

# Celebrating Black History & Heritage

A Guide from Children's Literacy Initiative

## Celebrating Black History & Heritage



### Black History Month February

**Black History Month** is right around the corner and at CLI we recognize the importance of this month for our nation and the African American community. Black History is US History - it's a story that needs to be told. Students need to learn the roles in which African Americans have played in building our country's social/cultural, political and economic structures. Not having this knowledge of self in this regard, perpetuates the marginalization of Black Americans.

CLI also recognizes that we need to go beyond the "same old" when it comes to Black History Month – hmm, let's put together some worksheets and coloring sheets for MLK and Rosa Parks, play the last 3 minutes of I Have a Dream, have a read aloud about the Little Rock 9 and talk about slavery. That's not who Black people are, that's not what Carter G. Woodson envisioned when he developed Black History Week.

When CLI thinks of Black history, we think of how it fits into our nation's history and how Blacks played a role in our country's development. And, in order to have this perspective, schools and teachers need to learn how to integrate it into their current curriculum throughout the entire school year by identifying the stories that need to be conveyed to students that tell a more complete narrative. Stories that validate contributions, expose different perspectives, explore systemic inequities and their impact, and illustrate the resilience of Black Americans.

For those of you who are already integrating Black History throughout the curriculum and year, we recommend you look at Black History Month as a time to:

- Highlight certain topics and/or eras, eg: Black writers, Reconstruction,
- Dive deeper into topics you want to explore, eg: Black Lives Matter, Covid's impact on Black America, Black Panthers
- Celebrate Black culture, eg: Black Joy project, Black Culture Day/Week where you focus on different parts of Black culture

To add to your planning we, hope the following book list and resources are helpful.

**"He understood that people are more likely to devalue those who are invisible or omitted from history. Woodson hoped that if educators showcased African Americans' humanity—their intellect, resilience, creativity and dignity—they could inspire black people to embrace their blackness and reject internalized racism. And they could encourage the rest of the world to embrace that humanity as well."**

- Teaching Tolerance Magazine, 1/1/19

## Incorporating Black History & Heritage into the Classroom

Here are some methods you can use children's literature to live the tenets of Black History Month day to day in your classroom. These umbrella concepts and questions can be used with books to spark conversation and inspire children to stand up for change.

### Develop Criticality

Criticality means reading, writing, and thinking in active ways to understand and question how power, privilege, and oppression play out in texts and in the real world and work towards change.

- How do you know when something is unfair?
- Make a list of things that you think are unfair. For example, you may want to focus on classroom and/or school policies and/or rules.
- Why do you think these things are unfair?
- How would you change these things to make them more fair?
- How did the changes you made to make things more fair affect people's lives?

### Understand and Dismantle Racism

Help children recognize and understand privilege and bias in the world. Explore what is needed to combat racism and make America a better place for Black Americans.

- What were the civil rights activist fighting against and for?
- How does racism show up in our lives today?
- How did the strategies that activist used during Black Lives Matter protests compare to strategies used in the books we read?

### Connect Children to Their History

Connect the events of history to the lives of the children in your classrooms. Explore how the actions of the past shaped and continues to shape the lives of people now. Help children see how historical events connect to current events.

- How does your family talk about things that are not fair?
- How does your family talk about the Civil Rights issues that are happening today?
- What can we learn from the past that we can apply to today?

### Amplify Black Joy

Joy is contagious and is an act of resistance against systems of oppression. Amplifying Black joy affirms children's identity and helps to build resilience in Black children. When we amplify Black joy, we shift children's understanding of Black culture and enrich the lives of every child in our classrooms.

- How do you see yourself in the activists we read about?
- What did you learn about who you want to be?
- In what ways do you and your family celebrate your culture?

### Additional Resources

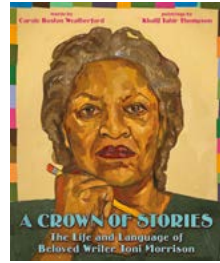
- **Steve King Shows Why We Need Black History Month** (Teaching Tolerance)
- **Black History Month: Teaching Beyond Slavery** (Teaching Tolerance)
- **5 Books to Teach Your Kids About Privilege and Socioeconomic Differences** (Today's Parent)
- **Black History Month is a chance for white parents to learn how to talk about racism** (Mashable)
- **4 Black History Month Must Haves** (Teaching Tolerance)
- **Black History Month Lessons & Resources** (National Education Association)
- **Classroom Resources for Black History Month** (PBS)
- **Black History Month Teaching Resources** (iCivics Education)
- **Black History Month Resource Guide for Educators and Families** (Center for Racial Justice in Education)

### Do More...

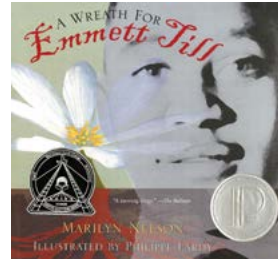
- Audit your library to ensure that there are "windows and mirrors" for Black students
- Include literature in your curriculum about African Americans on a regular basis
- Include lessons about Black history across the curriculum
- Find stories of Black Joy – we have got to get out of the habit the doom and gloom, traumatic history of Black people
- Learn about systemic oppression – define it, how to identify it, examples of it and how it continues to marginalize Black people
- Create projects around Black History – and we don't mean slavery, MLK and Rosa Parks. To name a few, we suggest: writers and poets, Emerging Leaders, the Great Migration, and the Harlem Renaissance.

## Celebrating Black History & Heritage Book List

This year, commit to making Black History a central part of children's learning **all year long**. Start now, during Black History Month, by studying and sharing stories that reflect the true depth and impact of Black experiences over centuries. We recommend these titles for kindergarten through 8th grade to promote conversations about resistance and liberation movements, voting rights activism, Black literature, Black artistry, and more.



**Crown of Stories**  
Carole Boston Weatherford



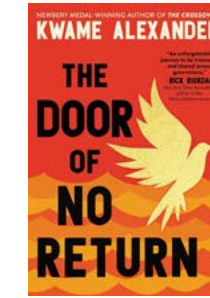
**A Wreath for Emmett Till**  
Marilyn Nelson



**Betty Before X**  
Ilyasah Shabazz



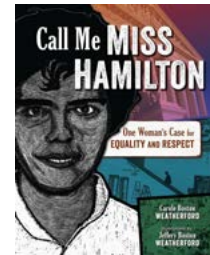
**Do You Know Them?**  
Shana Keller



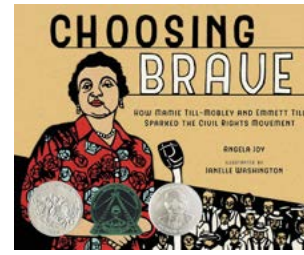
**The Door of No Return**  
Kwame Alexander



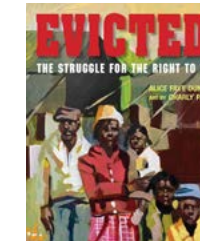
**brown girl dreaming**  
Jacqueline Woodson



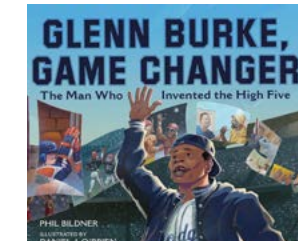
**Call Me Miss Hamilton**  
Carole Boston Weatherford



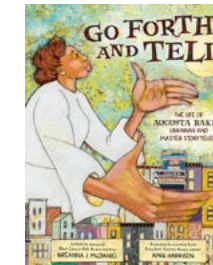
**Choosing Brave**  
Angela Joy



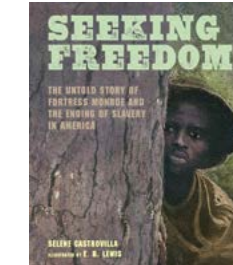
**Evicted!**  
Alice Faye Duncan



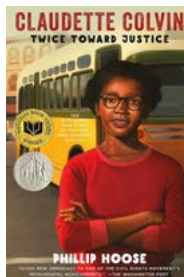
**Glenn Burke, Game Changer**  
Phil Bildner



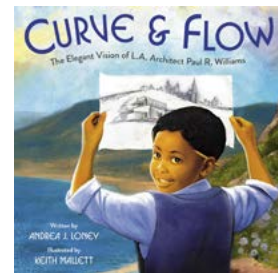
**Go Forth and Tell**  
Breanna J. McDaniel



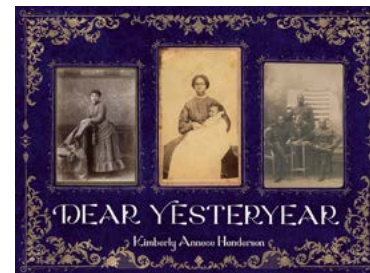
**Seeking Freedom**  
Selene Castovilla



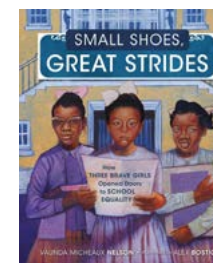
**Claudette Colvin**  
Phillip Hoose



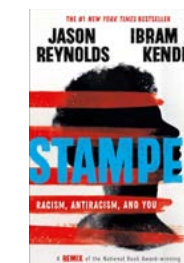
**Curve & Flow**  
Andrea J. Loney



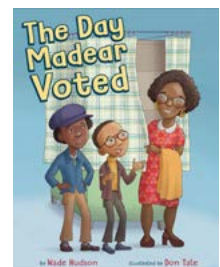
**Dear Yesteryear**  
Kimberly Annece Henderson



**Small Shoes, Great Strides**  
Vaunda Micheaux



**Stamped**  
Jason Reynolds



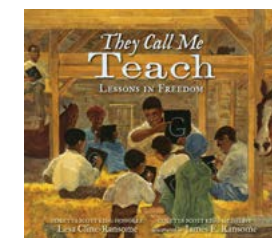
**The Day Madear Voted**  
Wade Hudson



**The Port Chicago 50**  
Steve Sheinkin



**When the Schools Shut Down**  
Yolanda Gladden



**They Call Me Teach**  
Lena Cline Ransome

## Where to shop

This month (and every month!), we encourage you to shop local! Visit any of our local bookstore partners, or shop online through [bookshop.org](http://bookshop.org).

- Julia De Burgos
- Uncle Bobbie's
- Harriett's Bookshop
- The Black Reserve
- Hakim's Bookstore
- Da Book Joint
- Semicolon
- The Lit Bar
- Ashay by the Bay
- Pyramid Books
- Frugal Bookstore
- Detroit City Books
- Harambee Books and Artwork
- Turning Page Bookshop
- The Key Bookstore
- AfriWare Books
- The Dock Bookshop
- Altamira Libros
- Barrio Books
- Chau Luna
- The Phoenix Bookstore
- The World's Borough Bookshop
- Third House Books
- Happy Medium Book Cafe
- Femme Fire Books



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