

A Curriculum Guide to

I DISSENT



**RUTH BADER GINSBURG
MAKES HER MARK**



written by
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illustrations by

Background/Summary

From early on, Ruth Bader Ginsburg championed fairness and equality. She objected to different expectations for girls and boys, prejudice against minority groups in places like hotels and restaurants, and women having fewer job opportunities than men.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg's life continues to be one of achievement: as a lawyer, professor of law, a judge, and now a Supreme Court justice, she stands out because she is not afraid to dissent, disapprove, and disagree with conditions of unfairness and inequality. This biography is the inspiring story of how she "changed her life—and ours." Bold, full-page, and double-page illustrations emphasize Ginsburg's dedication to fairness and equality.

Key Ideas and Details

The discussion questions and activities below draw on Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for reading informational text (RI) that ask children to ask and answer questions about key details in a text (**RI.K-3.1**), identify the main topic and key details that support it (**RI.K-3.2**), and describe the relationship between a series of events, concepts, or ideas (**RI.K-3.3**).

1. *I Dissent* begins with this sentence: "You could say that Ruth Bader Ginsburg's life has been...one disagreement after another." What ideas has she disagreed with?
2. What did Ruth learn from her mother? Ruth's mother took her to the library. What did she learn there?
3. Why did Ruth decide to become a lawyer? What did other people think of this idea?
4. Even though Ruth became a brilliant young lawyer, no one wanted to hire her. Why not?
5. Describe how Ruth Bader Ginsburg got along with Justice Antonin Scalia.
6. Many people think of Ruth Bader Ginsburg as a hero. Do you agree? Explain your thinking.
7. If you could ask Ruth Bader Ginsburg some questions, what would they be? With a partner, write four to six questions. Here are some topics you could ask about: What she learned from her mother, what she protested about in school, how she became a lawyer, how she became a Supreme Court justice, equal treatment for women, Ginsburg's disagreements with Supreme Court decisions, and her friendship with Justice Antonin Scalia. Once you have the questions, imagine how she would answer. Prepare an interview and practice giving it.

Craft and Structure

To learn about craft and structure, the CCSS asks us to help students learn and understand vocabulary words and phrases (**RI.K-3.4**), think about the features of nonfiction text (**RI.K-3.5**), and assess the author's point of view (**RI.K-3.6**). The questions and activities below emphasize these understandings.

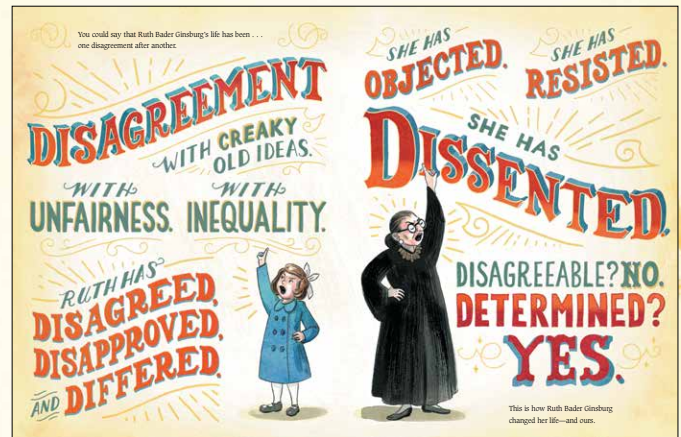
8. **Semantic Gradient.** A semantic gradient helps students understand the differences between words that are similar in meaning. Beginning with the continuum below, ask students to decide where on this continuum to place each word listed below it. The words should make a bridge from *agree* to its opposite, *dissent*. Be sure to discuss each word first, using a dictionary as necessary. Have children work with a partner and encourage them to discuss where to place each word and why.

Place these words on the continuum:

- accept
- protest
- support
- disagree
- object
- defend
- resist
- approve

For a discussion of how to use the word gradient and to watch a video of a teacher using this technique, go to the Reading Rockets website at ReadingRockets.org/Strategies/Semantic_Gradients.

9. **Visual Essay.** The illustrator of *I Dissent* combines pictures and words to get a point across to readers. Several pages in *I Dissent* make important statements about Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Study the first two pages of the book (shown to the right). Think about these questions:
- What do the words in red have in common?
 - What do the words in green have in common?
 - Why do you think the illustrator included a picture of Ruth Bader Ginsburg as a child and as an adult?
 - What do you think the illustrator wants us to know about Ruth Bader Ginsburg?



10. **Interesting Sentences.** Sometimes authors use ordinary words in interesting, surprising ways. Discuss how author Debbie Levy does this in the sentences below. Pay attention to the underlined words.
- “On the shelves [of the library] were stories of girls and women who did big things....Ruth read her way into this world.”
 - “She was a woman....She was a mother....She was Jewish....Three strikes against her. But Ruth was not out.”
 - “Ruth, her family knew, had mastered the art of burnt pot roast.”
 - “Her voice may not carry a tune, but it sings out for equality.”
11. **Beginning and Ending.** The book begins this way: “You could say that Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s life has been...one disagreement after another.” It ends with these words: “Step by step, she has made a difference...ONE DISAGREEMENT AFTER ANOTHER.” The words in capital letters are part of an illustration showing Justice Ginsburg holding the scales of justice, which are out of balance. Why do you think the author and illustrator used the phrase “one disagreement after another” to begin and end the book?
12. **Author’s Note.** An author’s note entitled “More About Ruth Bader Ginsburg” provides additional information. What additional information is included about the following:
- Ruth’s mother, Celia Amster Bader
 - The American Civil Liberties Union
 - Ruth’s first case before the Supreme Court
 - Ruth’s disagreement with the Virginia Military Institute (VMI)
13. **Author’s and Illustrator’s Point of View.** What do the author and illustrator think about Ruth Bader Ginsburg? What makes you think so? Give examples from the book. Do you agree with this point of view?

Writing

CCSS emphasizes writing informative and explanatory text in the early grades. The writing activities below provide experience writing to give an opinion (**W.K-3.1**), to inform (**W.K-3.2**), and to explain a sequence of events (**W.K-3.3**).

14. What disagreements did Ruth Bader Ginsburg have as a girl, as a lawyer, and as a Supreme Court justice? Make your own visual essay, showing these disagreements. Use both words and pictures. Photographs and pictures of Justice Ginsburg can be downloaded from the Internet.
15. Do you think that Ruth Bader Ginsburg was right to take part in one disagreement after another? Write a letter to Justice Ginsburg explaining your views.
16. Many people think of Ruth Bader Ginsburg as a hero because she made change happen and changed people's minds. Do you agree? Explain why. Give your three strongest reasons.

Extending the Reading Experience

17. Learn more about the Supreme Court by visiting the Congress for Kids website: CongressforKids.net/JudicialBranch_SupremeCourt.htm
18. Read short biographies of the current Supreme Court Justices at the Supreme Court website: SupremeCourt.gov/About/Biographies.aspx
19. Read more about Ruth Bader Ginsburg in *Portraits of Jewish-American Heroes* by Malka Drucker, illustrated by Elizabeth Rosen.
20. Search the Internet for images of Ruth Bader Ginsburg to color.
21. Read about Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor by reading the picture book biography *Sonia Sotomayor: A Judge Grows in the Bronx* by Jonah Winter, illustrated by Edel Rodriguez. Discuss how the lives of these two women justices are similar and yet also different.
22. To learn more about the author of *I Dissent*, visit her website at DebbieLevyBooks.com. And learn more about the illustrator at EBaddeley.com.



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