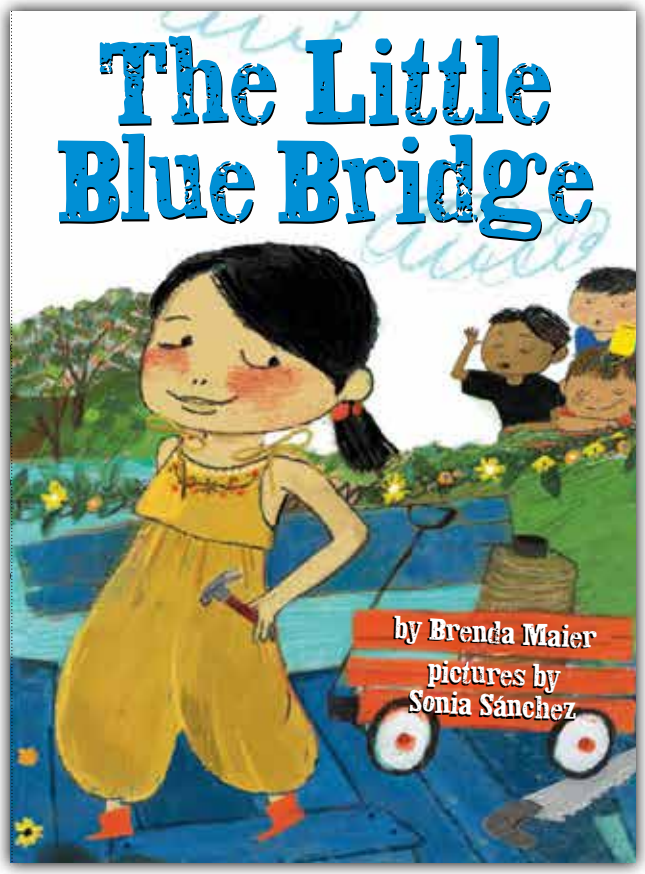
The Little Blue Bridge

Teacher's Guide: Lessons & Activities



Praise for

The Little Blue Bridge
by Brenda Maier
illustrated by Sonia Sánchez

"Many positive qualities are demonstrated here, including problem solving, tenacity, self-confidence, and helpfulness, making this a worthwhile refresh of a classic with a slight Latinx twist.."— *Booklist*

". . . neither Ruby's size nor gender is an obstacle to success" — *Kirkus Reviews*

Brenda Maier is an author and career teacher. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Oklahoma, a Master of Science in Teaching, Learning, and Leadership from Oklahoma State University, and a Gifted Specialist Certification. Visit her online at brendamaier.com.

Sonia Sánchez is the illustrator of *The Little Red Fort* and several other acclaimed picture books. To see more of her art, go to https://bookmarkliterary.com/2019/12/10/soniasanchez/

QUESTIONS BEFORE/DURING/AFTER READING THE STORY:

1. Look at the front and back cover and make a prediction about what you think will happen in the story.

Teacher Note:

★ Students could also be encouraged to make inferences based on THE LITTLE RED FORT or THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF if they have read them.

2. Why do the children want to cross the creek? (to get blueberries)

3. Why don't the boys wait for Ruby? (They say she's "too little to cross the creek.")

4. How do the boys feel when they see Santiago on the bridge? Use text evidence to support your answer. (The boys feel unsure, scared, hesitant, etc. Evidence could include that they "almost turned around." Rodrigo said, "Do you think he'll let us cross?" Santiago also looks mean/annoyed.)

5. How do the boys convince Santiago to let them cross? Do you agree with what they said? Why or why not? (Each brother suggests Santiago should wait for the next brother, as the next brother will have a better snack. The last brother, Oscar Lee, tells Santiago to wait for Ruby, as she packs the best snacks. Students may speak to ethical concerns about this action, but whatever they say should have a reason to support it.)

6. In two words, describe what kind of person Ruby is. What does she do that makes you think so? (Students may describe Ruby as creative, independent, resourceful, resilient, peace-minded, clever, forgiving, etc. Accept any response that is supported with text/illustration and/or personal experience as evidence.)

7. Why do you think Santiago decides to help Ruby with her bridge? (He was probably impressed, she was nice, etc.)

8. What misunderstanding occurs when the brothers come back and find a new bridge across the creek? Why do they think this? (They think Santiago made the bridge. They underestimated Ruby, just like they did when they said she was too little to cross the creek.)

9. Bridges usually connect lands. In this story, how does the bridge symbolize connecting the characters? (This bridge brings Ruby and Santiago together as friends, and the bridge brings all of the kids together at the end.)

10. What clues are there that this is a retelling of the folktale THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF? (Characters want to cross a bridge, a bully/troll blocks their way, the characters tell the bully/troll to wait for the next brother, the bully splashes in the water, etc.)

Math Collaboration Cards

Give each group of students one of the 4 cards below, the instruction card, and supplies.

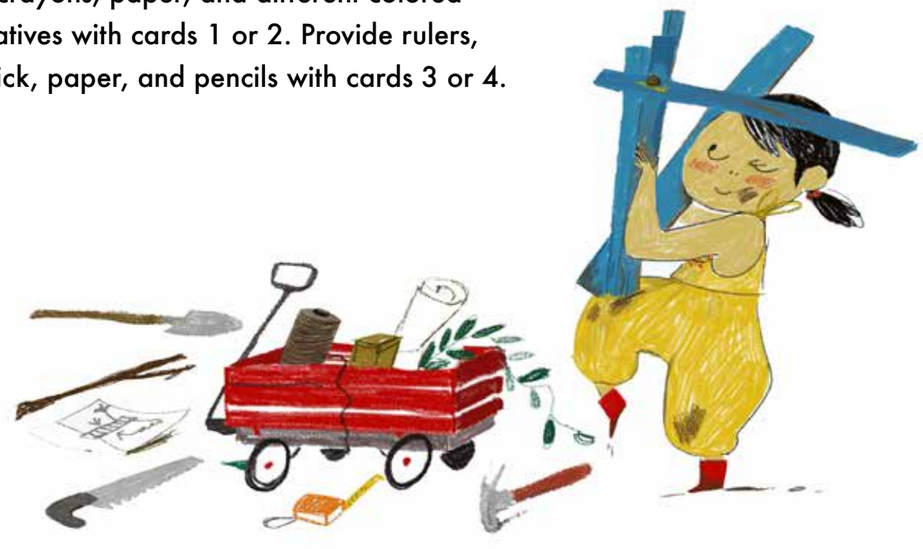
INSTRUCTIONS

1. Read the problem and make sure your entire group understands what it is asking.
2. Brainstorm ways to solve the problem.
3. Solve the problem. Agree on the solution.
4. Each group will present their problem and strategy for solving to the class.

Teacher Notes:

★ Students may use multiple methods to solve and compare solutions.

★ Provide crayons, paper, and different colored manipulatives with cards 1 or 2. Provide rulers, a yardstick, paper, and pencils with cards 3 or 4.



CARD 1

Ruby's bridge is only wide enough for one person to cross at a time. In the story, her brothers crossed in this order: José, Rodrigo, and then Oscar Lee. In total, how many ways could the brothers cross the bridge? (Answer: 6 ways)

CARD 2

Ruby, Santiago, Oscar Lee, Rodrigo, and José are sitting in a row on the bridge. Use these clues to figure out what order they are in.

José is next to someone he isn't related to and someone he is related to.
Ruby is between Santiago and the tallest brother.
Rodrigo is last.
José is not first.
Santiago is not on either end.
(Answer: Oscar Lee, Ruby, Santiago, José, Rodrigo)

CARD 3

Ruby's bridge is 15 feet long and 3 feet wide. What is the perimeter of her bridge? What is the area of Ruby's bridge? Bonus Question: Tell your answers in both feet and yards. (Answer: Perimeter=36 feet or 12 yards. Area=45 square feet or 15 square yards)

CARD 4

Ruby's bridge has planks (wooden boards) all the way across it. Her bridge is 15 feet long. Each plank is 6 inches wide. How many planks does it take to go all the way across it? How many planks would be needed for a 30 foot bridge? (Answer: 30 planks/boards; 60 planks/boards)

Writing Prompts

1. You cross a magical, mist-covered bridge into another land or time! Tell a story about your adventure there. Remember to include a beginning, middle, and end.

   Teacher Note:

   ★ You may want to distinguish between fiction, fantasy, and sci-fi genres and have the students classify their stories as one of these genres.

2. After reading both THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF and THE LITTLE BLUE BRIDGE, write a paragraph (or essay) explaining how THE LITTLE BLUE BRIDGE is different from the original folktale. For the ending, tell which is your favorite and give a reason to support your choice.

3. You are a reporter on the scene as the new bridge opens! Using the "Five W's and One H" questions that journalists use, imagine what the characters in the story would say about the bridge. Use your imaginary interview to write a news article giving your readers the scoop. Have each student present their news story to the class in their best "reporter" voice!

   Teacher Note:

   ★ The "Five W's and One H" are who, what, when, where, why, and how.

Nonfiction Research (Science/Social Studies/Reading/Writing)

1. Choose two of the following bridges: Pont du Gard, Golden Gate Bridge, Ironbridge, Tarr Steps, Helix Bridge, and Chapel Bridge.
2. Research your choices and make notes of the similarities and differences in them.
3. Create a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting them. Add illustrations if you wish.

Teacher Notes:

- For more depth, ask the student to compare something more specific, such as the construction methods of the two bridges. To add complexity to this task, ask the student to choose three and do a triple Venn Diagram.
- You could also substitute bridges from your local area.
- This research could be easily modified for an essay.

STEM Challenges

1. (Primary) Blueberry Bucket Design Challenge

You need some way to carry the "blueberries" you picked back across the bridge. Using given materials, design and then construct something to carry your "blueberries" 15 feet without dropping any or breaking the "basket."

Teacher Note:

- Assign constraints that may include: no supporting the bottom of the device with hands underneath it, you must use recycled materials, or don't go over your materials "construction budget". Use small blocks or plastic manipulatives as "blueberries."

2. How Many Pennies Will Your Bridge Hold?

Give students paper/cardstock, thick books, and one hundred pennies. Working with a partner, experiment with different ways to make a bridge that will hold 100 pennies. (folding paper encouraged).

Teacher Note:

- You could add complexity by rephrasing the question as "How much money will your bridge hold?" Provide a selection of coins, paper, and pencils.

3. Best Bridge Challenge

Assemble several long strips of poster board, index cards, or thick cardstock; rectangular prism blocks; and some small objects for the bridge load: toy cars, small blocks, or decks of cards, etc.

A. Look at images of different types of bridges: beam, arch, and cable-stayed. Form a hypothesis: Which type will hold the largest load?

B. Construct a basic beam bridge with vertical block piers and a poster board deck across the top.

C. Test its strength by rolling a toy car or placing weight on the deck. Observe where the beam/deck begins to dip. If you don't detect a weak spot, add more weight until you can identify the weak spot.

D. Record the maximum weight it was able to hold before buckling or collapsing.

E. Modify your bridge to be able to support more weight. You can add another beam, a poster board arch underneath the deck, "corrugated" layers of decking, or string that connects the deck to the tops of the piers.

F. After each modification, re-test the bridge to see the maximum load it can hold. Be sure to record those. (Use a new strip of poster board with each modification.)

G. Compare the results of each bridge type. Which type was able to hold the largest load? What conclusion can you draw from your experiment?

Teacher Note:

- Truss bridges can be included if you want. They are a type of reinforced beam bridge. Suspension bridges have cables that are connected differently from cable-stayed bridges.

4. Team Building Thirty-Minute Bridge Challenge .....

Teacher Note:

- Gather recycled materials such as paper towel or toilet paper rolls, empty tissue boxes or other boxes, etc. You could also add string, paper straws or popsicle sticks, tape, and anything else you want.
- Have pictures of each of these bridges available for students: beam, truss, arch, suspension, cable-stayed, rope.

A. Each team of students will have 30 minutes to make as many types of bridges from the materials as possible.

B. Students should strategize how they can get the most bridges created. (construct the easiest first, break into smaller groups, specialize, etc.).

C. The bridges do not have to be perfect, but their type should be identifiable to others.