

LP-MAJC-4

TRAVELING SOUTHERN STYLE

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Lesson can be found online at www.teachingushistory.org/travelingsouthernstyle.html

Property: Atlantic Beach (Horry)
Harriet M. Cornwell Tourist Home
(Richland)

Standard Indicators: 3-5.2; 8-7.2; 8-7.3

Literary Elements: A, E, G, H, K, L, O, P

Essential Questions

1. How did Jim Crow laws make travel different for African Americans?
2. Where did African American travelers find lodging during the Jim Crow era?

Historic Content

Traveling during The Jim Crow Era exposed African Americans to both risk and humiliation. Crossing the Mason-Dixon Line or the Ohio River meant entering a different world with different laws. While traveling basic necessities were needed such as food, gas, water, restrooms and maybe an overnight hotel stay. Stopping for these necessities in the South was dangerous for African Americans due to Jim Crow segregation laws.

Seeing signs enforcing segregation and denial of service were a common part of life for African Americans living and traveling in the South. While traveling by train the conductor was sure to let passengers know which sections were for “whites” and “colored.” The train stations also had separate entrances, ticket offices, restrooms and waiting rooms. “White Only” signs hung above restaurant entrances, gas stations, and other public facilities. Parks, benches, movie theaters and hospitals were also segregated. Many restaurants served blacks through a door or window at the rear of the building, not allowing them to sit in the dining area. Most stores practiced segregation by making people of color wait until the white people were served first. Blacks were forbidden to try on hats, clothes or shoes in the store. Public libraries were closed to African Americans in the South.

While traveling south during the Jim Crow Era travelers had to pass through small towns where knowledge of the local unwritten Jim Crow laws was very important. Blacks could be stopped at anytime and forced to state their reason for being in a certain place at a certain time. Local people in small towns knew where the whites and blacks were allowed to mix such as the post office, banks and certain stores. Blacks were often warned not to let the sun go down on them in certain towns. Traveling during this time presented great danger.

Victor Green, publisher and owner of *The Negro Travelers' Green Book* began publishing the book in 1936. It offered “Assured Protection for the Negro Traveler.”

Green created the book from his own personal experiences while traveling. His encounters and those of his friends were often described as painful embarrassments, which ruined the vacation or business trip. (Green 1956, 5)

Two properties listed in *The Negro Travelers' Green Book* were the Harriet M. Cornwell Tourist Home in Columbia and the Theretha Hotel in Atlantic Beach, both in South Carolina. Harriet Cornwell, known for her community activism, provided travelers to Columbia with an alternative to staying in the two black hotels in town. At her house was a comfortable place to stay with one meal a day provided. She only required guests to pay what they could. While white travelers had no problems getting rooms or food, the Cornwell Tourist Home, which never advertised with signs, is an example of how much people of color depended on word of mouth for an enjoyable traveling experience.

Not much is known about the Theretha Hotel, but Atlantic Beach became a popular destination for African Americans as early as the 1930s. Nicknamed “the Black Pearl,” Atlantic Beach is a 4-block stretch of beach from 29th to 32nd streets surrounded by North Myrtle Beach on three sides and the Atlantic Ocean on the other. Atlantic Beach was not only segregated by land with barricades at 29th and 32nd Street but barricade wire also ran into the water. The land barricades still remain today that block off Ocean Boulevard on either side from Atlantic Beach. During segregation Atlantic Beach was one of the most popular beaches for blacks on the East Coast from Virginia to Florida. Even nationally-known black entertainers like Ray Charles and James Brown who performed in Myrtle Beach had to stay in Atlantic Beach because of Jim Crow Laws. Incorporated in 1966, Atlantic Beach may be the only black-owned and governed oceanfront community in the United States.

Sources Needed

Primary Sources (in addition to the historic sites)

South Carolina ETV Roadshow. “Atlantic Beach.” YouTube™. www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKldzJqmUVc&feature=related.

The Negro Motorist Green Book. New York: Victor H. Green and Company, 1949. From the Collections of Henry Ford, in partnership with the University of Michigan. www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Casestudy/Negro_motorist_green_bk.htm.

The Negro Travelers' Green Book. New York: Victor H. Green and Company, 1956. Published Materials Division, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina. Selected portions of this source are online at www.teachingushistory.org/tTrove/blackandwhitetourism.htm.

State Development Board. Tourism Promotional Brochure. S149013. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina. www.teachingushistory.org/tTrove/blackandwhitetourism.htm.
The Town of Atlantic Beach, www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/index.asp.

Secondary Sources

Cooper, Michael L. *Bound for the Promised Land: The Great Migration*. New York: Lodestar Books, 1995.

Dawson, George and Richard Glaubman. *Life Is So Good*. New York: Penguin Books, 2000.

Litwack, Leon F. *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.

South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office. "Harriet M. Cornwell Tourist Home, Richland County," National Register of Historic Places nomination. www.nationalregister.sc.gov/richland/S10817740141/index.htm.

Taylor, Mildred. *The Gold Cadillac*. New York: Scholastic, 1987.

Lesson Procedures

1. Students will read aloud and discuss *The Gold Cadillac* by Mildred Taylor. The students will use the book for building background and prior knowledge to discuss some of the problems African Americans faced while traveling South during the 1950s.
2. Students will compare travel guides (*The Negro Travelers' Green Book*, *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, and the *South Carolina Tourism Promotional Brochure* that was intended for white travelers). Students might also compare these travel guides with modern travel guides provided today by the state of South Carolina (www.discoversouthcarolina.com). Students can discuss the differences between travel guides of the past and present.
3. Students will pretend that they are traveling to Columbia from another part of the state that includes an overnight stay. They will create a poster showing the route they will travel, including signs and stops along the way.
4. Students will write a two-paragraph essay explaining and comparing a trip taken by an African American family and one by a white family during the Jim Crow era. Students could also pretend that they are leaving South Carolina to a city in the North, such as Chicago, Detroit, or New York, making the same comparisons. Students should read selections in the 1949 *Green Book* and 1956 *Green Book* (cited above) in order to describe conditions for African Americans traveling during the Jim Crow era.
5. Drawing on their personal experiences of traveling within and outside the state, have students compare traveling during the Jim Crow era to today by creating a poster and writing a two-paragraph essay.

Assessment Ideas

Descriptive Poster and Essay. See Project Rubric on next page.

Name _____

Date _____

Traveling Southern Style **Project Rubric**

Travel Description

The writing assignment must include two paragraphs. The first paragraph must describe four stops listed in either the 1949 *Green Book* or the 1956 *Green Book*. Students should read pages 1-7 of the 1949 *Green Book* and pages 3-7 of the 1956 *Green Book* to learn more about the emotions of African Americans who traveled in the Jim

Crow South. Posters must include features listed below to receive points toward this assignment. Illustrations from either *Green Book* may be copied and printed to create the poster. Other images from the web may be used. Be sure to include images from the Jim Crow era as well as from today.

	Total Points Possible	Student Grade
First Paragraph		
Description of 4 Stops from Green Book	16	
Explanation of Feelings	6	
Problems	6	
Reasons to Visit Particular Stops	3	
Second Paragraph		
2 Stops Today	6	
3 Ways Travel Differs Today	9	
Poster		
Route of states in order	18	
Pictures of 4 Stops	12	
4 Stops labeled	12	
4 Jim Crow Signs	12	
Total	100	