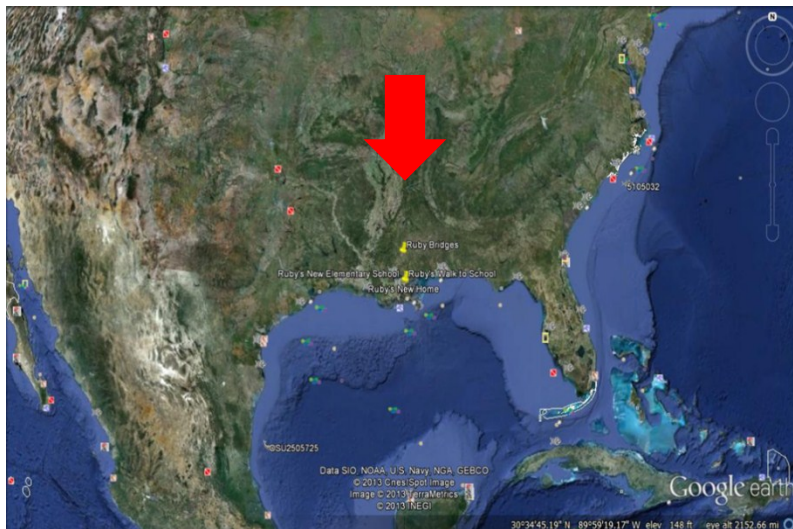
## Chapter 4: Results

### Creation of my Google Lit Trip

When I first started planning out my proposal, and even thesis, I wanted to explore the idea of technology and reading with underprivileged school-aged children. Through talking with my thesis chair, I heard about an interesting tool called Google Lit Trips. I was curious and decided to look into it. At first I was very confused because technology is almost a foreign language to me. As I delved further into my research, I realized that this virtual field trip usually by teachers to enhance a book would be a great tool for social studies, and to narrow it down further, for historical fiction. I immediately thought of my favorite historical fiction book from fifth grade, *My Brother Sam is Dead*. Unfortunately when I went to research if a GLT (Google Lit Trip) had been made for it, it had. I wanted my research to tie into what my fifth grade internship class had been learning in social studies. The teacher informed me that the topics would be a progression of Civil Rights, and segregation. When I explained this to my chair, who teaches children's literature, of course she had many quality books from which to choose, the one that stuck out was *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995). This is a historical fiction picture book about the true story of Ruby Bridges. Ruby was a less fortunate African American girl in the 1960s, at the time when the Supreme Court in Louisiana decided to integrate schools. She along with a few other Black students were ordered to attend an all-White school. Even when faced with protestors, she kept a positive attitude and learned a great deal. White students that had been pulled out of the school by their parents were slowly being placed back in her classroom. Ruby Bridges persevered and did very well academically. She stayed in New

Orleans, and still lives there now with her family. She even created the Ruby Bridges Foundation to encourage acceptance within youth.

I thought it would be a great practice to start on a picture book rather than a novel, and it would also be a great deal easier for participants to remain engaged through a shorter presentation of a Google Lit Trip of a picture book, with the same content, rather than a novel. I was able to get in contact with a professor from the University of Central Florida that was an expert in Google Lit Trips and had a tutorial on how to create one. Ms. Schloe Kerness provided me with invaluable resources that would help any novice, she provided me with a link that helped me a lot though the creation process: <http://googleearthlittrip.wikispaces.com/>. I went through *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, researched additional information and began work on my Lit Trip.



As you can see from the image, yellow pins are located in the southern region of the United States, Mississippi and Louisiana to be specific. These pins were created by me based on

**Figure 1**

important information and locations from the book, and factual historical information. I made five pins in my Google Lit Trip, by pins it refers to locations I have bookmarked, and once

opened have a discussion box that has information I want students to know and assignments to be completed. Before using the Google Lit Trip application it is important that the teacher does a read aloud of the story, or every student has the chance to read the book individually. That way the GLT is supplemental to the historical information within the book.

My first location is Tylertown, Mississippi, which is the first location mentioned in the book, and the town in which Ruby Bridges was born. In this pin, I have a famous picture by Norman Rockwell depicting Ruby Bridges as she walks to the all-white school. I have my summary as follows: Ruby was born in a cabin in Tylertown, Mississippi. Her father worked by



picking crops, but as technology was advancing, crop owners no longer needed people to pick crops, because they had machines, so Ruby's father lost his job. Left is a picture that a famous painter, Norman Rockwell, painted of Ruby Bridges.

**Figure 2**

Based on this picture, students are asked discussion questions that can be answered in their social studies notebook; questions such as “Can you infer who those men were and the meaning behind this picture? Why do you think there are food/tomato spatters on the wall? Do you think this picture was controversial? Why or why not?”



**Figure 3**

This is what my discussion box contained: Since Ruby's father could no longer work picking crops, they had to move to New Orleans. Here, her father worked as a janitor, and her mother worked night jobs scrubbing the floors of banks. During this time, children of different races were not allowed to attend the same school. Not only were schools separated, but public parks, water fountains, movie theaters, even buses were segregated. This was known as segregation. Above you will find an example of a sign that was posted in a public place separating people of different races. Discussion Questions: A lot of influential people arose out of this time in America's history, can you think of any? How do you think segregation affected people?



**Figure 4**

in addition to touching on the Supreme Court's decision. This is how I phrased by discussion box: In 1960, when Ruby was just six years old, she along with three other African American girls were sent, by order of a judge, to an all "White School." This was in hopes that it would



help end segregation in New Orleans. Some people were not happy. They felt safer with what they knew, which at the time was segregation. People would protest outside the school and threaten the four little girls' lives. This carried on to such a threatening degree that the little girls were sent with federal marshals (armed guards sent by the president) to protect them. Above is a picture of a newspaper clipping of people protesting the girls going to the school in November of 1960. Discussion Questions: How do you think Ruby and the other little girls felt going to those schools for the first time? How would you feel?

The fourth pin is about her walk to school; I included a link to an article written about what happened during that time, and asked students to think about the Civil Rights Movement, and to predict and infer from their social studies book, *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995) and the Google Lit Trip what Brown v. Board of Education and Jim Crow laws were. My pin read as follows; After having the four little girls in the new schools, parents of the students in Ruby's classroom began not sending their kids to school. Ruby attended every day, having to walk through the hordes of protesters at the entrance of her school. Her teacher, Ms. Hurley taught her every day, even though she was the only student in the class. One day she saw Ruby appearing to be talking to the protesters, when Ms. Hurley asked Ruby what she was doing, she simply replied that she was praying for each of the protesters. Above you will find a link to a short article on Ruby Bridges as well as a picture of her being escorted into William Frantz Elementary School. I want you to read it, view the newspaper picture from that time period, and go through the discussion post below. Discussion Questions: What happened in the Civil Rights Movement was scary, people reacted in a violent manner because they were scared of change. Think about Ruby and the other four girls, do you think they were scared? This was happening

all over the country, even in the northern states. We will be talking about Brown v. Board of Education and also Jim Crow laws a little later, for right now I want you to infer and predict what you think they were, and how they affected desegregation in the United States. That way this conversation can occur in the classroom, with the teacher, but it gets students' brains thinking about it beforehand.

When I envision using this in the classroom, I picture it being a center activity, especially since it includes reading, I picture using it within my 90 minute reading block. That way the book can be read whole-group, as a teacher read aloud, then students can complete the GLT in a small-group, recording their answers in the social studies notebook. It would not be possible for students to answer all the questions and visit all of the link within one center rotation, so it would have to be done within a few days' time.



**Figure 5**

It explains where she is now, has a video clip of her returning to her school and meeting with a former classmate after Hurricane Katrina had almost destroyed the historical landmark, William Frantz Elementary, also their former elementary school;

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7049731n> and there is also a link to a timeline of

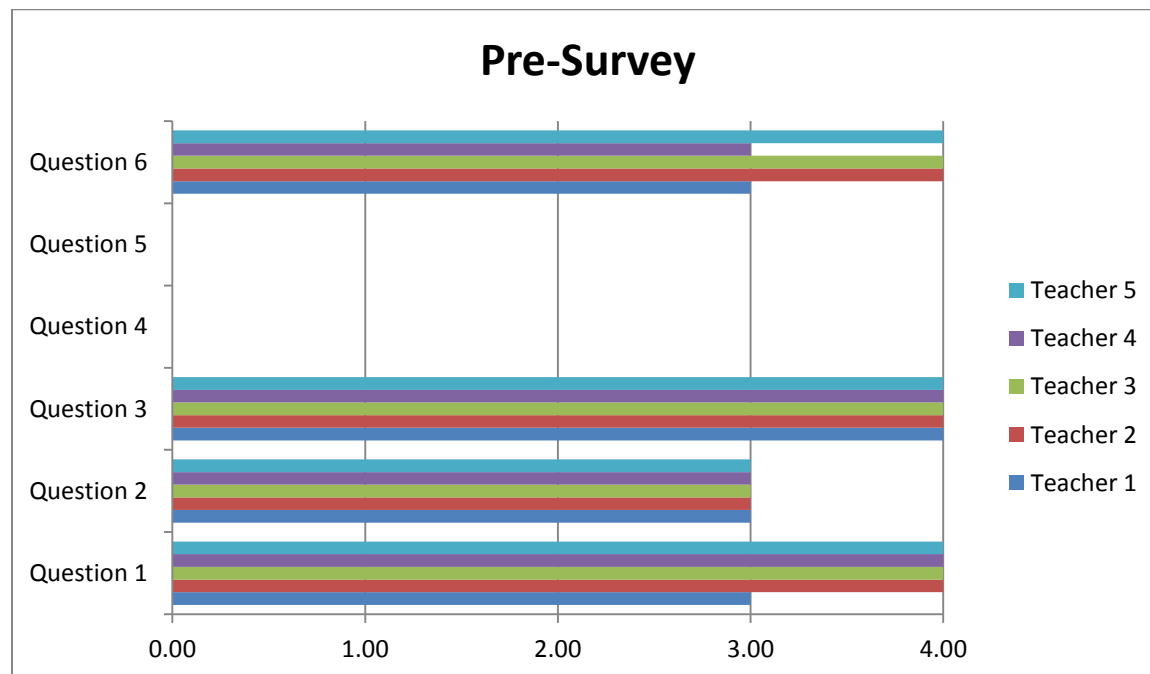
Ruby Bridges' life; [http://www.softschools.com/timelines/ruby\\_bridges\\_timeline/49/](http://www.softschools.com/timelines/ruby_bridges_timeline/49/); also included in Appendix B. After giving the links, the rest of the pin looked like this: This is the post office location where all mail to Ruby Bridges' Foundation goes. She still lives in New Orleans with her husband, Malcolm Hall, and four sons. Her foundation was created in 1999 in hopes to promote "the values of tolerance, respect, and appreciation of all differences." Watch the first video above to see Ruby and a fellow classmate then and now. Then click on the second link to see a timeline of Ruby Bridges' life. Discussion Questions: How do you feel after watching the video? Do you have any questions or comments? Write them down. Remember how her timeline looked and keep that in mind for our next assignment. This section has hopefully given you an idea of each pin. Now, the next section will describe sharing it with the fifth grade teachers.

### **Meeting With My Participants, the Fifth Grade Team**

Before my presentation none of the teachers had heard of Google Lit Trips, but after my presentation, they were very impressed with the application. They all believed it could be used as an effective tool in their classroom to teach subjects. During the presentation most of the teachers reacted by saying "Wow" or "This is great." They remarked that this activity would be great to link historical fiction to factual history, especially since that is big with their new standards. They also said things along the lines of it being a fantastic cross-curricular activity, especially since teachers will be required to integrate the English Language Arts CCSS with the Social Studies NGSS by 2015 in Florida public schools (cpalms.org). Each teacher remarked that it would bring so many standards to the table, from art to social studies, reading to

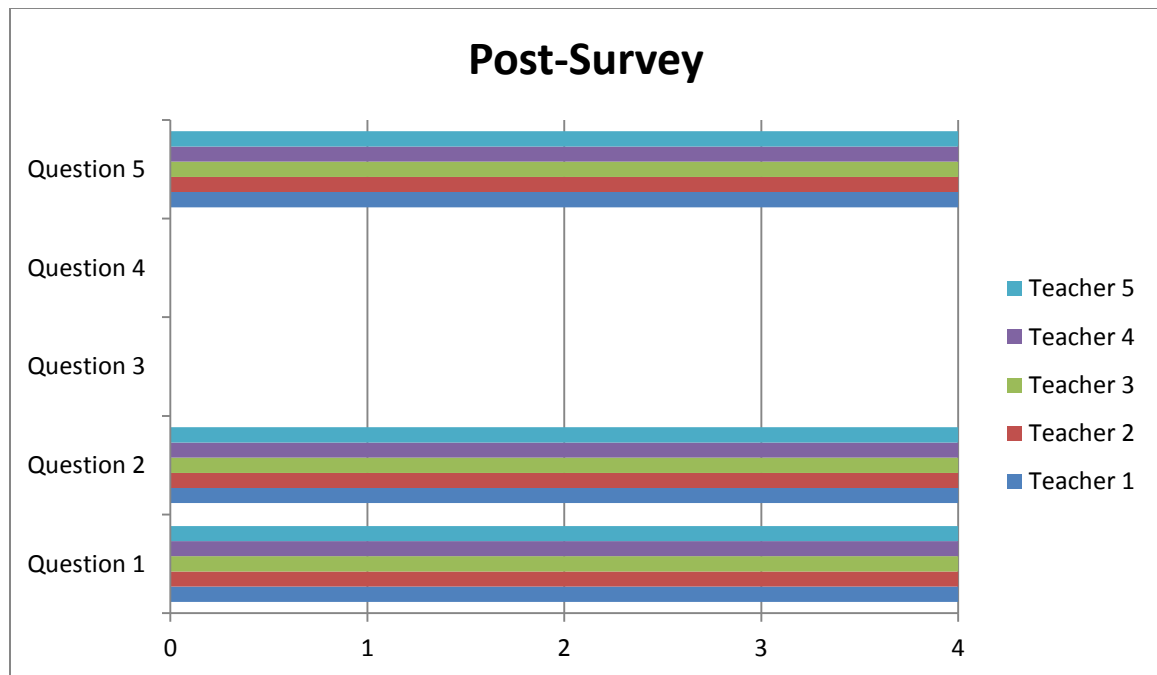
technology, that it's great because so much of their time is limited to only teaching subjects tested on standardized tests and having an activity that would peak the students' interest while strengthening their knowledge of non-tested subjects would be so beneficial. They also thought that this tool would be great for all types of learners; be it visual, kinesthetic, ESE, Gifted, ESOL; they said the possibilities are endless as to what learners would benefit from this tool. As I was packing up, the teachers said something that made me feel extremely proud; they asked if I would email them my Google Lit Trip; yes, my Google Lit Trip, to all of them because they want to incorporate it into their curriculum next school year. I could not have asked for a better meeting, and for better results.

### Results of Teacher Responses



This is a chart of the teachers' pre-survey responses. As shown above 4 of the 6 questions asked the teachers to rank their answer on a scale of 1-4. Question one asked teachers to rate the effect of having students being more technologically inclined by themselves. Four out of the five teachers ranked it at a four, meaning that students that are more digitally native has a big effect on instruction; one teacher marked it at a three, meaning he/she thought it had some effect. Question two asked the teachers about their technology use in the classroom. All the teachers ranked their answers at a three, meaning they use it most of the time. Question three touched on the importance of using technology in the classroom; five out of five of the teachers ranked that the use of technology in the classroom is extremely important. Question four asked if they had heard of the Google Lit Trip application, none of them had. Question five asked teachers how they teach social studies education; most said through reading integration, readers' theater, discussions, projects, and the textbook. The sixth and final question asked on the pre-survey was in regards to the importance of social studies education; three of the five teachers ranked it at a four being very important, the remaining two teachers ranked it at a three being important.

Through the answers provided in this survey, I concluded that teachers understand the importance of using technology in the classroom for this new age of students, and they incorporate it as much as possible for that reason. I also concluded that teachers understand the importance of social studies education, but find they need to incorporate it into other subjects, that are standardized tested, in order to fulfill the social studies requirements for their students. I was also happy to know that none of them had heard of Google Lit Trips before.



This is a visual representation of the teachers' post-survey responses. After reading *The Story of Ruby Bridges* and experiencing the associated GLT, I asked teachers to fill out a second survey. Question one asked: Do you think the Google Lit trip enhanced the instruction of the content involved in the picture book *The Story of Ruby Bridges*? Rate 1-4. 1 being very little, 2 being somewhat, 3 being a good deal, and 4 being a lot; all of the teachers responded four, it can enhance instruction immensely. Question two asked teachers to rank the usefulness of Google Lit Trips; again all the teachers responded four, extremely useful. Question three asked teachers how they would use Google Lit Trips, most of the answers were "linking social studies, reading, geography", "whole-class and small-group instruction." Question four asked teachers what learners would benefit from the use of Google Lit Trips, the most common answers were visual, auditory, ESE, ESL, gifted, all students. Question five asked teachers is Google Lit Trips would positively or negatively affect student learning. All teachers said that

Google Lit Trips would be a definite positive influence learning, because it would keep students focused, actively engaged, and more interactive; thus getting the ranking of four.

Through the completion of the post-survey, I can say that these teachers really liked the application, Google Lit Trips. They had a lot of positive remarks to make about it, they thought all learners would benefit from using it, and they thought it would greatly enhance students' learning. Throughout the presentation they made comments such as "this is great," "this can cover a lot of standards within our curriculum," "this is great for the new common core standards," "my ESE students would love using this," "I could do so much with this," "we could have this be a fifth grade project, students creating a Google Lit Trip on a novel and sharing it with the other fifth grade classroom." I received a lot of feedback from these teachers, and all of it was positive. At the end of the survey, the teachers asked for a link to the Google Lit Trip I created so they could implement it next school year; they seemed very interested and intrigued about this teaching tool.

Chapter 5 will explain the educational impact of this research. It will connect the research with the implementation of the GLT with the teachers'. It will include my reflections on the research and the project itself. Lastly, it will include thoughts on future research with this project and expanding its effectiveness in classrooms.

## **Chapter Five: Educational Impact**

### **Connections to prior research**

Through my research of articles and through the creation of my Google Lit Trip, I have come to the conclusion that the use of Google Lit Trips to teach historical fiction and social studies is an effective teaching tool. I, along with the other five teachers that have seen my Google Lit Trip, agree that it is an enticing way for the new digitally native learners to delve into the neglected subject of social studies, along with many other subjects; art, science, reading, math, etc. I also believe that Google Lit Trips could be used in the classroom for authentic teaching, through having teachers use this application for assessment. I could see older students creating their own Google Lit Trip, and having the teacher check for understanding through their information; as well as teachers creating a GLT for younger students to explore with.

### **My Reflections: What I Learned About Myself as a Teacher and a Learner From This Thesis**

My next step is going to be to share my Google Lit Trip with the Google Earth Community, to be found at <http://googleearth.org>, in hopes that it will help other teachers who are struggling to incorporate social studies into their curriculum. Having such positive results from my participants tells me that Google Lit Trips are a quality activity that deserves attention. Teachers are in need of avenues that can shed some light around the United States to use to help spice up their lessons and dive into cross-curricular activities. I have learned so much about myself, technology, and proper teaching tools from this research. I have learned that I have determination and drive to make quality activities for my future students. I learned how to work



Google Earth and Google Lit Trips, which was no simple task for a novice technology user, such as myself. I have also learned what makes a good teaching tool; one that intertwines subjects and one that grabs the attention of all participating in it.

The benefits of using Google Lit Trips are that it is a great way to make learning appealing to the new 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. Not only that, but it coincides with a prominent educational theory; the Dual Coding Theory, which states that mental images can greatly enhance how students learn and store information (Clark & Paivio, 1991). It is also a great way to implement several different subjects; reading, social studies, technology, etc. Having an activity that can enhance benchmarks in several different subjects is an amazing tool to have because teachers are already on a time crunch, and this can help them get everything in. That fact that it can cover several areas of social studies is also impressive; it helps with geography: locating on a map, giving coordinates (on Google Earth); and it also helps with history by using the application with a historical fiction book. One of the greatest advantages I learned about while trying to publish my Lit Trip on the GLT website, is that Jerome Burg, the creator of Google Lit Trips, personally emails all teachers interested in posting their Lit Trip. He informed me that I need to send him my recorded tour and he will check the academic accuracy of the information, and provide feedback on how to make it a better Google Lit Trip. I think the integrity behind that is immense and adds a great deal of academic power behind this teaching tool.

There are a few disadvantages to the application; the first being that all schools may not have access to computers, in which case it would be near impossible to implement. Another

would be that students are potentially using this without complete supervision, if done in small-group setting, and if not monitored properly, they might get off task. Some students with disabilities may have trouble completing this activity on their own, but again if done in a small-group setting other students would be able to assist.

### **Future Research**

My future research from here would have to be allowing students to use the application and see if it affects learning. I would love to have one group of students read a novel and do regular classroom activities with it, and have them take a comprehension and content test on the novel. I would like to have a second group of students that reads the same novel, complete the normal classroom activities, in addition to a Google Lit Trip on the novel; followed by the same test. It would be interesting to see which group would score higher, and whether or not the Google Lit Trip enhanced student learning.

In my literature review I saw that teachers had a difficult time figuring out their role in education now that technology is becoming such a big part of life for this new generation of students. Having a role for teachers, by having them create the Google Lit Trip is a great way to familiarize themselves with new technology and classic historical fiction books. They also worry that technology will be used as a distraction rather than a learning tool. I believe that if you have students actively engaged, such as completing the activities in the Google Lit Trip, distraction will be less likely. Teaching social studies through historical fiction is a great way to intrigue students, it was even that way when I was young. Now with technology in the mix, using historical fiction to teach social studies becomes easier and easier. Technology can be

used to help students envision and empathize with the past to ensure they get the most effective historical teachings. Finally, tying all this back to my previous research, Google Earth and Google Lit Trips are a great way for students to digest information that is sometimes hard to grasp, this was proven by the responses the teachers had to the application, and they would be experts in how to make knowledge stick with their students.

## **Appendix A: IRB Approval**

## Appendix A: IRB Approval



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Human Research

From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: Sherren E. Roberts and Co-PI: Kristin T. Bider

Date: May 21, 2013

Dear Researcher:

On 5/21/2013, the IRB approved the following human participant research until 5/20/2014 inclusive:

Type of Review:	UCF Initial Review Submission Form
Project Title:	Exploring Elementary Students' Learning and Attitudes of Social Studies Through Historical Fiction Using Google Lit Trips
Investigator:	Sherren E. Roberts
IRB Number:	SBE-13-09398
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

The scientific merit of the research was considered during the IRB review. The Continuing Review Application must be submitted 30 days prior to the expiration date for studies that were previously expedited, and 60 days prior to the expiration date for research that was previously reviewed at a convened meeting. Do not make changes to the study (i.e., protocol, methodology, consent form, personnel, site, etc.) before obtaining IRB approval. A Modification Form cannot be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at <https://iris.research.ucf.edu>.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 5/20/2014, approval of this research expires on that date. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. The new form supersedes all previous versions, which are now invalid for further use. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Participants or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziugielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 05/21/2013 01:01:40 PM EDT

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Joanne Muratori'.

IRB Coordinator

## **Appendix B: Ruby Bridges Timeline**

## Appendix B: Ruby Bridges' Timeline

Date	Event
1954	<b>Ruby is born</b> Ruby Bridges was born in Mississippi, on a farm where her parents worked.
1958	<b>Ruby's family moves</b> Ruby's parents moved the family to New Orleans. It was their hope that they would receive a better life in the city.
1960	<b>Ruby takes a special test</b> The board of education put out a test for black children, to measure whether or not they could attend an all-white school. Ruby was one of only six kids in New Orleans who passed the test.
1960	<b>Ruby goes to a new school</b> That fall, when school started, Ruby was the first black child in the south to attend an all-white school. She was escorted to the doors by federal marshals.
1964	<b>She is featured by Norman Rockwell</b> Norman Rockwell was a famous artist in the 60's. He was inspired by Ruby's story, and so he painted "The Problem We All Must Live With" in her honor.
1965	<b>Life goes on</b> Ruby's second year at school went more smoothly than the first, but there was still racism toward her. One child refused to be her friend because Ruby was black.
1984	<b>Ruby gets married</b> Ruby went on to finish school and get married. She lived a happy life, not sure why she had experienced the things she had.
1993	<b>A children's book in her honor</b> Ruby had seen a child psychologist while attending the all-white school. Years later he published a children's book about her.
1995	<b>Ruby is reunited with her past teacher</b>

	<p>While on the Oprah Winfrey Show, Ruby was reunited with a former teacher at the all-white school. Mrs. Henry was the only teacher who would work with Ruby that first year.</p>
1995	<p><b>A biography is published</b></p> <p>A biography of Ruby's life was put out. It was titled The Story of Ruby Bridges.</p>
1998	<p><b>A film about her</b></p> <p>Disney produced a movie about Ruby and her courageous story. It aired for the first time in 1998 as Ruby Bridges.</p>
1999	<p><b>She forms a foundation</b></p> <p>Ruby established the Ruby Bridges Foundation. It promotes the values of tolerance and acceptance for everyone.</p>
2000	<p><b>Ruby is made an honorary deputy</b></p> <p>Ruby was honored by the US Marshals and made an honorary deputy for her bravery as a child.</p>
2007	<p><b>An exhibit in her honor</b></p> <p>The Children's Museum of Indianapolis unveiled a new exhibit, with Ruby Bridges as one of the centerpieces. Along with Ruby, Anne Frank and Ryan White were featured.</p>
2012	<p><b>Ruby is honored</b></p> <p>Ruby has received many honors during her lifetime, including meeting the president and having other paintings in her honor. In 2012 she was given an honorary degree from Tulane University. Her work for the acceptance of all people goes on today, and she will forever be remembered for her bravery.</p>



## **Appendix C: Teacher Pre-survey**

## Appendix C: Teacher Pre-survey

*This exercise is part of a study of teachers' perception on the learning tool Google Lit Trips. The study has been approved by IRB at UCF, where Sherron Roberts and Kristin Bider are the Primary Investigators. Your signature indicates your agreement to participate; however, your identity will be held in confidence and will not affect your employment.*

---

*Sign and Print Name here.*

### *The Story of Ruby Bridges*

#### Pre-Survey

1. As an educator, how do you feel about students entering school, and your classroom often being extremely technologically inclined? How does that change instruction? Rate 1-4. 1 having no effect, 2 having a little effect, 3 having some effect, and 4 having a lot of effect.

2. How much do you encourage the use of technology in your classroom? Rate 1-4. 1 being not a lot, 2 being just a little, 3 being most of the time, and 4 being all of the time.

3. On a scale of 1-4, four being extremely important, three being somewhat important, two being a little important, and one being not important at all. How would you rank the importance of technology use in the classroom? Why?

4. Have you ever heard of the application Google Lit Trip?

5. How do you teach social studies in your classroom?

6. On a scale of 1-4, how important is social studies education? Why? One being not important, two being somewhat important, three being important, and four being very important.

## **Appendix D: Teacher Post-survey**

## **Appendix D: Teacher Post-survey**

*This exercise is part of a study of teachers' perception on the learning tool Google Lit Trips. The study has been approved by IRB at UCF, where Sherron Roberts and Kristin Bider are the Primary Investigators. Your signature indicates your agreement to participate; however, your identity will be held in confidence and will not affect your employment.*

---

*Sign and Print Name here.*

### ***The Story of Ruby Bridges***

#### **Post-Survey**

1. Do you think the Google Lit trip enhanced the instruction of the content involved in the picture book *The Story of Ruby Bridges*? Rate 1-4. 1 being very little, 2 being somewhat, 3 being a good deal, and 4 being a lot.

2. On a scale of 1-4, how would you rank the usefulness of a Google Lit Trip for social studies education through historical fiction? (1 being not useful at all, 2 being a little useful, 3 being useful, and 4 being extremely useful) Why?

3. If you were to use a Google Lit Trip in your classroom, how would you use it?

4. What type of learners, if any, would benefit from the use of Google Lit Trips?

5. Do you think student learning would be positively or negatively affected by the use of Google Lit Trips in the classroom? Why?

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