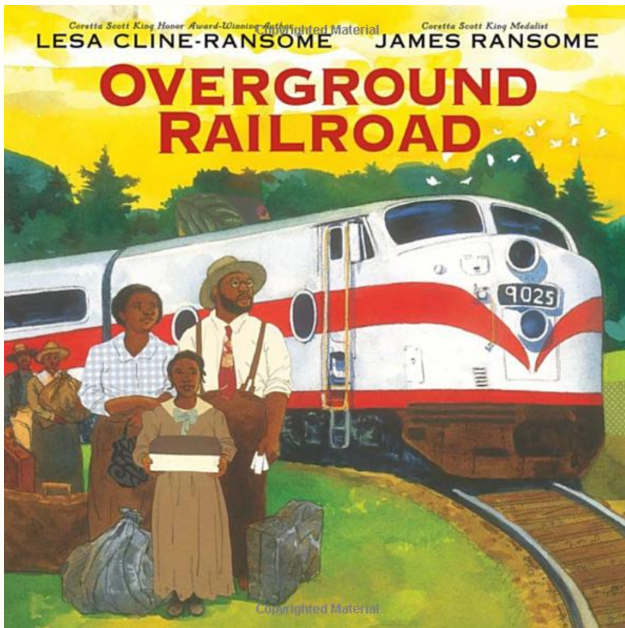


# Downtown Cranford Story Walk



**BLACK  
HISTORY  
MONTH**



*The Overground Railroad is the story of a girl named Ruth Ellen who travels with her family from North Carolina to New York City during the Great Migration, a time in history when Black Americans were driven from their homes in the South by a lack of economic opportunities and harsh segregationist laws. Some six million Black people left rural areas of the Southern states to relocate to urban areas in the North. Ruth Ellen's observations and the conductor's announcement of stops along the way chart the family's progress to a place that will offer only a little bit more freedom but much more opportunity for them all.*



Before you Begin the Story Walk: This guide is to provide your children with the historical context of Black History Month and the story you are about to read together. We hope this handout is helpful, and we look forward to seeing you all in downtown Cranford. Use the hashtag #cranfordstorywalk on social media for your photos.

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

There was once a time when the contributions of Black people were not acknowledged. In February 1926, historian Carter G. Woodson established the first celebration of Black contributions to the United States, using the second week of February to honor the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (February 12, 1809) and Frederick Douglass (born in February 1818) and their notable accomplishments. Over the years, more Americans, both Black and white, were honored. In the 1960s, the civil rights movement further emphasized the impact of Blacks in American culture and throughout United States history.

Black History Month was officially recognized by the U.S. Government in 1976, when President Gerald R. Ford asked Americans to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history. Every year since then, every American president has declared February Black History Month.

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## Discussion Questions

1. What's the difference between the Underground Railroad and the Overground Railroad?
2. Why did Ruth Ellen's family leave their southern town? Why did they leave in the middle of the night? Have you ever had to move? How do you think it felt for Ruth Ellen to leave her home?
3. What type of images did Ruth Ellen see outside the train window while they traveled North?
4. The train cars were divided so that Black passengers sat together and white passengers sat together while traveling in southern cities. What was the first city where both races were free to sit anywhere on the train?
5. What meal did Ruth Ellen's grandma pack for them for their train trip?
6. How was Frederick Douglass's trip to freedom different from Ruth Ellen's trip?
7. What did her family hope to see in their new city home? How do you think they felt when they arrived?

## After the story walk



**ACTIVITY:** Ruth Ellen's family left their home to embark on a journey for a better future. Imagine that your family is planning a trip or a move to a new city or town. What memories of your home would you like to take with you? Where are some places you would like to go? Decorate your box with pictures and words.

### Materials:

Shoe box/Cereal box  
Paper  
Crayons/colored pencils  
Magazines  
Ribbon

*INFORMATION FROM THIS GUIDE WAS ADAPTED FROM THE WEBSITE OF THE REGINALD F. LEWIS MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY & CULTURE AND SCHOLASTIC.COM*