

Annotated Bibliography for Black History Month

Grade-Level Range 2-5 (DRA 20-44)

Kendall Joseph Binder

Bacon, P. & Golenbock, P. (1990). *Teammates: How Two Men Changed the Face of Baseball*. Boston. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

DRA: 44

Summary: *Teammates* recounts the historical story of segregated baseball teams in the 1940s. Retelling the history of the Brooklyn Dodgers, this book explains the social period of racial segregation and how Pee Wee Reese made his voice heard to other team members about the skills and kindness of Jackie Robinson, attempting to defeat racism among this small baseball community. It is the story of Jackie Robinson's entry into the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Merits: *Teammates* is loaded with text features: authentic photographs, vibrant illustrations, and maps. Not only does *Teammates* provide a story about how baseball was racially segregated in the 1940s, it displays themes of friendship and teamwork to make a social and cultural change.

Bridges, R. (2003). *Ruby Bridges Goes To School: My True Story*. New York.

Scholastic, Inc.

DRA: 20

Summary: *Ruby Bridges Goes to School* recounts the story of school segregation in the 1960s. Written by Bridges herself, she explains the trials and tribulations of a time when school segregation was at its peak and how she attended the all-white William Frantz Elementary School. Bridges notes how famous people applauded

her and her teacher, Mrs. Henry's, bravery—John Steinbeck and Eleanor Roosevelt were among the few to honor Bridges.

Merits: *Ruby Bridges Goes to School* is written for a first-second grade reader. The book is full of authentic historical photographs that recount school segregation during the 1960s. Bridges tells her story in an easy-to-read language while implementing lessons of kindness, activism, and acceptance.

Bull, A. (2000). *Free At Last! The Story of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York. DK Publishing, Inc.

DRA: 44

Summary: *Free At Last!* chronicles the life and accomplishments of Martin Luther King, Jr. The story is written with age-appropriate language and includes other historical figures and facts from the times of MLK—including the Vietnam War, The Black Power movement, James Earl Ray, Elvis, and facts about various cities in the U.S.

Merits: *Free At Last!* is full of text features—stunning authentic photographs and illustrations, side facts, Table of Contents, Glossary, and an Index. The side facts gives the reader a good gauge on how times were in the 1950s and 1960s, leading up to the assassination of several key political and activist figures.

Cairns, J., Chamberlin, M., & Chamberlin, R. (2005). *Mama Panya's Pancakes: A Village Tale from Kenya*. Cambridge, MA. Barefoot Books.

DRA: 36

Summary: *Mama Panya's Pancakes* is an international story that takes place in Kenya.

The story has themes of poverty and sharing, along with facts about Kenyan culture and the similarities and differences between U.S. culture and Kenyan culture.

Merits: *Mama Panya's Pancakes* uses vivid watercolor illustrations complimenting the every day life of a Kenyan family. It includes a facts pages about life in a village, including how their schools operate; what type of trees and animals live in Kenya; how to speak Kiswahili; facts about Kenya; and even a recipe for *Mama Panya's Pancakes*.

Cooper, F. & Littlesugar, A. (1999). *Tree of Hope*. New York. Scholastic, Inc.

DRA: 28

Summary: This folkloric tale takes place in Harlem during the Great Depression. Florrie is the main character and her father is an actor at the Lafayette Theatre. The theatre closes; Florrie and her father wish upon the tree of hope for something grand to happen. The theatre reopens when Orson Welles wants to put on a Black production of *Macbeth*. The story recounts the Great Depression, Black culture, and the Harlem Renaissance.

Merits: This historical fiction story is full of oil paintings that compliment the text. The story also brings in elements of African culture, along with important elements of

the Great Depression and the Harlem Renaissance. The author, Littlesugar, also includes a folkloric tale about wishing upon a tree of hope—making the children’s book a hybrid genre.

Gigliotti, J. & Marchesi, S. (2015). *Who was George Washington Carver?* New York. Penguin Random House, LLC.

DRA: 44

Summary: An excellent series of books, the *Who Was...?* series recounts the lives of historical figures. George Washington Carver was a significant figure in the science community who studied plants and became an inventor. Born into slavery, Carver became college educated and made a profound footprint in the fields of science, crop rotation, and academia.

Merits: The thorough biographies in the *Who Was...?* series contain sketched illustrations by Stephen Marchesi. Each book has nonfictional text features like explicit timelines that parallel Carver and the history of the world. There are also educational apps and websites that compliment the book series, allowing children to play trivia about several different historical figures, places, and events.

Harrington, J. & Jackson, S. (2007). *The Chicken-Chasing Queen of Lamar County.* New York. Melanie Kroupa Books: Farrar, Starus and Giroux.

DRA: 20

Summary: This fictional, adventurous tale is great for a read aloud. It primarily focuses on rural culture life on a farm where a young black girl and her mother, Big

Mama, live. The girl loves to chase chickens because it helps her with her speed and accuracy. One day, the girl decides to leave a chicken, Miss Hen, alone because she has had a nest of babies—and learns to take care of the chickens.

Merits: The moral of the story is learning that sometimes a hobby has to end for the betterment of something else. The book has vivid color pictures to accompany the text. The book captures rural farm life and what children do for fun in the country.

Other books that compliment Black History Month

McDonough, Y. & Marchesi, S. (2010). *Who Was Rosa Parks?* London. Penguin Books Ltd.

DRA: 40
Historical Biography

Nelson, K. (2013). *Nelson Mandela.* New York. Scholastic, Inc.

DRA: 36
Historical Biography

Parvis, S. (2009). *President Obama: A Day in the Life of America's Leader.* New York. Time Inc.

DRA: 44
Magazine-themed Biography

Robinson, S. (2013). *Jackie Robinson: American Hero.* New York. Scholastic Inc.

DRA: 44
Historical-Sports Biography

Schaefer, A.R. (2002). *Serena and Venus Williams*. Mankato, MN. Capstone Press.

DRA: 40

Sports Biography
