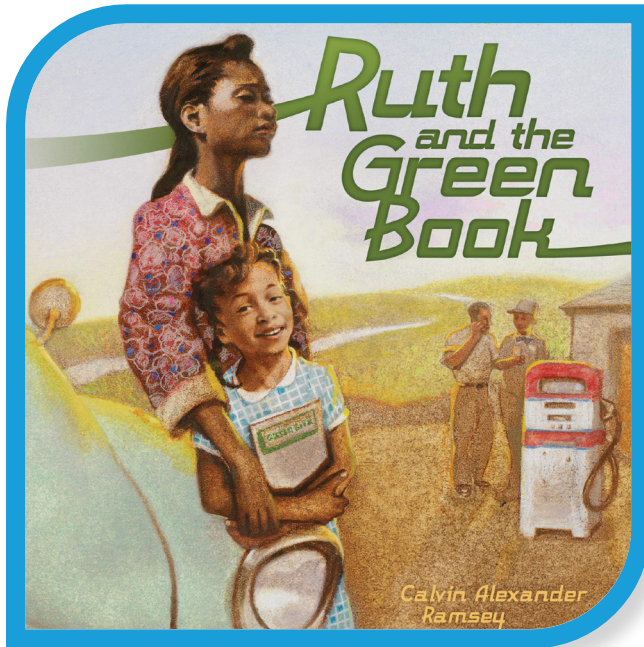




Monthly Featured Book

Presented by ADL's Education Department

About the Monthly Featured Book: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter™: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A World of Difference® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For parents, guardians and family members, reading the books listed on this site with your children and integrating the concepts into your interactions with them is an excellent way to help children grapple with and learn about these important principles.



Ruth and the Green Book

Author: Calvin Alexander Ramsey and Gwen Strauss (Authors) and Floyd Cooper (Illustrator)

Age Range: 6-10

Year Published: 2010

Book Themes

Black History, Civil Rights, Race and Racism, Activism

About the Book

Ruth was so excited to take a trip in her family's new car! In the early 1950s, few Black people could afford to buy cars, so this would be an adventure. She soon found out that Black travelers weren't treated very well in some towns. Many hotels and gas stations refused service to Black people. Daddy was upset about something called Jim Crow laws. Finally, a friendly attendant at a gas station showed Ruth's family *The Green Book*. It listed all of the places that would welcome Black travelers. With this guidebook—and the kindness of strangers—Ruth could finally make a safe journey from Chicago to her grandma's house in Alabama. Ruth's story is fiction, but *The Green Book* and its role in helping a generation of Black travelers avoid some of the indignities of Jim Crow are historical fact.

Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book aloud with your child or your child reads it on their own and you discuss it later, you can use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remembering not to judge their responses, listen thoughtfully and engage in a give-and-take will help them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes..

- What happens in the story?
- How do Ruth and her family feel about driving to Grandma's house in Alabama? How do their thoughts and feelings change throughout the book as they travel?

- What does Ruth learn about the Jim Crow laws? How does she feel about them? How did you feel when Daddy was explaining these laws to Ruth?
- What are some of the places that are not welcoming to Ruth and her family? What happens and how do they feel?
- What are some of the places that are welcoming to Ruth and her family? What happens and how do they feel?
- What is the Green Book? Why was the Green Book created?
- Towards the end of the trip, why does Ruth give her Brown Bear to the little boy she meets at the last inn where they stay? Do you think it was hard for Ruth to give Brown Bear away? How so?
- How did you feel when the book ends? What do you think will happen next?
- What did you learn about the Green Book? What questions do you still have about the Green Book?
- Why do you think the author wrote this story?

Talking Points

Below are some important considerations to highlight in order to make this a learning opportunity for your child and your family.

1. What is the Green Book?

Talk with your child about *The Negro Motorist Green Book* (known as “The Green Book”), asking them what they learned about it from reading the book—its purpose, who used it and why they needed it. Together you can read the back of the book (page 30) to learn more about the Green Book and its history. You can explain that the Green Book was a guidebook that Black people used as they traveled across the U.S. by car. It provided a list of hotels, boarding houses, taverns, restaurants, gas service stations and other businesses throughout the U.S. that served Black customers. A mail carrier named Victor H. Green published it every year from 1936 to 1966 when there was segregation (separating people based on race) and discrimination against Black people. During this period, Black people faced white-owned businesses who refused to serve them, repair their cars, serve them food or provide hotel/housing accommodation; price gouging (when a seller increases the prices of goods or services to a much higher amount than is fair or reasonable); and threats of physical violence while traveling around the U.S. The information included in *The Green Book* helped Black people get the services they needed, be treated with respect and stay safe. Victor Green stopped publishing the Green Book in 1964 when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, which made it illegal for hotels, restaurants and gas stations to discriminate against customers. Talk with your child about how Ruth and her family felt as they traveled to Alabama and at first, weren't able to get the services they needed because of discrimination and segregation, and how when they discovered the Green Book, they were able to. The Green Book is an example of Black people helping each other when they faced racism. You can also discuss examples of discrimination and racism today, and the ways in which you experience or observe it—and the ways people work together to challenge bias and injustice.

2. Civil Rights Movement and Activism

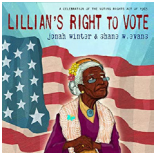
Talk with your child about how people in the 1950's and 1960's addressed and challenged segregation, discrimination and racism by engaging in activism. Ask your child if they know what an “activist” is and share that an activist is a person who uses or supports actions to bring about change in their community or the world. Talk with them about the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 1960's, eliciting what they already know, learned in school, or learned from their family. You can explain that the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 1960's came about because of the need for equality, justice and freedom for Black people and other people of color. Remind them what happened in the book and how Ruth and her family couldn't get the services they needed and were treated disrespectfully by the white-owned businesses. Explain that during that time, almost 100 years after slavery ended, there was widespread segregation, discrimination, and racially motivated violence that took place in all parts of Black people's lives. These “Jim Crow” laws, referred to in the book, barred Black people from classrooms and bathrooms, from theaters and train cars, and from buying the goods and services they needed, like what happened to Ruth and her family on their trip to Alabama. During that time, there was a great deal of activism taking place as a result of the injustice, segregation and inequality.

Activists worked together to bring about change and people of all races and religions joined activists to proclaim their support and commitment to freedom and equality. Ask your child to share examples of activism they see today and share activism that you have engaged in or currently participate in and why you do it. Talk with them about whether there's anything they think needs changing in society and how activism might help to bring about that change.

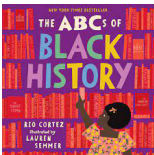
3. Black History Month

Explain that the book and the main topic (the Green Book) is something that happened in Black history. Black history includes important and meaningful events, milestones, time periods, cultural aspects, people and accomplishments of Black people in the U.S. It also includes the ways in which Black people faced and challenged bias, discrimination and injustice throughout history. Talk with your child about how Black history is an important part of U.S. history. Explain that even though Black history is an essential part of U.S. history, it often doesn't get the attention it deserves in school, in communities and in society. Black history is frequently minimized, excluded or inaccurately portrayed due to racism, bias, and exclusion. That is one of the reasons we commemorate Black History Month. Explain that while Black History Month, commemorated in February, is sometimes the only time in school and society we talk about Black history, emphasize that Black history should be part of and incorporated into our teaching and learning throughout the year. Talk with your child about their experiences in school and in their community about learning Black history. You can also discuss with your child what they already know about Black history that is reflected in the book and what they didn't know but want to learn more about. Another idea is to learn about Black history in your own community by exploring museums, historic houses, plaques about local history, etc. Talk about what you can do as a family to learn more.

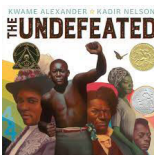
Other Books You Might Like



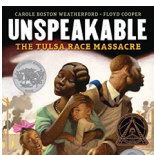
Lillian's Right to Vote <https://www.adl.org/lillians-right-vote>



The ABCs of Black History <https://www.adl.org/abcs-black-history>



The Undefeated <https://www.adl.org/undefeated>



Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre <https://www.adl.org/unspeakable-tulsa-race-massacre>

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and other resources on Black history, civil rights, race and racism..

- 13 Exceptional Kid Lit Books to Read for Black History Month <https://www.adl.org/blog/13-exceptional-kid-lit-books-to-read-for-black-history-month>
- Black History Month <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/black-history-month>
- Civil Rights Movement <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/civil-rights-movement>
- Children's Books about Race and Racism <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?f%5B0%5D=attachments%3A0&f%5B1%5D=topic%3A1580>
- Early Childhood Frequently Asked Questions <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/question-corner>
- Experiences with Race and Racism <https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/experiences-with-race-and-racism>
- Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/race-talk-engaging-young-people-in-conversations-about>
- Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk>
- Why We Need Diverse Books <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/why-we-need-diverse-books>