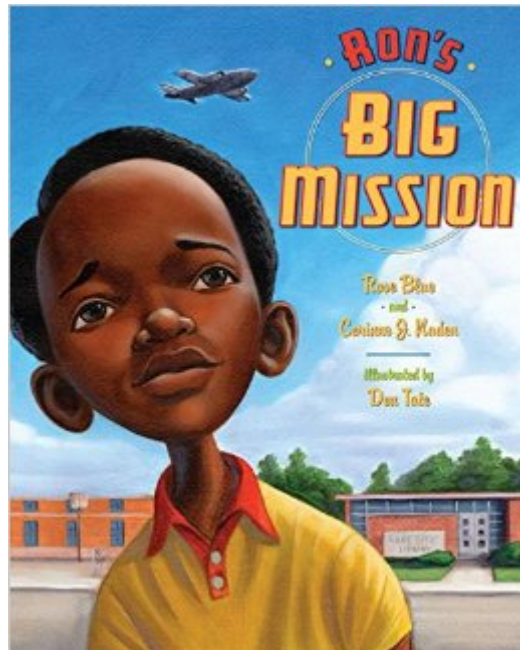


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Ron's Big Mission



Synopsis

Nine-year-old Ron loves going to the Lake City Public Library to look through all the books on airplanes and flight. Today, Ron is ready to take out books by himself. But in the segregated world of South Carolina in the 1950s, Ron's obtaining his own library card is not just a small rite of passage—it is a young man's first courageous mission. Here is an inspiring story, based on Ron McNair's life, of how a little boy, future scientist, and Challenger astronaut desegregated his library through peaceful resistance.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 440L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: Dutton Books for Young Readers (January 22, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0525478493

ISBN-13: 978-0525478492

Product Dimensions: 9.1 x 0.3 x 11.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (34 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #69,301 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #61 in Books > Children's Books >

Education & Reference > History > United States > 1900s #88 in Books > Children's Books >

Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Prejudice & Racism

Age Range: 6 - 8 years

Grade Level: 1 - 3

Customer Reviews

Ron, a young boy from Lake City, South Carolina, grew up at a time when segregation laws and other institutionalized forms of racism prevented him from enjoying the privileges that came with having his own library card. Although the local librarian always greeted the library's most frequent patron with a smile and allowed him to read on site, Ron was not allowed to bring home the books he so loved to read. It took a courageous act of civil disobedience on young Ron's part to stand up for his rights, obtain a library card, and take a step toward the end of segregation in his home town. Based loosely on actual events in the childhood of Ron McNair, Ron's Big Mission can inspire children to dream big about their future goals and also think about how they can, in big or small ways, work toward social justice in their community. The name Ron McNair is familiar to many, as

Ron grew up to become the talented scientist and astronaut who, sadly, perished in the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger shortly after take-off in 1986. This background adds an even deeper layer of poignancy and meaning to the powerful story.

This little book tells the story of a young Ron McNair's (later famous as an astronaut who died in the 1986 explosion of the Challenger space shuttle) determination to check out library books for himself in a Southern town which denied that privilege to people whose skin color was not white. The book does not directly address the issue of racism. The message can be inferred from the events, dialogue, and pictures but it is a subtle message, not overtly spelled out. Most kids will see it as a matter of fairness: it is not fair that they wouldn't let Ron check out the books just because of the color of his skin. The story is also well-told, with a heroic Ron giving a smile to light up a room when things work out in the end. This story is as uplifting for adults as it is for kids. I do not agree with the two one-star reviews here who state that children shouldn't be exposed to the issue of skin color because it isn't relevant anymore. If only that were true! Racism is still alive and well and children need to know from a young age that any kind of discrimination on the basis of skin color, or anything arbitrary, is wrong and "unfair." If the proper lessons are not taught at a young age, the wrong lessons may be "taught" to kids when they grow up from sources that parents would never want their kids to get their values from. I therefore recommend this book as highly as possible.

I must say I was shocked to see that some reviewers found it "inappropriate". I don't understand that thinking. Ignoring the history of racism doesn't make it go away, nor does pretending your child doesn't see people of different size, shape, ability, and color around him/her. My son brought this home from school today. What a great book! Even the older girls came in to listen. This spurred a short discussion on history, race, and the Challenger accident. It was well written, easy to read, engaging, and very well illustrated.

My daughter picked this book from the Scholastic book order form from school because the description sounded interesting. We read it as soon as it arrived and both my 5 and 7-year-old children listened intently. My kids are white and it floored them to think that this nice black child was denied a service that they so frequently use themselves. I especially like the author's note at the end, which indicates that this is a fictionalized story based on a real event involving Ron McNair, who later became one of the astronauts who perished on the Space Shuttle Challenger in 1986. I read the author's note to my children and we ended up online watching videos of the Challenger

explosion and reading up on why that explosion happened and what has been done to prevent that from happening in the future. I believe this story opened up a lot of learning opportunities for my children. There is great value in choosing literature that puts your children in other people's shoes, other people who are different than themselves. The reason I give it 4 and not 5 is because I think some people may feel that the way that Ron choose to make a scene in the library as not a good example for young children. However, I simply explained to my children why he did this and why they do not need to do this themselves. I highly recommend this book.

This book can be a wonderful, age-appropriate way to introduce some of the issues of race disparity and struggle in our past, which is part of the backdrop of such issues today. It can also be a great example of a boy, who is black, who loves reading and science and air planes and, as the book explains after the story, pursues those interests all the way to becoming an astronaut as an adult. Exciting stuff! As a white mother of white children I am making a concerted effort to speak to them openly about color, and to point out differences. Kids see these differences whether or not grownups speak about them, and I want to make sure the first input my children get on the subject comes from me and not a random child at school, or a movie or TV show they see somewhere later. I want to expose my kids, as best as I am able from my place of privilege, to a variety of people from many places - and books are part of how I hope to do this. This book was a big winner for my five-year-old on several levels. He's into science and outer space, and most importantly, he understands how libraries work. The idea that a kid who loved books would not be able to check out a book from a library because of the color of his skin (or for any reason), not to mention that grownups would actually call the police because the kid politely (though standing on a counter) insisted he be allowed to check out books, was incredible to him. The setting and mechanism of how it all is supposed to work (a library), vs. how it had been working for Ron, was something he could relate to. This was a good basic, early exposure to a subject that's hard to understand, while still leaving a kid feeling good about Ron's victory at the end of the story. My son asked to read the book many times over the course of several weeks, and I'm sure we'll be reading it again soon.

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