



MILES & THE MONARCHS

By Carolyn Mueller | Illustrated by Philip Goudeau

CHAPTER FIVE

Miles and his dad pulled their truck back on to the main road, continuing on their way to Philadelphia.

"We gotta' hurry," his dad said. "And make good time. We don't want to be late for the game!"

"Dad?" Miles asked. "Why did you want me to go to the bathroom in the woods back there? Why couldn't we just go into town? I'm sure they have a restaurant or a gas station."

Miles' dad sighed.

"Miles," he said. "See this map here?"

"Yeah," Miles said. "You've been looking at that map all day. I guess it tells you how to get to Philly?"

"Sort of," his dad answered. "It tells a lot more than that too. This was your Grandpa's map. And your Uncle and I have both used it. We took this map with us all those times we drove around to see the games in the Negro Leagues."

"So, it's like your lucky baseball game map?" Miles asked.

"Not exactly," his dad said. "It's a map to Pennsylvania, sure. But it's more than that. See, son, you know that we don't always feel welcome in every place around here. Restaurants or gas stations are sometimes marked WHITES ONLY. You've seen that, I know you have. When we travel across the state we can't just stop and use the bathroom wherever we want in whatever small town we want. We might not be welcome."

"Because we're black," Miles said, matter-of-factly.

"Yes, Miles, because we're black," his dad answered.

"Most importantly we need to be safe. I want you to be safe. It felt safer to me to have you go to the bathroom in the empty woods than to enter an unknown small town where we might not feel welcome. Where we might not be safe."

Miles nodded.

"Your Grandpa made this map," his dad said, indicating the pencil lines and marks all over it. "It helps us know where we can travel and still be safe. He marked gas stations to stop at, places to go to the bathroom, even restaurants we can eat at or hotels we might be able to stay in along the way. We've used this map a lot in our family. And you know what?"

"What, Dad?" Miles said.

"I'll pass this map on to you so you can use it on all of your journeys when you're as old as your old man here."

"Dad?" Miles asked.

"Yeah, Miles."

"Do you think I'll still need a map like that when I'm your age?"

"I sure hope not, Miles. I sure hope that you won't."

"Dad?" Miles said. "It's not fair is it."

"No, Miles," his dad said, sighing. "It's not fair at all."

The two rode in silence for a while, his dad looking ahead at the road, Miles counting rows of corn as the truck bounced along.

"We're getting close to Philadelphia," Miles' dad said, brightly. "We have just enough time for me to tell you all about one of my very favorite baseball players ... Cool Papa Bell!"

Newspaper Connection: Look for maps in your local newspaper and notice the symbols used. Use these maps as an example to draw what you imagine Miles' dad's map looked like.

