

Busing Brewster

by Richard Michelson
pictures by R. G. Roth

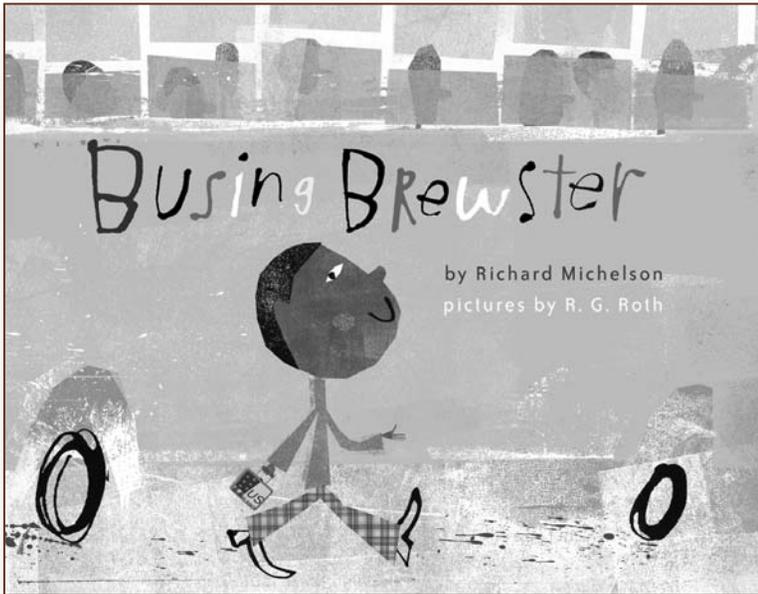


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Let's talk about desegregation . . .



Ages 6–10

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Brewster is excited about first grade . . . until Mama announces that he'll be attending Central—a school in the white part of town. Brewster's not sure if he'll fit in or if he's even wanted there. But on the first day, he ends up spending the day with the school librarian, who gives him not only the gift of books but also the gift of self-confidence.

Sometimes a simple picture book can offer an accessible introduction to a complex concept.

About the author . . .

Richard Michelson has written many critically acclaimed picture books, including *As Good as Anybody: Martin Luther King and Abraham Joshua Heschel's Amazing March Toward Freedom*, which was a Sydney Taylor Book Award winner and a National Jewish Book Award finalist. Like Brewster, Richard never minded his library "time-outs." He lives in Massachusetts. Learn more about him at RichardMichelson.com.

About the illustrator . . .

R. G. Roth has received numerous honors for his illustrations, including ten awards from the Society of Illustrators. When not vacationing on Martha's Vineyard, Robert lives in an 1850s farmhouse in Ohio.



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To talk about with your class . . .

- Prior to reading *Busing Brewster*, show the book's cover to the class. Ask the class to predict the storyline from the title and featured art. Does Brewster's lunchbox and/or clothing give them any clues? After reading the story, discuss the cover again; did the class accurately predict the storyline? Do they have a better understanding of what "busing" means in this story? Given Brewster's experience on the school bus that first day, why do they think he's smiling?
- Discuss key concepts including: desegregation, forced busing, equal rights, discrimination, the Civil Rights Movement.
- Civil rights is about fairness, about all people being treated equally and given the same opportunities. Introduce the class to the people and moments in civil rights history and discuss their significance.

Jim Crow laws • Ida B. Wells • Rosa Parks
Brown v. Board of Education decision • Ruby Bridges
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. • The Little Rock Nine

Connect the person or event to an everyday situation the students would understand (e.g., under Jim Crow laws, only certain students would be able to eat in the school cafeteria).

- To help students understand fairness, divide the class into groups based on the color of their clothing. Allow one group to have "privileges" such as receiving extra stickers or not having to do that day's homework. Afterwards, have the two groups discuss how they felt, especially the group that was denied the privileges.
- Research your town/city's newspaper and television report archives for coverage on any local civil rights demonstrations/protests. Discussing a local event could connect your students to the movement on a more personal level.

- Brewster dreams of becoming president one day. Discuss the importance of dreams and goals and perseverance, of not giving up. Everyone has obstacles to overcome, even presidents. Talk of the obstacles Presidents John F. Kennedy and Barack Obama had to face during their presidential campaigns. Ask the students if they know of other people—either public figures or those in their family—who have overcome obstacles.
- The library instantly becomes an important place for Brewster; it inspires him and gives him confidence. Have the class visit their school or local library to find a book that inspires them. During class, have each student give a book talk on why they chose their particular book.

Internet Resources . . .

THE KING CENTER www.thekingcenter.org

The official Web site of the King Center located in Atlanta, Georgia.

VOICES OF CIVIL RIGHTS www.voicesofcivilrights.org

Archive of recordings made by everyday people telling their personal stories of the civil rights movement.

HISTORIC PLACES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/civilrights

A travel itinerary of 49 places (including churches, schools, homes, and neighborhoods), listed in the National Register of Historic Places, associated with the civil rights movement.

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