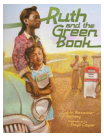
Ruth and the Green Book



When I got my first car, I couldn't wait to take a road trip of my own. I'd spent plenty of time in the "wayback" of the family station wagon as a kid attempting to read while my Dad switched the radio back and forth from baseball broadcasts to classical music stations. Now I'd be in the driver's seat and could choose what to listen to and when and where to stop for a rest break! The road atlas was my guide as I set off on my own from Chicago to visit my brother in Pennsylvania.

When Ruth and her family set off in the early 1950s on a road trip from Chicago to Alabama, they needed something in addition to a road map to guide their trip. They needed "The Green Book." "The Green Book," author Calvin Alexander Ramsey explains in his picturebook *Ruth and the Green Book* was developed in 1936 by a postman named Victor H. Green to help black people who were traveling. The book listed by city all the restaurants, hotels, gas stations and businesses that would serve African Americans during the era of "Jim Crow" laws when many establishments, especially in the South, refused to admit blacks.

Softly illustrated in pastel shades by Floyd Cooper, *Ruth and the Green Book* describes how excited Ruth and her parents are when they start their trip in their new 1952 Buick automobile, and then how discouraged and angry they feel when they are not allowed to use the restroom at a gas station, or stay overnight in a hotel. Finally, a friend advises them to watch for Esso gas stations, among the only stations that sold to African Americans. There they purchased a copy of the pamphlet "The Negro Motorist Green Book" for 75 cents. The remainder of the family's trip, although not without difficulty, was made easier by having "The Green Book" as their guide.

Highly recommended for grades 1-4, *Ruth and the Green Book* supports lessons on civil rights, providing a gentle way to introduce young children to the great injustices African Americans endured for decades in our country. The last page of the book provides additional facts about "The History of The Negro Motorist Green Book" which was published until 1964, the year that President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Bill into law.

For additional information about the author and his work, see the *New York Times* article: The Open Road Wasn't Quite Open to All. The article includes a link to the actual "Green Book" published in pdf format by The University of Michigan -- Dearborn through its website: Automobile in American Life and Society.

* Black History Month Bloomington Style!
* To view more documents and images from African American history, see the Library of Congress website dedicated to African American History Month: www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov/index.html

Oh, the Thinks You Can Think History Picture Book Ruth and the Green Book
Posted by Lisa C. on Feb 10, 2011

- [1]
- [1]

Links:
[1] http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-LLqKKIgcURY/TVQaGHYWhbI/AAAAAAAASI/OqEDfEVgndc/s1600/greenbook.jpg
[2] http://mcpl.monroe.lib.in.us/view.aspx?isbn=9780761352556
[3] http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/23/books/23green.html
[4] http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Casestudy/87_135_1736_GreenBk.pdf
[5] http://bloomington.in.gov/documents/view2document.php?document_id=441
[6] http://www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov/index.html
[7] http://mcpl.info/childrensblog
[8] http://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subjects/history
[9] http://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subjects/picture-book
[10] http://mcpl.info/category/reviews-titles/ruth-and-green-book
[11] http://mcpl.info/print/printpdf/blogs/oh-thinks-you-can-think/ruth-and-green-book?page=2
[12] http://mcpl.info/printmail/printpdf/blogs/oh-thinks-you-can-think/ruth-and-green-book?page=2
[13] http://mcpl.info/printpdf/printpdf/blogs/oh-thinks-you-can-think/ruth-and-green-book?page=2