



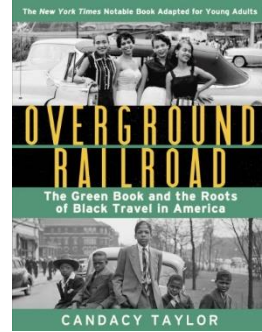
# ***Overground Railroad: The Green Book and the Roots of Black Travel in America***

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Grades 9-12

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Reading Guide by Mary Alice Wollam, L.A. Conservancy Volunteer

## **Questions**

1. The book begins with a chapter called “Are We There Yet?” Think about driving trips you have taken with your family and used that phrase. Contrast those memories with the kind of preparations and precautions Black motorists of the past needed to take while driving in cars?
2. Before reading this title had you heard of *The Negro Motorist Green Book*? How did African American travelers use The Green Book to avoid discrimination and stay safe while on the road? What kind of services did The Green Book list?
3. So many stories of travelers often exclude women. Who were some of the women who played a role not just in the writing and production of The Green Book, but also as activists and businesswomen who thrived in the face of racism and sexism?
4. *Overground Railroad* mentions the Dunbar Hotel, a Los Angeles landmark that was listed in The Green Book. Read the 1937-1967 editions of The Green Book by going to the Los Angeles Public Library digital collection. Look at the California sections and research whether any more of the Los Angeles sites still exist. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/9ea5d5b0-1117-0132-7932-58d385a7b928#/?tab=navigation>
5. Why are historically preserved buildings, like the Dunbar Hotel, important to Los Angeles and to our shared history? What stories of people past, present and future do these buildings tell?



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6. *Overground Railroad* mentions famous African American resorts and restaurants. Was there one where you would have liked to have visited? Would you like to explore history, like the author did, by taking a road trip to see the Green Book sites that are still open?
7. How did the Civil Rights Movement affect Black motorists?
8. After the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned segregation, many Black-owned businesses specifically serving African Americans began to close. How do you think integration, which by law allowed Black people to use any business, influenced the businesses listed in *The Green Book*? Why does author Candacy Taylor call integration “the double-edged sword of progress?”
9. When you hear the phrase “driving while Black” what do you think about in present day? Can you think of recent examples of drivers who were threatened and/or harmed just because of the color of their skin? How does the history of *Overground Railroad* help you understand current racial struggles?
10. Describe why it is important to learn about difficult history, like that of discrimination aimed at African American drivers and travelers.

