

ACC (African and Caribbean Canadian) Books in Colour

Recommended Fiction and Non-fiction
Resources for K-12 Schools



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Introductions

Dear Educator,

As the parent of two girls, one of whom frequently missed school due to a chronic illness, I often wondered if they were receiving a well-rounded education. Were there teachers who looked like them? Were there books about people like them? Were they learning about different places, different cultures, and different ways of living? These questions led me to pursue my own research on dress, culture, and identity, research that led me to find that students, no matter how long their family has lived in Canada, need to be exposed to other cultures in the classroom.

In the Spring of 2020, like many other parents and grandparents, I was suddenly responsible for homeschooling my seven-year-old grandson. Until that time, I had never realized just how much teachers were responsible for in the classroom.

With the murder of George Floyd in May of 2020 and the Black Lives Matter movement in full swing, I realized that my area of research, my 'classroom' with my grandson, and social momentum, were all intersecting.

I reached out to the Edmonton Public Library with the idea of creating a resource guide for teachers, parents, and educators, similar to the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Guide EPL previously created with Edmonton Public Schools. I wanted a guide that would be relevant to Black Canadians—their culture, experiences, and identity—and help educators diversify their classrooms, and spark conversations about race, diversity, discrimination, and culture.

I am extremely grateful for the contributions from the Sickle Cell Foundation of Alberta, Edmonton Community Foundation, the Government of Canada and Alberta Gaming Liquor and Cannabis, which made this project possible. My praise would be insufficient if I did not mention the Edmonton Public Library, particularly Librarian Ariel Kleber, who went over and above in developing this guide.

Dr. Jean Walrond Ph.D.

Manager—Research & Education and COO



Dear Reader,

Growing up in my hometown, you needed an adult card to take out adult materials from the library. YA books were almost non-existent, and none of the material featured a boy or a person of colour. Still, I was lucky. I had parents who read widely and encouraged and supported me to do the same.

This lack of access to information encouraged me to become a librarian in the first place. I believe representation matters, particularly for children and youth, and I believe age is not a prerequisite for learning. This is a philosophy I embrace with my own little one.

When asked to work with Dr. Walrond to develop a Kindergarten to Grade 12 book list, I was delighted and a little terrified. Creating a resource list for parents, teachers, and librarians that would support teachers in selecting classroom resources about Black Canadian culture and experiences felt daunting, but critical, work.

The idea was simple: find books, use a grant to hire university students to read and review the books, and publish a shortlist. In the end, our four reviewers read almost 500 books in 15 weeks. They read fiction and non-fiction books that focused on the history, culture, and experiences of Black Canadians while also normalizing diversity and representation. Many of the books on this list have made their way into my home, where my child is growing in the knowledge that there are many different types of people in the world, and they are all deserving of love, respect, honour, and dignity.

Reading isn't safe. Reading is risky, emotional, and messy. When we empower children to find books where they see themselves, their lives, their troubles, and their experiences reflected, or when we encourage children to see through the eyes of someone completely different, we all grow, learn, and benefit.

It was my distinct privilege to be a part of this project and to support and challenge our reviewers as they read, debated, analyzed, and discussed every book. Being part of these intimate, timely, and honest discussions of how reading a certain book made them feel, think, or remember moments in their lives, allowed everyone in the project to come away with a deeper understanding of how literature can support social change and how important that change is.

Ariel Kleber

Community Librarian

Meadows Branch, School-Aged Services Team



How to Best Use This Guide

Legend

There are icons after each title indicating some of the themes present in the book. There is a legend at the beginning clearly labelling each icon, and on every second page an abbreviated legend appears at the bottom of the page for quick reference. These icons are not all-encompassing but try to indicate topics and genres that may be of particular interest to readers and educators.

Links

On occasion, the guide includes notes to parents and educators. Here we have tried to flag books where parents and educators should be prepared for further discussion. In some instances, we have included links to help you prepare for these conversations, or provide additional resources; in others, these resources appear in the books themselves.

Understandably, readers may have questions or want to have difficult conversations after reading *any* of the books in this guide, so these links are not exhaustive by any means.

Book Selection

The books selected for inclusion in this guide went through a lengthy vetting process.

The books in the **long list** were either:

- positively reviewed in a critical review journal (such as School Library Journal, Booklist, Kirkus, and Canadian Review of Materials Magazine);
- award winning or nominated for a book award (such as the Governor General's Award, the Coretta Scott King Book Award, the NAACP Image Award Winners, and others);
- recommended by the Canadian Children's Book Centre, the Canadian Library Association, the American Library Association, and others.

The books narrowed to this **short list** were subjected to following additional criteria:





























- recently(ish) published (ideally, but not exclusively)
- written by a Canadian
- current and relatable
- new(ish) author
- featured intersectionality (ideally, but not exclusively)

Priority was given to books where the reader might learn, feel, perceive, or understand something different; where the book might contribute to the promotion of African Canadian or Caribbean Canadian or Black Canadian culture; or where the book could be used to encourage discussions or start conversations about racism, colourism, discrimination, diversity, police or systemic violence, representation, or similar topics of importance.

While a concerted effort has been made to include high quality age-appropriate materials for a wide variety of students and learning styles, the guide is not exhaustive.

All books featured in this guide can be borrowed from any Edmonton Public Library location, or online at epl.ca.

Legend (click on each link for a list of the books from that category on epl.ca)

 <p>The Arts (Fine Art, Dance, Music, or Acting)</p>	 <p>Award Winner, Nominee, or Finalist Kindergarten to Grade 6 Grade 7 to 12</p>	 <p>Biography, Autobiography, or Memoir</p>	 <p>Canadian</p>
 <p>Contemporary or Current</p>	 <p>Everyday Diversity Kindergarten to Grade 3 Grades 4 to 12</p>	 <p>Fairy Tales, Folktales, or Retellings</p>	 <p>Fantasy</p>
 <p>Graphic Novel</p>	 <p>Historical Fiction or Non-fiction</p>	 <p>Learning About</p>	 <p>Levelled Reader or Hi/Lo Book</p>
 <p>LGBTQQIP2SAA (Includes or features an LGBTQ2+ character)</p>	 <p>Magical Realism (Magic or fantasy elements in the real world)</p>	 <p>Mystery, Thriller, or Horror</p>	 <p>Neuro or Physical Divergence (Autism, mental health, or physical disability)</p>
 <p>Picture Book Picture Books Part 1 Picture Books Part 2</p>	 <p>Poetry or Written in Verse</p>	 <p>Reader's Choice (Our personal favourites)</p>	 <p>Romance</p>
 <p>Science Fiction</p>	 <p>Self-Esteem, Body Positivity, Mindfulness</p>	 <p>Short Story Collection</p>	 <p>Social and Emotional Development Kindergarten to Grade 6 Grade 7 to 12</p>
 <p>Sports</p>	 <p>STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math)</p>	 <p>Storytime Book (Excellent one-on-one or group storytime book)</p>	 <p>Tough Stuff (Dealing with difficult topics) Kindergarten to Grade 6 Grades 7 to 12</p>

Primary – Grades K to 3

Fiction

While we feel that these are titles which would be appropriate for readers in Kindergarten to Grade 3, many of these books would also be appropriate and may be of interest to Grade 4 to 6 readers.

48 Grasshopper Estates (2021)

by Sara de Waal,

Illustrated by Erika Medina



Sicily is an inventor. All inventions need one thing: a friend. What's an inventor to do? Why, invent her own friends of course. Sicily creates friends out of things around her home. The best thing about friendship is sharing. And Sicily shares her friends with people in her neighborhood who are alone. While sharing her friends, Sicily meets another young inventor looking for a part for his own invention. Sicily has just such a part and maybe she has made a friend too!

Ada Twist, Scientist (2016)

by Andrea Beaty,

Illustrated by David Roberts



A great story that expands on the value of knowledge and the lengths that curious children (with the encouragement of friends and family) go to satisfy their thirst of knowing more. The illustrations, and in particular the fashions, are stunning, and the characters are so endearing and funny that they, and the book, are bound to be a fast favourite for any curious future scientist that loves to ask: Why?

Africville (2018)

by Shauntay Grant,

Illustrated by Eva Campbell



Africville shows the imagined memories of a child growing up in Africville. At the present day Africville Reunion, a little girl envisions what life in Africville might have been like for her family members who used to live there. Back matter includes family photographs, further information, and a brief history of Africville.

Alfie (2017)

by Thyra Heder



Even though he's not very soft, he doesn't do tricks, and he's pretty quiet, Nia still loves her pet turtle, Alfie. The night before Nia's seventh birthday Alfie disappears! We learn Alfie's side of the story. He didn't leave Nia—he's actually searching for the perfect birthday present for his dear friend.

All Are Welcome (2018)

by Alexandra Penfold,

Illustrated by Suzanne Kaufman



All Are Welcome is a regular classroom, in a regular school full of diverse students and family dynamics living their lives and enjoying each other's company. The casual representation is amazing, and everyone is made to feel included, empowered, and embraced in the gently rhyming picture book where "our strength is our diversity, a shelter from adversity. All are welcome here."

All Because You Matter (2020)

by Tami Charles,

Illustrated by Bryan Collier



All Because You Matter uses stunning images and poetic language to instill into Black and Brown children that they matter now and forever. The book touches on a range of topics, from having atypical or 'hard to pronounce' names to police violence. It does so without overwhelming and while reassuring the reader they are their ancestor's wildest dreams, and that they matter. *All Because You Matter* delves into the concept of self-love, particularly aimed at Black boys, in a philosophic and open-ended way that could elicit future conversations.

Anna Hibiscus' Song (2011)

by Antinuke,

Illustrated by Lauren Tobia



Anna Hibiscus is bursting with happiness! As our heroine sits in a mango tree, watching her family go about their day, she is eager to find a way to express her joy. Visiting each member of her extended family, Anna takes the suggestions of her loved ones and tries out what they do when they are happy. Dancing to the car radio, squeezing a loved one's hand, telling others how much she loves them are all wonderful ideas! However, when Anna's mother suggests that she sit still and quiet, Anna returns to her tree and is inspired to express her happiness in a song of her own. A lovely, joyful story that also showcases the beauty of Africa and the families that live there.

Apples and Butterflies:

A Poem for Prince Edward Island (2013)

by Shauntay Grant,

Illustrated by Tamara Thiebaux-Heikalo



Beautifully and lyrically, the young Black Canadian narrator recalls a family vacation to Prince Edward Island. She fondly remembers activities like exploring and apple picking. The family also revels in the natural beauty of the island, from the colours of the autumn leaves to the smell of the ocean breeze. Stunning illustrations accompany this loving story about taking time to bask in nature and enjoying time together with loved ones.

Astro Girl (2019)

by Ken Wilson-Max



Astrid has her heart set on becoming an astronaut. When she shares her ambitions with her father, he lovingly challenges her with a list of all things an astronaut must do. Swinging her through the air, he asks: can she withstand zero gravity? As they bake cookies together, he asks: can she do science experiments? What about eating food out of a packet? Of course, she can! At the end of the day, Astrid and her father pick up Mama from work. Readers will be delighted to see that Astrid's mother is also an astronaut, having just returned from the space station on a mission. Clearly, if Mama can be an astronaut, so can Astrid! This empowering story and epilogue of notable female astronauts reminds young girls that their interest in STEM is worth pursuing.

The Arts | Award | Biography | Canadian | Contemporary | Diversity | Folktales | Fantasy | Graphic Novel | Historical | Learning About | Levelled Reading | LGBTQ2+ | Magical Realism | Mystery | Neuro or Physical Divergence | Picture Book | Poetry | Reader's Choice | Romance | Science Fiction | Self-Esteem | Short Stories | Social and Emotional Development | Sports | STEM | Storytime | Tough Stuff

Auntie Luce's Talking Paintings (2018)

by Francie LaTour,

Illustrated by Ken Daley



A little girl travels to Haiti to visit her Aunt Luce, an artist. During her visit, Aunt Luce shares her paintings of Haiti, which "takes the darkest colors and the brightest ones, and all the colors in between" to paint. The story uses metaphors to create an emotional connection to the history the book is sharing. Back matter includes an author's note and a glossary of figures and phrases.

B is for Baby (2019)

by Atinuke,

Illustrated by Angela Brooksbank



B is for Baby is a fun story using mostly words that begin with B. Brother is bound for Baba's on his bicycle to bring bananas. On the way a bunch of bandit baboons steal the lid from the basket to reveal a baby stowaway! A fun word book with beautiful illustrations inspired by West Africa.

Baby Goes to Market (2017)

by Atinuke,

Illustrated by Angela Brooksbank



Baby and Mama are at a bustling Nigerian market doing some shopping. As Mama buys all the things on her list, different vendors at the market give Baby food, and Baby keeps putting things into Mama's basket without her noticing. A fun and bouncy read-aloud story and a great introduction to numbers.

Becoming Vanessa (2021)

by Vanessa Brantley-Newton



For her first day of school, Vanessa chooses her most exciting outfit to help her feel special and confident. Still, things don't go as planned. Her new classmates don't seem to appreciate her or her outfit, and there's also a problem with her name...it's too long and too difficult to spell! By the end of the day, Vanessa is discouraged and doesn't feel like her special self anymore.

Vanessa's mother reassures her that the name Vanessa means "butterfly" – a creature that can adapt, transform, and fly free. In the end, Vanessa is affirmed and feels special once more, as will every child reading this sweet and inclusive story.

Bedtime Bonnet (2020)

by Nancy Redd,

Illustrated by Nneka Myers



"In my family, when the sun goes down, our hair goes up!" starts *Bedtime Bonnet*, a celebration of nightly bedtime routines in a Black multigenerational household. Every family member has a different routine for their different hair, but that doesn't mean that there isn't room for fun, mischief, and a little bit of silliness.

The Big Bed (2018)

by Bunmi Laditan,

Illustrated by Tom Knight



In this hilarious book, our strong-willed protagonist is fed up with her father hogging her mother, but she has a solution. Presenting well-thought-out evidence, and ready with counterarguments, this pint-sized lawyer in the making is ready to firmly, but gently, rebuff any resistance she encounters in her plan to take over The Big Bed. Adults will get a kick out of the precocious litigator and children will think her points are uproariously funny. A perfect storytime book for bedtime, if you're allowed in the big bed, that is!

Black is a Rainbow Colour (2020)

by Angela Joy,
Illustrated by Ekua Holmes



A celebration of Black culture, Black history, and black as a colour, *Black is a Rainbow Colour* is full of beautiful, bold illustrations and reflects on the importance of the colour black, even if it's missing from the rainbow.

Boonoonoonous Hair! (2019)

by Olive Senior,
Illustrated by Laura James



Jamalia doesn't like her hair. She wants hair like the girls in her class: swishy hair. But, as her mama explains, her hair is one of a kind. She can wear it any way she likes. Her hair is boonoonoonous!

The Camping Trip (2020)

by Jennifer K. Mann



Being brave sometimes means trying something new. It can be exciting and interesting, but it can also be nerve-wracking, and a little scary too! Ernestine is beyond excited when she is invited to go camping with her Aunt Jackie and cousin Samantha. On Ernestine's first camping trip things are familiar, but also not. She has been swimming before, but not in a lake. She's been on walks before, but never a hike. Join our new friend as she discovers camping!

Can I Touch Your Hair?: Poems of Race, Mistakes and Friendship (2018)

by Irene Latham and Charles Waters,
Illustrated by Sean Qualls and Selina Alko



When Irene and Charles become partners for a poem-writing project, they slowly and bravely begin to explore how the issue of race affects their lives. Irene's white perspective and Charles's Black perspective are inherent even when they begin by writing about a subject seemingly devoid of racial context: shoes. Their next topic, hair, opens a dialogue that includes the emotional effects of race-based conflicts at school. As the children move on to poems involving their friends and families, readers sense a developing trust and warmth that culminates in a beautiful poem written by Irene and Charles together. Their different perspectives are largely due to race, but they grow into friends based on the many things they have in common.

Chasing Freedom (2015)

by Nikki Grimes,
Illustrated by Michele Wood



Chasing Freedom hypothesizes what would happen if Harriet Tubman and Susan B. Anthony sat down, had tea, and talked about the amazing contributions they'd made to history. The book explores two women trailblazers who had a huge impact on the Underground Railroad, the Civil War, the Women's Suffrage Movement, and changed the face of history forever.

The Arts | Award | Biography | Canadian | Contemporary | Diversity | Folktales | Fantasy | Graphic Novel | Historical | Learning About | Levelled Reading | LGBTQ2+ | Magical Realism | Mystery | Neuro or Physical Divergence | Picture Book | Poetry | Reader's Choice | Romance | Science Fiction | Self-Esteem | Short Stories | Social and Emotional Development | Sports | STEM | Storytime | Tough Stuff

Chicken in the Kitchen (2015)

by Nnedi Okorafor,

Illustrated by Mehrdokht Amini



Winner of the Children's Africana Best Book Award, *Chicken in the Kitchen* follows Anyaugo as she wakes up to find something is not quite right! When she finds a giant chicken in her kitchen being very naughty, Anyaugo wishes her friend Wood Wit was there to help her. Beautifully illustrated with fun characters, *Chicken in the Kitchen* showcases the masquerade culture of West Africa and brings folklore characters to life.

Christopher Changes His Name (1996)

by Itah Sadu



Christopher is tired of having an ordinary name, so he decides to change his name, until he realizes that he's special just the way he is.

The City Speaks in Drums (2010)

by Shauntay Grant,

Illustrated by Susan Tooke



Two boys from Halifax's North End travel through their neighbourhood and into the city beyond. The sights and sounds speak to them in rhythm. Their adventure ends at the harbour where they are "poppin' and lockin' hip hoppin'" on the waterfront. Everything about this book speaks of vitality. Electrifying illustrations, the exuberance of the rhythm embodied in the verse, the pleasure of the children seeing their surroundings with the unique awareness of the young, the ingenuity of the effervescent people they meet—all celebrate the joie de vivre of a Canadian city and its culture. Truly the drum of this city "is a heart and a soul and a mind all of its own."

Come Back to Earth, Esther! (2019)

by Josée Bisaillon



Esther is a brilliant girl with an even more brilliant imagination. Her dream is to travel the cosmos. Esther swims underwater to mimic the weightlessness that astronauts experience. She builds her very own spaceship. She lets her mind wander off into the clouds. Esther's imagination comes to life on the pages of this out-of-this-world story!

Come, Read With Me (2021)

by Margriet Ruurs,

Illustrated by Christine Wei



When a dad shares a bedtime story with his two daughters, they suddenly find themselves inside that very same story! Venture along as they meet up with childhood favourites, such as a toad and a yellow brick road. This is a great read for families, as a new tale for young children, and one of memories and nostalgia for parents.

Common Threads: Adam's Day at the Market (2019)

by Huda Essa,

Illustrated by Mercè Tous



Adam and his parents are at the market, and Adam is very excited – it's bustling, beautiful, and busy! When Adam gets separate, he has trouble finding them in the crowd where people might look similar, might be different, and might have more in common than you realize.

Cool Cuts (2020)

by Mechal Renee Roe



A simple and delightful book featuring depictions of different hairstyles boys (or anyone with short hair) could rock. Each page offers an affirmation call and positive response. While written specifically for boys, there is a book by the same author for girls called *Happy Hair*.

The Crossover (2014)

by Kwame Alexander



The Crossover is the fast-paced story of two brothers, Josh and Jordan, as they overcome the complications of girlfriends, loss, and of course, basketball. This novel in verse lyrically embraces the relationship of siblings and life growing up both on and off the court.

Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut (2017)

by Derrick Barnes,

Illustrated by Gordon C. James



There is nothing like the magic of a "fresh cut" at the barbershop. That crisp yet subtle line makes boys sharper, more visible, more aware of every great thing that could happen to them when they look good: lesser grades turn into As; girls take notice; even a mother's hug gets a little tighter. Everyone notices. This rhythmic, read-aloud title is a celebration of the way boys feel when they leave the barber's chair.

The Day You Begin (2018)

by Jacqueline Woodson,

Illustrated by Rafael López



Remember your first day of school? Or trying to fit in on the playground? Maybe you ate different food or wore different clothes. These differences make you, you! *The Day You Begin* is the day you learn that different doesn't mean bad. You are you, and you are wonderful!

Dear Black Girls (2021)

by Shanice Nicole,

Illustrated by Kezna Dalz



A love letter of affirmation, reassurance, and positivity, *Dear Black Girls* highlights the ways in which no two Black girls are the same, that they are all special, and despite differences, all deserve to be loved, just as they are.

Dear Baobab (2011)

by Cheryl Foggo,

Illustrated by Qin Leng



Maiko, a young boy, has recently immigrated from Africa to a place with spruce trees instead of baobab trees and snow instead of sun. He feels lost and out of place, but with the help of his family, a friend and tiny tree, Maiko finds a way to remain optimistic even while feeling uprooted.

Don't Touch My Hair (2018)

by Sharee Miller



Aria hates it when curious hands reach out to touch her hair. Instead, Aria escapes those hands by going under the sea, to the jungle, a fairy tale castle, and outer space, but the hands just seem to follow her. Finally, Aria has enough, and learns that it's ok to say NO!

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: informed consent

The Arts | Award | Biography | Canadian | Contemporary | Diversity | Folktales | Fantasy | Graphic Novel | Historical | Learning About | Levelled Reading | LGBTQ2+ | Magical Realism | Mystery | Neuro or Physical Divergence | Picture Book | Poetry | Reader's Choice | Romance | Science Fiction | Self-Esteem | Short Stories | Social and Emotional Development | Sports | STEM | Storytime | Tough Stuff

Dragons in a Bag (2018)

by Zetta Elliot



What do you do when the woman you thought was your grandmother (but isn't) needs your help to deliver baby dragons to a magical world? You say yes! For Jaxon, and friends Vikram and Kavita, this means adventure, excitement, and following two very strict rules: DO NOT feed the dragons anything sweet, and DO NOT let the dragons out of the bag!

Everywhere, Wonder (2017)

by Matthew Swanson,

Illustrated by Robbi Behr



A young boy explores his world, and everywhere he looks there is wonder to be seen. Enter the young protagonist's imagination as he makes his world a little more magical and a little more fun.

Firebird (2014)

by Misty Copeland,

Illustrated by Christopher Myers



This beautifully written story centres around Misty Copeland, a renown ballerina and the first African American principal dancer at the American Ballet Theatre. When Misty speaks with a young African American girl who also aspires to be a ballerina but lacks the confidence to see herself in that role, she offers words of reassurance and empowerment. Misty shares her own story of growing up in poverty and of the countless, tiring hours of training that created the dancer she is today. With love and encouragement, she inspires the young girl to believe in her potential and pursue her dreams.

For Beautiful Black Boys Who Believe in a Better World (2020)

by Michael W. Waters and

Keisha Morris



Jeremiah wants to understand why Black people are dying because of the colour of their skin. With his parents' guidance, Jeremiah learns about racial injustices, but also the positive changes that can come by voting, marching, praying, and speaking out. There can be a better world.

The Forgotten Girl (2019)

by India Hill Brown



It was just a snow angel - there was no way Iris and Daniel could know that underneath was a crumbling gravestone of a restless spirit. Now a jealous and demanding ghost is causing nightmares and trouble to Iris wherever she goes. Iris and Daniel's research exposes the clearing as the site of a long abandoned segregated cemetery, and former home to the spectral girl who now lurks in the woods, calling Iris back to the clearing, and back to the grave.

Parents and educators should check out [this article](#) for why Horror is a fantastic option for children.

Freedom Soup (2019)

by Tami Charles,

Illustrated by Jacqueline Alcántara



On New Year's Day while listening to Kompa music, Belle and her grandmother Ti Gran make Freedom Soup. As they dance, chop, cook, and prepare, Ti Gran tells Belle the history of Haiti, slavery, freedom, celebration, and the importance of memories, culture, and Freedom Soup. The story includes an author's note about the importance of Freedom Soup to their household and story, as well as a recipe for Freedom Soup or *Soup Joumou*.

Gator, Gator, Gator! (2018)

by Daniel Bernstrom,
Illustrated by Frann Preston-Gannon



There are gators in the swamp, and one fearless little girl is going to lead you on a journey to find one! Beautiful and detailed illustrations of bayou allow readers to play a game of search and find.

Gift Days (2012)

by Kari-Lynn Winters,
Illustrated by Stephen Taylor



Gift Days is a story about a young girl determined to learn to read and write, despite the obstacles she faces simply because she is a girl. She realizes her dream thanks to a special gift from a loved one. Readers will learn that gifts of kindness, however small, can make a real difference in the lives of others. Many children throughout the world, especially girls, do not have a right to an education, and the author reminds us that education is indeed a gift to be treasured.

Going Down Home with Daddy (2019)

by Kelly Starling Lyons,
Illustrated by Daniel Minter



Winner of The Caldecott Medal and Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award, *Going Down Home with Daddy* is a stunning depiction of the celebration of family, culture, and honouring family traditions. Beautifully and thoughtfully rendered, the reader follows Lil Alan as he struggles to find something to present at this year's family reunion. Lil Alan eventually finds a way to honour his family and their history.

Going Up! (2020)

by Sherry J. Lee,
Illustrated by Charlene Chua



Sophie, her dad, and the cookies they made are on the way to a birthday party on the 10th floor of their apartment building. More and more neighbours join Sophie and her dad in the elevator as it goes up. Everyone is going to the party! Playful, funny, and depicting the rich cultural tapestry of a diverse Canadian city, *Going Up!* is a must add to any storytime collection.

Green Pants (2017)

by Kenneth Kraegel



Jameson loves his green pants. When he wears his green pants, he can do anything! Jameson is excited—his cousin is getting married. It means he needs to wear a tuxedo and tuxedos have black pants. Jameson is worried that he won't be able to do everything in his black pants that he was able to do in his green ones. He will need to be brave to try something new.

Greetings, Leroy (2017)

by Itah Sadu,
Illustrated by Alix Delinois



Written as an email to his friend Leroy in Jamaica, Roy recounts his experience moving from Jamaica to Canada with his family. Everything is different: school, the weather, the people. What he finds is that people are kind, and curious, and some interests are common across countries, even if the sun feels cold in Canada.

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Hair Love (2019)

by Matthew A. Cherry,
Illustrated by Vashti Harrison



Armed with an iPad of YouTube tutorials and her cat, Zuri is ready to tackle her hair. Or thinks she is. Zuri's hair has a mind of its own, which kinks, coils, and curls sometimes out of control. When her mom did her hair, Zuri felt like a superhero, but Zuri just can't seem to tame her locks the same way. Feeling increasingly desperate, Zuri calls in her dad for reinforcement and they both end up frustrated and hurt. When they work together to celebrate Zuri's natural hair instead of waging war, they can achieve amazing things.

Be sure to check out the Oscar-winning short film, [*Hair Love!*](#)

Harriet Tubman: Freedom Fighter (2018)

by Nadia L. Hohn,
Illustrated by Gustavo Mazali



Harriet Tubman risked her life multiple times to help others escape oppression. Tubman, then known as Araminta Ross, was born into slavery in Maryland. Between 1850 and 1860, she escaped from her oppressors and returned to the South to guide countless others to freedom along the Underground Railroad. She also served as a soldier and a spy during the American Civil War. Tubman's story of courage and determination will engage readers who are still building confidence in their literacy skills and aid their understanding with illustrations and a historical timeline.

Hiking Day (2018)

by Anne F. Rockwell,
Illustrated by Lizzy Rockwell



An endearing story about a young girl and her family's first hike up Hickory Hill, what looks to her to be a mountain from her window. On the way, the family encounters wild animals and wonders of nature in the woods. Simple and engaging, the illustrations are beautifully and lovingly rendered with much attention to detail. Perfect to prepare for going for a first hike or camping trip, or to spark a discussion about a previous hiking or camping trip.

Hockey Night in Kenya (2020)

by Danson Mutinda and Eric Walters,
Illustrated by Claudia Dávila



Goal-oriented and irrepressibly optimistic, orphans Kitoo and Nigosi spend their time playing soccer, studying, helping around the orphanage, and reading books from the orphanage's very small library. One of these books is *Sports Around the World*, which includes a photograph of the Canadian national men's hockey team. Kitoo is enraptured. After finding a pair of old roller blades, Kitoo teaches himself to skate, and is determined to play hockey.

Honeysmoke (2019)

by Monique Fields,
Illustrated by Yesenia Moises



Honeysmoke was inspired by author Monique Field's experiences raising her biracial child. Featuring positive messages on racial identity, *Honeysmoke* encourages children to find their own identity and see colour in all its hues. Children are invited to discover their own colour word and to share it.

How to Find a Fox (2016)

by Nilah Magruder



A very determined girl is intent on finding a fox. Little does she know, the sneaky canidae (that's the type of animal family foxes belong to) is closer than she thinks! Readers will love the wily fox in this excellent storytime book for young children.

I Am Enough (2018)

by Grace Byers,

Illustrated by Keturah A. Bobo



Beautifully illustrated, *I Am Enough* is a story about building confidence and loving the differences that make you and others stand out. Children in the book participate in several activities and hobbies, and diversity and difference are broadly demonstrated. An important story about self-love and finding commonality in the differences between us all.

I am Human: A Book of Empathy (2018)

by Susan Verde,

Illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds



A meditation on what it means to be human, *I Am Human* explores the bright and the dark parts of life. As humans we experience happiness, pain, sadness, and empathy with the people around us. A thoughtful and poetic book that would be a lovely addition to discussions about kindness, mindset, and mindfulness.

I Got the School Spirit (2020)

by Connie Schofield-Morrison, Illustrated by Frank Morrison



Excited for the first day of school, *I Got the School Spirit* outlines a school day routine with an optimistic attitude and excitement. A wonderful way to prepare a young reader for putting on their shoes, zipping up their backpack, and getting to school—all with beautiful pictures, rhythmic words and brimming with hope and confidence!

Idia of the Benin Kingdom (2020)

by Ekiwa Aire,

Illustrated by Alina Shabelnyk



Part of the *Our Ancestories* series, *Idia of the Benin Kingdom* is the story of Queen Idia who was pivotal to her son's reign in the Kingdom of Benin, part of modern-day Nigeria, from 1504-1550. Queen Idia was a legendary queen and her story of love, courage, wisdom, and living your dreams is an empowering celebration of culture and self-reliance.

If Your Monster Won't Go to Bed (2017)

by Denise Vega,

Illustrated by Zachariah OHora



A fun, humorous and charming caregiver's manual for a child with a monster who refuses to go to sleep. Adults will find the spoof on a parenting manual entertaining, and children will enjoy the vibrant and colourful illustrations and the gross items to offer a truculent monster.

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I'm New Here (2015)

by Anne Sibley O'Brien



Part of a project called *I'm Your Neighbor, I'm New Here* follows three immigrant children from Guatemala, Korea, and Somalia as they navigate the experience of attending a western school. The struggles they face are very real as they learn to speak English, participate in activities, write sentences, and understand one's place amongst others. Thoughtfully written and illustrated by Anne Sibley O'Brien who remembered her time as a new student from her own childhood experience of her family moving to Korea.

I Love My Hair (1998)

by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley, Illustrated by E. B. Lewis



Combing her hair hurts and Keyana hates it. Keyana's mama shows her all the beautiful things they can do with Keyana's hair. Mama can plant rows of braids, like seeds in a garden.

I Promise (2019)

by Catherine Hernandez,
Illustrated by Syrus Marcus Ware



A loving celebration of family in all their wonderful shapes, sizes and colours. *I Promise* explores how family and parenting look and feel different in different families, while recognizing we have so much in common: love, bedtime stories, pillow forts, grilled cheese, giggles, and fun.

I Promise (2020)

by LeBron James,
Illustrated by Nina Mata



I Promise is a visual representation of children going about their day, working to live up to the promises they have made to be empathetic, respectful, and conscious members of society by setting goals, working hard, and holding themselves accountable. The book encourages children of all ages, ethnicities, sizes, and abilities to do more and be more in their communities.

Islandborn (2018)

by Junot Díaz,
Illustrated by Leo Espinosa



There is a lot to unpack in *Islandborn*. This children's picture book tells the story of Lola who cannot remember where she is from. Born on an unnamed Caribbean Island, she's lived in America for as long as she can remember. When her teacher gives Lola's class the assignment to draw a picture of their first country, Lola is distraught about how little she remembers, until her teacher reminds her that there are many in her community to ask for help. Lola embarks on a magical journey of shared history, the importance of community, and memory. There is a lot of coded language in the book, and while younger children will read about monsters, older children and adults will read the coded language about dictatorships and political dissidence.

Jabari Jumps (2017)

by Gaia Cornwall



Jabari wants to jump off the diving board and into the public swimming pool. He is sure today is the day, but on his way, he keeps remembering the things he needs to do before he can make the jump: stretch, find space, decide on the type of jump, have a rest. Jabari's dad gives him space to be afraid and tells Jabari that he might surprise himself. A wonderful book about dads, sons, and doing scary things by facing your fears.

Joseph's Big Ride (2016)

by Terry Farish,
Illustrated by Ken Daley



In his refugee camp, the biggest thing Joseph wants to do is ride the one bike in the camp, but it is too big. Each time he sees the bike, the owner tells him "Tomorrow. Hey!" Then Joseph moves to America, and among all the new, interesting, and sometimes scary things, there is a girl whose hair goes "whoosh" as she rides her red bike, one that is just Joseph's size!

Julián Is A Mermaid (2018)

by Jessica Love



Julián is riding the subway home with his Abuela when he sees three amazing women dressed as mermaids. Julián loves mermaids. When they get home, Julián creates his own mermaid outfit with a fern headdress, and a curtain for his tail. Julián is worried that his Abuela will get upset about the mess he made, or about how Julián has expressed himself. Instead, Abuela has a surprise of her own. *Julián Is a Mermaid* is a story of being seen and affirmed for exactly who we are.

Just Like Me (2020)

by Vanessa Brantley-Newton



A beautifully illustrated guide for girls in poetry form, *Just Like Me* covers topics many young girls can relate to, such as body image, standing up for rights, standing up against bullies, nature, feelings, friends, family, exploring, accepting differences, and getting pimples. The book promotes self-love and an appreciation of different skin tones, hair types, and physical features.

The King of Kindergarten (2019)

by Derrick Barnes,

Illustrated by Vanessa Brantley-Newton



Starting Kindergarten can be daunting, but for *The King of Kindergarten*, it is going to be a piece of cake. Bright and beautiful illustrations follow the royal theme throughout, and our hero is likeable and fun to watch as he meets new challenges and experiences with his infectious enthusiasm.

The King of Too Many Things (2017)

by Laurel Snyder,

Illustrated by Aurore Damant



Jasper is the king of his own kingdom. Everything was nice in his kingdom, but nice wasn't exciting. Jasper's wizard obeys Jasper's command and provides more and more exciting options until Jasper is *The King of Too Many Things*! Amazing illustrations by Aurore Damant who worked as a character designer on *The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water*.

Last Stop on Market Street (2015)

by Matt de la Peña,

Illustrated by Christian Robinson



The Last Stop on Market Street is a heartwarming picture book that delivers a powerful message. CJ's Grandma encourages him to see the world through the lens of empathy, teaching CJ, and readers, a lesson in compassion.

The Library Book (2017)

by Tom Chapin and Michael L. Mark,

Illustrated by Chuck Groenink



A picture book adaptation of *The Library Song*, the story is an endearing slice of life about a girl's Saturday at the library. The addition of the classic storybook characters coming along for the ride adds to the fun and excitement of a trip to the library. A must have storytime book!

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Love Is (2017)

by Diane Adams,
Illustrated by Claire Keane



A wholesome, heartwarming, and stunningly illustrated picture book that is a true delight to read, *Love Is* shares the story of a little girl who adopts and raises a duckling, watches it mature, then ultimately lets it go when it's time. Adults will recognize their own struggles and triumphs and children will love the adorable duckling and entertaining story.

Lullaby for a Black Mother (2013)

by Langston Hughes,
Illustrated by Sean Qualls



Lullaby (For a Black Mother) was a poem written by Langston Hughes. Stunningly illustrated by Sean Qualls, the book celebrates the love between a Black mother and her baby including moments of maternal love, tenderness, and whimsy. Back matter includes biographical notes, further reading, and the complete lullaby.

M is for Melanin: A Celebration of the Black Child (2019)

by Tiffany Rose



Celebrating the spectrums of skin, hair colouring and patterning, *M is for Melanin* is an empowering alphabet book that celebrates Black children, while working on ABCs.

Mae Among the Stars (2018)

by Roda Ahmed,
Illustrated by Stasia Burrington



When Mae was little, she used to imagine herself surrounded by billions of stars, floating, gliding, and dancing in space. It was Mae's dream to become an astronaut. Mae's mother would tell her: "If you believe it, and work hard for it, anything is possible." As Mae grew up, she kept remembering her parents' encouraging words, and her curiosity, intelligence, and determination helped her to become the first African American woman to travel in space. With beautiful illustrations, this story of a young Black girl wanting to journey outside the Earth is touching and 100% real!

Malaika's Costume (2016)

by Nadia L. Hohn,
Illustrated by Irene Luxbacher



It's almost time for Carnival, but Malaika, whose mummy is away working in Canada, hasn't sent money home so unlike her friends, she hasn't been able to make her costume. Frustrated with her mummy, her hand-me-down costume, and her feelings, Malaika comes up with an idea and creates the perfect Carnival costume with her Grandma's help. *Malaika's Costume* shares the hardship of a parent working overseas and sending money back to a family they miss dearly.

Malaika's Winter Carnival (2017)

by Nadia L. Hohn,
Illustrated by Irene Luxbacher



Malaika's mummy has come home with a French-Canadian man named Mr. Frederic and his daughter Adele, who is about Malaika's age. Mummy and Mr. Frederic are getting married, and after they do, they all move to cold Quebec to live together. Malaika has trouble adjusting to her new family arrangement, to the cold, and to her new classroom, but with the help of her Grandma, Malaika starts to adapt to her new situation.

Mama's Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation (2015)

by Edwidge Danticat,
Illustrated by Leslie Staub



Told from the perspective of a little girl waiting for her mama to be released from Sunshine Correctional, a prison for women without documentation, *Mama's Nightingale* highlights the hardship many immigrant families face when separated because of immigration laws. Ending on a positive note, it also demonstrates the power a single person can have.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: immigration, immigration laws, incarceration, and detention.

Mayann's Train Ride (2015)

by The Honorable Mayann Francis,
Illustrated by Tamara Thiébaux-Heikalo



Mayann and her family are traveling from Cape Breton to New York City by train. While the train ride, the bustle, and the porters are all exciting, Mayann is most excited about showing off her new grown-up purse. When Mayann loses her beloved purse on the New York subway, the amazing trip doesn't seem so amazing anymore.

Me & Mama (2020)

by Cozbi A. Cabrera



Me & Mama is a celebration of a mother-daughter relationship, and a day they spend together getting ready for the day, going out in the rain, then coming home and going to bed. Perfect to share with a little one who wants to be everywhere Mama is.

Milo's Museum (2016)

by Zetta Elliott,
Illustrated by Purple Wong



Museum displays are made up of things that people feel are valuable or important. What if you visit a museum and can't find anything that feels important to you? That's what happens to Milo. When Milo visits a museum, neither her, nor her culture, is reflected in what she sees. She takes matters into her own hands, creating her own museum where everyone is welcome.

Mommy's Khimar (2018)

by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow,
Illustrated by Ebony Glenn



A wonderful introduction to headscarves and celebration of Muslim culture, *Mommy's Khimar* details all the reasons a little girl loves the different types of Khimar her mother has, from the way they smell like her mommy even when she isn't there, to how she feels like a shooting star, a queen, or a superhero when she wears her mother's Khimar.

My Big Welcome: A Story About Kindness (2021)

by Onaolapo Dagunduro,
Illustrated by Saoirse Lou



Emilia and her family are forced to leave their home when a wildfire strikes. Their home and possessions are destroyed, and they move to the city where everything is so different and so frightening! Emilia is terrified of the noise, the crowds, and most of all, making new friends. This book is an excellent choice for children who face unforeseen changes in life circumstances.

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My Hair is a Garden (2018)

by Cozbi A. Cabrera



Gardens need to be tended and taken care of to grow—so does Black hair. When one of Mackenzie's classmates makes fun of her unruly hair, Miss Tillie, Mackenzie's neighbour, teaches Mackenzie how to take care of, love, and nourish her hair. Back matter includes information on how to properly wash and care for Black hair.

My Hair is Beautiful (2019)

by Shauntay Grant



The perfect book for little ones who like to look at faces, *My Hair is Beautiful* is geared at helping Black girls embrace their hair. Texturism and hair discrimination are obstacles that Black women experience both inside and outside their community, making this book both welcome and necessary as it promotes confidence, self-love, and diversity of hairstyles, hair textures, and skin tones. A mirror at the back of the book invites the reader to name themselves as "Beautiful."

My Soca Birthday Party: With Jollof Rice and Steel Pans (2020)

by Yolanda T. Marshall,

Illustrated by Subi Bosa



A fun and inclusive story about classmates planning a surprise birthday party for their friend, Anne. Anne loves jollof rice, her favourite West African dish, and her classmates share their favourite rice dish from their own cultures. It turns out they all have a rice dish, a type of fried bread, and music or dancing to share. Back matter includes the definitions of items mentioned in the story, a recipe for jollof rice, and various flags across the African and South Asian diaspora.

Nana's Cold Days (2002)

by Adwoa Badoe,

Illustrated by Bushra Junaid



Ken and Rama have been looking forward to their Nana's visit from Africa for months. When she arrives in the middle of winter, she covers herself in three blue top sheets, three red blankets, and three pink comforters! Nothing entices Nana from her cozy nest, until she comes down with croup. Nana quickly takes the situation in hand, solving her own and everyone else's problems.

Njinga of Ndongo and Matamba (2021)

by Ekiuwa Aire,

Illustrated by Natalia Popova



Part of the *Our Ancestories* series, this is the story of Queen Njinga, the queen of two African kingdoms part of modern-day Angola in the 1600s. Queen Njinga defied the odds, stood up for herself and her people, and led with leadership, equality, and sacrifice.

Not Quite Snow White (2019)

by Ashley Franklin,

Illustrated by Ebony Glenn



Tameika can't wait to audition for her school play, *Snow White*. When she hears her classmates saying she's too tall, chubby, and Black to be Snow White, she is devastated. With support from her parents, Tameika is able to thrive despite what the other kids say.

Old Mikamba Had a Farm (2013)

by Rachel Isadora



Old Mikamba Had a Farm, as with other Rachel Isadora books, is a reimagining of a classic in an African setting. In this version, Mikamba has a plethora of grassland animals instead of more familiar farm animals. Back matter gives readers more information about the animals featured.

One Day in the Eucalyptus, Eucalyptus Tree (2016)

by Daniel Bernstrom,
Illustrated by Brendan Wenzel



One day in the Eucalyptus Tree, a boy and his whirly toy go on an adventure inside the belly of a snake. In the spirit of *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly* by Simms Taback, Daniel Bernstrom's tale comes to life with the help of magical illustrations from Caldecott-winning artist Brendan Wenzel. Funny, repetitious, beautifully illustrated, with dynamic text and a rhythmic tone, this makes for a perfect storytime picture book.

Oscar Lives Next Door: A Story Inspired by Oscar Peterson's Childhood (2015)

by Bonnie Farmer,
Illustrated by Marie Lafrance



A historical fiction story told from the perspective of Oscar Peterson's fictional neighbour, Millie. A love letter to the neighbourhood of Saint-Henri, known as Little Burgundy in Montreal, this beautifully illustrated picture book explores a difficult time in Oscar's life – diagnosed with TB as a child, his slow recovery, and inability to play the trumpet anymore. This well-thought-out book includes cityscapes, train porters, a detailed author's note and further readings.

Over and Under the Pond (2017)

by Kate Messner,
Illustrated by Christopher Silas Neal



A mother and son paddle a rowboat around the pond and observe everything living above and below the water's surface. Onomatopoeia and sound words are used throughout to describe the sounds of birds, mammals, and fish as they are observed. A fantastic introduction to nature, ecosystems, and pond life, back matter includes description of each animal and further reading.

Parker Looks Up: An Extraordinary Moment (2019)

by Parker Curry and Jessica Curry,
Illustrated by Bea Jackson



Jessica Curry didn't know how much a visit to the museum with her daughters would change their lives. As they were leaving, Parker looked up and saw the stunning painting of Michelle Obama in the National Portrait Gallery. Parker is spellbound and struck by the realization that her own life is full of possibilities. Based on a true story and written by Parker and Jessica Curry, this book demonstrates the importance of representation.

Pierre & Paul: Avalanche! (2020)

by Caroline Adderson,
Illustrated by Alice Carter



A bilingual (English and French) picture book about two friends, one Black and one White. They love to pretend to be explorers but get hungry and need to pause their adventures to eat. Pierre only speaks French in the story, and Paul only speaks English, but they have no trouble understanding each other, and encouraging each other to be adventurous and brave.

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Phoebe Sounds It Out (2017)

by Julie Zwillich,
Illustrated by Denise Holmes



Sometimes a "PH" can make the sound of an "F". That can be tricky if you're learning to spell! Phoebe wants to spell her name, and her teacher tells her to sound it out. The result isn't quite right. *Phoebe Sounds It Out* is a great read for anyone who is learning to read and for those of us who need to be reminded that we don't always have to get it right on the first try.

A Place Inside of Me: A Poem to Heal the Heart (2020)

by Zetta Elliott,
Illustrated by Noa Denmon



Feeling anger and fear in the aftermath of a police shooting in his community, one Black teen moves through his emotions over the course of a year to healing, peace, compassion, and self-love.

Please, Baby, Please (2002)

by Spike Lee and Tonya Lewis Lee,
Illustrated by Kadir Nelson



A day-in-the-life story of a family with a toddler. Younger children will enjoy the stunning illustrations and the phrasal repetition; older children will appreciate the hilarious antics; and adults will appreciate the reflection of their own daily toddler struggles. The clock face at the beginning of each piece of text shows the passage of time, from an energetic little one at 3am to begs-for-out-of-bed-kisses at 10pm.

Princess Hair (2014)

by Sharee Miller



A charming read, *Princess Hair* features different types of densities and styles of hair, and different types of princesses too. From Afros to locs, and from baking to running, these princesses have it all. Celebrate your Princess Hair!

The Proudest Blue:

A Story of Hijab and Family (2019)

by Ibtihaj Muhammad and S.K. Ali,
Illustrated by Hatem Aly



Faizah knows the first day of school is going to be special: she has a new backpack and new light up shoes, and Faizah's older sister Asiya is also wearing something new: her hijab. Faizah spends her whole day watching Asiya and her beautiful ocean blue hijab as Asiya is strong in the face of hurtful and confusing words and stands proud of who she is and her choices. A powerful, vibrantly illustrated story by Olympic medalist and social justice activist Ibtihaj Muhammad.

Puppy Truck (2019)

by Brian Pinkney



Carter wants a puppy. Carter has a toy truck. What does Carter do? He imagines Puppy Truck, of course! Puppy Truck can bark, play, and even chase squirrels. A perfect choice for storytime!

Rocket Says Look Up! (2019)

by Nathan Bryon,
Illustrated by Dapo Adeola



Rocket is obsessed with space! On the day of a meteor shower, Rocket manages to convince her whole neighbourhood (except her grumpy teenage brother) to look up and watch the skies. Rocket's tenacity and zest makes her a loveable character and makes this book a fantastic read.

The Rolling Hills Residence Stories:

My Name is Blessing (2013)

Today is the Day (2015)

Hope Springs (2014)

by Eric Walters,

Illustrated by Eugenie Fernandes



In *My Name is Blessing*, Muthini faces bullying and hardships not only because of his missing fingers, but also because his name means "suffering". When Muthini changes his name to Baraka, which means "blessing", he has new hope for the future.

In *Today is the Day*, Mutanu is excited about the annual birthday celebration at the orphanage. Many children arrive at the orphanage and don't know when their birthday is, so once a year they all celebrate together.

In *Hope Springs*, Boniface is tasked with fetching water from the spring in the valley. There isn't enough water for everyone who needs it, and Boniface is sent away empty handed. Boniface learns that when people are afraid and desperate, it is often hard for them to be kind. When the new well is finished at the orphanage, Boniface suggests they help the villagers in the valley get better access to water. "We are not desperate... so perhaps we can be kind."

The Rolling Hills Residence for Orphaned Children sparked the Creation of Hope foundation, a charitable foundation that Eric and Anita Walters are still involved with in Mbooni, Kenya. All Rolling Hills stories are based on true stories of hope, kindness, and the real children Eric Walters has met during the time he's spent at the Rolling Hills Residence.

Ruth and the Green Book (2010)

by Calvin A. Ramsey and Gwen Strauss,
Illustrated by Floyd Cooper



Ruth and her parents leave their home in Chicago to visit Ruth's grandmother in Alabama. As they drive, Ruth starts to notice differences along the road, and fewer places where she and her family are welcome. Ruth learns about "a bunch of ugly laws" called Jim Crow, the Esso stations that will help them, and The Green Book that will be their guide. With beautiful illustrations by Floyd Cooper that bring history to life, *Ruth and the Green Book* is fantastic historical fiction about an innovative and important resource that helped to keep many people of colour safe in a very dangerous era.

Santa's Husband (2017)

by Daniel Kibblesmith,

Illustrated by Ashley Quach



In *Santa's Husband*, Santa is a Black man married to a White man named David. The book talks about how David helps with Santa's work, the labour disputes they've negotiated, their hobbies and the fact that for a long time, their union wasn't legal. A charming picture book with fictional characters portrayed in different ways and intersectional identities.

Saturday (2019)

by Oge Mora



Saturdays are special: Ava and her mom spend the whole day doing things they love. This Saturday, everything goes wrong! Despite the challenges, they are reminded of what's most important thing: spending time together. A heartwarming and relatable story about a working mother and her daughter.

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Sharing a Smile (2021)

by Nicki Kramar,

Illustrated by Ashley Evans



Sophie used to love playing outside with her friends and neighbours, but now, going outside means wearing a mask, and keeping her distance from her playmates. Sophie can no longer tell who is smiling and who isn't, and it makes her uncomfortable and worried. When Sophie realizes she isn't the only one who is feeling a bit scared, she comes up with an idea to do something special for the people in her neighbourhood. With her grandpa's help, she tries to spread kindness and courage with a smile.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about scary situations and traumatic experiences.

The Snowy Day (1962)

by Ezra Jack Keats



This Caldecott Medal winning classic follows Peter, a little boy who wakes up to find it has snowed during the night. Outside, he has an adventure in the freshly fallen snow. That night, he has a dream that all the snow melted, but when he wakes up, he finds more snow has fallen overnight, and there is new snow to discover.

Something's Fishy (2017)

by Kevin McCloskey



There are lots of different types of fish—some fish breathe air, some fly. All are amazing, but the best of all is the fish you have at home. *Something's Fishy* explores the common goldfish and uses science, art, and comedy to create an engaging story for emerging readers, and anyone who loves to laugh.

Squeak, Rumble, Whomp!

Whomp! Whomp! (2012)

by Wynton Marsalis,

Illustrated by Paul Rogers



The sights and sounds of New Orleans come to life in the text and illustrations of *Squeak, Rumble, WHOMP! WHOMP! WHOMP!* A wonderful book to read aloud to listen and discover the sounds of everyday life, and the music that is made.

Swashby and the Sea (2020)

by Beth Ferry,

Illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal



Swashby and the Sea has everything: a loveable curmudgeonly pirate, an interracial and intergenerational friendship, and all things beach related! Emerging readers will find the mixed messages hilarious with lots of opportunities to work on new words.

Thank You, Omu! (2018)

by Oge Mora



What is that delectable smell? It's Omu's (Ah-moo's) Red Stew! People from all around the neighbourhood come looking for a taste of Omu's delicious smelling stew. Featuring concepts such as sharing, helping others, and the beautiful value of food, Oge Mora's *Thank You, Omu!* captures the hustle and bustle of a busy multicultural city while showcasing multiple ethnicities, personalities, and occupations.

There Was a Tree (2012)

by Rachel Isadora



A take on *The Green Grass Grew All Around* or *The Rattlin' Bog* that has been popularized by everyone from Barney to The Wiggles, *There Was a Tree* takes place in a lush African landscape and a beautiful acacia tree. Following in the tradition of Rachel Isadora's other books, vibrant collages are teamed with cumulative lyrics to create an irresistible song.

This Makes Me Happy (2018)

by Courtney Carbone,
Illustrated by Hilli Kushnir



Part of the *Dealing with Feelings* series of levelled readers, *This Makes Me Happy* follows a young girl on a field trip to the fair with her school. It's a wonderful day with many happy moments, but even the happiest of days can have unhappy moments. Designed to help give voice to emotions that may be difficult for children to articulate, this levelled reader helps name and read their emotions.

Tomorrow Most Likely (2019)

by Dave Eggers,
Illustrated by Lane Smith



Rhyming couplets are paired with beautiful illustrations to allow readers to explore just what tomorrow might bring. Encourages all readers to use their imagination to ponder, what in the world you could do tomorrow.

Ty's Travels: All Aboard (2020)

by Kelly Starling Lyons,
Illustrated by Nina Mata



Ty longs for someone to play with, but before dinnertime everyone in Ty's family is just too busy. Ty decides it's time for fun! Aimed at emerging readers with rhythmic text and bright exuberant artwork, *Ty's Travels* is perfect for sharing.

Unbound: A Novel in Verse (2016)

by Ann E. Burg



Tuck your thoughts deep, keep them private in your mind, and don't look up. That was Uncle Jim's advice when Grace is called from the slave cabins to work in the Big House largely because of the colour of her skin. Grace wonders why her skin isn't dark like her mother; instead, her lighter skin has separated her from her family. When Grace's thoughts accidentally escape, her words set in motion a series of consequences that mean Grace and her family must flee for their lives and their freedom to the Great Dismal Swamp.

Under My Hijab (2019)

by Hena Khan,
Illustrated by Aaliya Jaleel



Under My Hijab follows our narrator as she talks about the women in her life and the different ways they wear hijab. The story is written in pleasant rhyming couplets and impeccably illustrated. The author's note in the back talks about why women choose to wear hijab and how it's as personal as the woman wearing it. A joyful celebration of culture, beauty, and being true to yourself.

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Up Home (2009)

by Shauntay Grant,

Illustrated by Susan Tooke



Shauntay Grant's poetical text takes us back to her childhood of summer joys in the community of North Preston, Nova Scotia. Susan Tooke's brilliantly bold accompanying illustrations make the reader feel as though they are part of the narrative, sharing the author's memories, climbing trees, picking blueberries, and listening to Nana's stories of how Maroons, Loyalists, and refugees made their way to freedom in Nova Scotia.

The Very Last Castle (2018)

by Travis Jonker,

Illustrated by Mark Pett



In Ibb's town, there is a castle. No one knows what's behind the castle walls, but everyone in town has their own ideas. When Ibb is invited into the castle, it is more amazing than she could have believed. A lovely story about a brave and curious girl, a kind and shy knight, and the ways in which people create stories for themselves.

Wakanda Forever! (2021)

by Julia March



Welcome to the astounding Kingdom of Wakanda, home of the Black Panther! Learn about the many heroes of this country, including T'Challa, his brilliant sister Shuri, and the fierce Dora Milaje warriors that protect Wakanda from the rest of the world. Simple vocabulary, dynamic pictures, and lots of fun facts will keep young readers engaged and excited to learn more.

The Water Princess (2016)

by Susan Verde,

Illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds



In Georgie's village, men and boys don't have to get up early and walk three hours (there and back) to fetch water everyday, but Georgie and the other girls and women do. Georgie, or Gie Gie, imagines herself as a princess who can control everything around her—except water, which refuses to listen. *The Water Princess* is a story based on the childhood experiences of model and activist Georgie Badiel and the need for clean water in many African villages.

Ways to Make Sunshine (2020)

by Renée Watson,

Illustrated by Nina Mata



Ryan Hart is a vivacious young Black girl who will not let life bring her down. Despite the hardships of her life, from her father losing his job to being teased for having a boy's name, Ryan does her best to face the world with optimism! Renée Watson creates a spunky heroine reminiscent of Junie B. Jones and Ramona Quimby. Each chapter tells a new story that does not shy away from addressing race and gender but approaches each subject with the kind of heart that will make its Black female readers feel seen and appreciated. The first in the Ryan Hart series.

We're Different, We're the Same (1992)

by Bobbi Jane Kates,

Illustrated by Joe Mathieu



Join beloved and familiar Sesame Street characters, as well as a cast of diverse humans, as they explore the things that make us different and yet, make us the same.

We March (2012)

by Shane W. Evans



We March follows an ordinary family on an extraordinary day as they participate in the 1963 March on Washington. Many words have been written about that day, but few so delicate and powerful as those presented here. When combined with his simple yet compelling illustrations, the thrill of the day is brought to life for even the youngest reader to experience.

We Move Together (2021)

by Kelly Fritsch,

Illustrated by Eduardo Trejos



In *We Move Together*, we follow a diverse group of mixed-ability children and their families as they overcome everyday barriers and come together to connect with the disabled community. Whether it's solving accessibility issues or preparing for a protest, the book provides young readers with a wonderful example of a community working together to ensure everyone's needs are met.

When Aidan Became a Brother (2019)

by Kyle Lukoff,

Illustrated by Kaylani Juanita



Aiden was born a girl but the older he gets, the more he realizes he needs to make some changes. When Aidan finds out he's going to have a new sibling, he begins to worry. What if they are also misunderstood like he was? *When Aidan Became a Brother* is a fantastic book to introduce and explore the concept of transgender identity featuring stunning illustrations and carefully written, honest text.

When Mom's Away (2021)

by Layla Ahmad,

Illustrated by Farida Zaman



When Mom's Away explores the very real and timely challenges of families and the COVID-19 pandemic. Our protagonist's mom is a doctor during COVID-19 and to keep her and her family safe, mom quarantines in the garage. Her dad takes care of her while Mom's away. A very real look into the struggles and resilience of families during an unprecedented time.

When's My Birthday (2017)

by Julie Fogliano,

Illustrated by Christian Robinson



Readers follow the protagonist as they contemplate their birthday and all the ways that they would like to celebrate it. Paper cut illustrations are fun and engaging.

The Word Collector (2018)

by Peter H. Reynolds



Jerome loves words. He loves the sound of them, learning the meaning of them, and most importantly, collecting them. One day, when Jerome accidentally spills his word collection, he is astounded to see how powerful and creative the words are when connected side-by-side. To share this powerful knowledge, Jerome tosses his collection into the wind and hopes that the poems, songs, and stories that others create from these words will help them express themselves to the world. A truly heartfelt story about the beauty of words and finding your voice, complete simple, affecting illustrations in Reynold's signature art style.

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Wordplay (2017)

by Ivan Brunetti



Fun and funny, *Wordplay* is a levelled reader that focuses on young girls learning about compound words. Annemarie imagines all sorts of hilarious visuals for the representations of compound words such as homework, housework, and playground.

Your Mama (2021)

by NoNieqa Ramos,

Illustrated by Jacqueline Alcantara



If you remember "your mama" jokes, you'll appreciate this book, which turns those jokes into an ode to hilarious, vivacious, strong, and tough mamas everywhere. The playful rhythm and fun text are enjoyable for children and provide a deeper meaning to the adults reading it.

Your Name is a Song (2020)

by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow,

Illustrated by Luisa Uribe



Names are important. Names have meaning. They are a part of us and often the first word we recognize. They stay with us all our lives. *Your Name is a Song* celebrates the importance of names, reminding us about the history, beauty, and magic of these words and the importance of taking the time to learn how to pronounce the names of others correctly, and to teach others how to pronounce our name correctly.

Non-Fiction

While we feel that these are titles which would be appropriate for readers in Kindergarten to Grade 3, these books would also be appropriate and may be of interest to Grade 4 to 6 readers.

The ABCs of Black History (2020)

by Rio Cortez,

Illustrated by Lauren Semmer



The ABCs of Black History is an alphabet book that presents key names, moments, and places in Black history with simple, lyrical text. Children of all ages can learn their ABCs beyond the usual words such as apple, boy, and cat.

Hansel and Gretel (2009)

by Rachel Isadora



Set in Africa, Rachel Isadora's *Hansel and Gretel* breathes new life into a familiar story. The author keeps close to the original Brothers Grimm dark story, using her distinctive paper-cut style illustrations to create something special, and a truly frightening witch.

The Nutmeg Princess (1992)

by Richardo Keens-Douglas



Aglo and Petal live on the fictitious Isle of Spice and listen to stories about a mysterious Princess that appears on the island every year when the nutmeg is at its best. Excited to meet the Princess, Aglo and Petal travel up the mountain at night and wait for her arrival. Strangely, only Aglo can see her, and news of the Princess's appearance, especially the diamonds in her hair, attract other greedy villagers to search for her. This fable about selflessness is accompanied by detailed illustrations.

On the Playground: Our First Talk About Prejudice (2019)

by Jillian Roberts,

Illustrated by Jane Heinrichs



Part of *The World Around Us* series, a series that explores complex cultural, social, and environmental issues in accessible ways, *On the Playground: Our First Talk About Prejudice* introduces the topic of prejudice and diversity as a topic of conversation for educators and caregivers. Includes helpful back matter, questions, answers, and ways children can help to spread a message of inclusion and acceptance to the world around them.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: race, racism, and racial justice.

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Our Skin: A First Conversation About Race (2021)

by Megan Madison, Jessica Ralli, and
Isabel Roxas



Research has shown that we should talk to children as young as toddlers about race, gender, consent, and body positivity. *Our Skin* is part of a series of board books that helps adults talk to children about these topics in a safe, supported, and informative way. The books help increase self-awareness, self-esteem, and allow children to recognize behaviours and words they think are unfair or wrong. Beautifully illustrated and interactive, *Our Skin* is engaging and informative, including back matter with additional resources and ways to support discussion.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: race, racism, and racial justice.

Rapunzel (2008)

by Rachel Isadora



Rapunzel is a faithful retelling of the classic Brothers Grimm story of a beautiful girl trapped in a tower by a sorceress. Illustrated using her distinctive paper-cut style illustrations, Rachel Isadora captures Rapunzel's beauty in a vibrant African setting.

Rhinos for Lunch and Elephants for Supper! (1992)

by Tololwa M. Mollel,

Illustrated by Barbara Spurll



A folktale from the Maasai of East Africa, *Rhinos for Lunch and Elephants for Supper!* is a humorous story about being scared, having the courage to be brave, having a sense of humour, and standing up for yourself and others. *Rhinos for Lunch and Elephants for Supper!* could be used for storytime or as a felt or oral story for additional audience engagement.

Sometimes People March (2020)

by Tessa Allen



Some people march for change. Some people march for freedom. And some people wonder why people march at all. This book is a great tool for even the youngest of us learning about the changes in our world, finding strength in numbers, and standing up for what is right. Complete with a glossary that explores the many people, places, and movements that inspired marches around the world, this book is a wonderful way to introduce children to the reasons people march.

When I Grow Up I'll Be a Paleontologist (2016)

by Connie Colwell Miller,

Illustrated by Silvia Baroncelli



Part of the *When I Grow Up* series, which features children from diverse backgrounds exploring different careers, *I'll Be a Paleontologist* follows a little boy excited about digging, bones, and preservation. Includes a glossary of terms future paleontologists should know, as well as a recipe for how to create your own fossil.

Upper Elementary – Grades 4 to 6

Fiction

While we feel that these are titles which would be appropriate for readers in Grades 4 to 6, some of these books would also be appropriate and may be of interest to Grade 7 to 9 readers, particularly the non-fiction resources.

Alabaster Shadows (2015)

by Matt Gardner and Rashad Doucet



The neighbourhood of *Alabaster Shadows* is... strange. Carter and Polly move to the new housing development and things just don't seem quite right. There's a leak in the cellar that seems to hang in mid-air, the adults all seem zombie-like, and worst of all is mean Miss Crowe. They need to act fast and uncover the mystery behind *Alabaster Shadows* before it's too late!

Before the Ever After (2020)

by Jacqueline Woodson



ZJ's dad is a football hero but lately, he is angry all the time, and has trouble remembering things. ZJ's mom explained that the injuries ZJ's dad received during his football career caused a disease called CTE. ZJ tries to balance memories of the good old days, with questioning why the past even matters if his dad doesn't even remember it existed. Inspired by the research of Dr. Omalu into Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE), *Before the Ever After* shows the effects CTE can have on a family.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: mental health and a parent with mental health issues.

Black Boy Joy (2021)

by Kwame Mbalia



A collection of short stories and poems for readers of all ages that celebrate being a young Black boy, in a vein similar to Jon Scieska's *Guys Read* books. This is a fantastic starting place for readers trying to figure out what type of stories or fiction they enjoy, with various genres include contemporary, science fiction, fantasy, historical, poetry, graphic novel, LGBTQ+ representation. Biographies and works listed are included for each author.

Black Brother, Black Brother (2020)

by Jewell Parker Rhodes



Donte and his brother Trey are bi-racial: their mom is Black, and their dad is white. While Trey can pass as white, Donte cannot. Being the Black brother causes tension between Donte and Trey, Donte and his teachers, who in Donte's mind wish he was more like his even tempered and quiet brother, and Donte and his classmates, particularly Donte's bully and tormentor Alan. Fed up, Donte decides that the best way to deal with Alan is to beat him at his own game: Fencing.

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Elijah of Buxton (2007)

by Christopher Paul Curtis



Elijah was the first free child born in Buxton, Ontario. Now eleven, Elijah has never known slavery, unlike the other residents of Buxton, including his own parents, all of whom are former or escaped slaves having arrived in Canada via the Underground Railroad. When Elijah's friend—who has been saving money to buy his family, still in the South, out of enforced bondage—is robbed, Elijah leaves his home to help track down the thief. Elijah learns firsthand about the horrors the residents of Buxton, and so many others who were lucky enough to escape, faced.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: slavery and enslavement, deciding when to have this conversation with young children, how to prepare for conversations about slavery and enslavement and for tips on how to teach children about slavery.

For Black Girls Like Me (2019)

by Mariama J. Lockington



When Keda was a baby, she was adopted by a white family. Now, at eleven, Keda struggles with friendship and family drama, witnessing mental health struggles and learning how to navigate a world that can be both cruel and kind, particularly for a Black girl growing up in a white family. Raw and real, honest and hopeful, *For Black Girls Like Me* is a powerful and engaging read.

From the Desk of Zoe Washington (2020)

by Janae Marks



What do you write to a man you've never met, even if he is your father? What do you say to a man who's in jail for a terrible crime that he says he didn't commit? Zoe has a lot on her mind: an internship at a bakery, trying to audition for the Food Network's Kids Bake Challenge, and Marcus, her father. Marcus is in jail but says he's innocent. Determined to discover the truth, Zoe embarks on a mystery while getting to know her father, and herself, better.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: incarceration, arrests, detainment, and systemic racism.

Genesis Begins Again (2019)

by Alicia D. Williams



Heartbreaking and beautiful, *Genesis Begins Again* explores deeply entrenched colourism, internalized racism, generational trauma, and emotional violence. Genesis has a list of exactly 96 things that she hates about herself. Everything from the dark colour of her skin to how her family is always being put out of their housing. At thirteen, that is a lot of hate. Will Genesis be able to let go of her list and find the strength to love herself? Or when she reaches one hundred, will she keep going?

Ghost Boys (2018)

by Jewell Parker Rhodes



At twelve years old, Jerome was shot by a police officer who mistook his toy gun for a real one. Now he is a ghost witnessing the aftermath of his death on his community and family. Jerome meets two people on his journey. First is another ghost, Emmett Till, a boy from a different time who died in similarly tragic circumstances. Second is Sarah, the daughter of the police officer who killed Jerome, who is also grappling with her father's actions. A heart wrenching book about how systemic racism has existed for centuries and how future generations can aim to break the cycle.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: race, racism, systemic violence, police brutality, death, violence, and loss.

Go with the Flow (2020)

by Lily Williams and Karen Schneemann



When Sasha has a period emergency, friends Abby, Brit, and Christine come to the rescue, only to find the public dispenser empty. Why does the school have money for new football uniforms again this year, but not menstrual hygiene items? Why are questions about female health met with shrugs or squirms? *Go With The Flow* is a story about friendship, bodies, and period inequality. Back matter includes further discussions and other information.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: periods and puberty.

Check out No Period Without a local Edmonton Campaign to ensure that no one in Edmonton has a period without the hygiene products they need.

A Good Kind of Trouble (2019)

by Lisa Moore Ramée



Twelve-year-old Shayla stays out of trouble, follows the rules and makes absolutely no waves. When she starts middle school, she is exposed to the world of racial injustice and police brutality. Shayla begins to realize that sometimes you need to stand up to injustice. Sometimes you need to be loud. Sometimes you need to get into a good kind of trouble.

Home of the Brave (2007)

by Katherine Applegate



Kek, a young boy from Sudan, has moved to Minnesota to live with aunt and cousin. While adjusting to his new home, the new food, and the language, Kek meets a farmer named Lou who offers him a job on his farm. Kek immediately connects with the animals, but especially the cows, Kek's favourite. Through the kindness, patience, and love of those around him, Kek starts to heal, adjust, and find new joys in this strange (and cold) place.

How Lamar's Bad Prank Won A Bubba-Sized Trophy (2011)

by Crystal Allen



At thirteen years old, Lamar is the "King of the Strikers." Unable to play basketball like his superstar brother due to his asthma, Lamar has found his lane at the bowling alley. When Lamar gets involved in a shady deal, his integrity, best friend, brother's basketball career, and chance at getting to know the girl of his dreams are all at stake! Now Lamar needs to roll a strike before he strikes out.

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Hurricane Child (2018)

by Kacen Callender



In St. Thomas, being born during a hurricane is bad luck. For twelve-year-old Caroline Murphy—abandoned by her mother, bullied for her darker skin at school, and dogged by a ghost only she can see—that was where her bad luck started. When Kalinda arrives, a new student from Barbados with a smile for everyone and no time for bullies, Caroline's luck begins to turn, until she realizes her feelings towards Kalinda aren't platonic. For Caroline, life is rarely what it seems. Beautiful and immersive, *Hurricane Child* will stay with readers long after putting the book down.

Illegal (2017)

by Eoin Colfer and Andrew Donkin,

Illustrated by Giovanni Rigano



Heartbreaking, poignant, and thought-provoking, *Illegal* is the story of Ebo, a young boy who loses and finds his family members during his harrowing journey across the Sahara Desert to Italy. While some imagery could be unsettling or upsetting for a younger audience, *Illegal* shows an honest depiction of the ongoing humanitarian issues of immigration, people smuggling, desperation, and hope for the future.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: immigration, immigration laws, incarceration, refugees, death, violence, and loss.

King and the Dragonflies (2020)

by Kacen Callender



Grappling with his grief, twelve-year-old King spends his spare time in the bayou searching for his dead brother, Khalid, who King believes has become a dragonfly. Before he died, Khalid urged King to stay away from Sandy Sanders, King's best friend, or else people might think King was also gay. His brother's words stung, and worse, King wonders if he should be ashamed of what he feels deep inside. A story about love, honour, grief, magic, and being true to yourself.

Lemonade Code (2021)

by Jarod Pratt,

Illustrated by Jey Odin



Robbie Reynolds is a genius. When Robbie finds himself in need of funds to support his top-secret project, he decides he'll set up a lemonade stand. The Automatista will concoct the lemonade flavour of your dreams! When Daphne Du-Ri sets up a rival lemonade stand across the way, Robbie can't figure out what it is about Daphne's lemonade that's making them come back for more. Exciting to children interested in science, and hilarious to everyone, *Lemonade Code* is sure delight.

The Length of String (2018)

by Elissa Brent Weissman



Imani has always known she was adopted: as a Black girl adopted by a white Jewish family, it was obvious. For her bat mitzvah gift, Imani wants to search for her birth parents. When Imani's great grandma Anna dies and Imani finds her old diary, Imani can't help herself. Anna's diary is from 1941, the year she was twelve and sent by her family from Nazi-occupied Luxembourg to live with distant relatives in Brooklyn. Switching between Anna and Imani's diaries, *The Length of String* shares Imani's struggles between wanting to find her own identity and learning that biology is not the most important aspect of what makes a family.

My Name is Konisola (2020)

by Alisa Siegel



My Name is Konisola is the bittersweet and intimate story of nine-year-old Konisola, who arrived with her mother to a harsh Canadian winter with nothing but the clothing they travelled in. Soon after they arrive Konisola's mother gets sick, leaving Konisola alone in a strange and freezing country.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: immigration, immigration laws, parental illness, sick parents, death, grief and grieving.

Once Upon an Eid: Stories of Hope and Joy by 15 Muslim Voices (2020)

Edited by S.K. Ali and Aisha Saeed,
by Randa Abdel-Fattah, Huda Al-Marashi,
Sara Alfageeh, Hanna Alkaf, Ashley
Franklin, Asmaa Hussein, Hena Khan,
Rukhsana Khan, Ayesha Mattu, Candice
Montgomery, N.H. Senzai, Jamilah
Thompkins-Bigelow and G. Willow Wilson



Full of relatable, diverse, and loveable characters, *Once Upon an Eid* is a collection of energetic short stories that highlights the talents of some of today's best Muslim writers for youth. Eid is a day to cherish family and celebrate together. It means different things to different people who celebrate the holiday, but joy is the word most common.

One Crazy Summer (2010)

by Rita Williams-Garcia



It's summer of 1968, and Brooklyn-born siblings Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern Gaither are visiting the mother they barely know in Oakland, California. Cecile left six years ago and now the sisters are learning to appreciate her unconventional mothering while they navigate a city full of systemic racism, unsupervised children, Black Panthers, and civil rights activists.

The Parker Inheritance (2018)

by Varian Johnson



Candice finds a letter, but it isn't for her—it's addressed to her grandmother, the first Black city planner in Lambert who left years ago in a cloud of scandal. Candice discovers an injustice from decades ago and a fortune waiting for the person who solves the puzzle. With the help of Brandon Jones, the boy next door, the puzzle will lead them through Lambert's ugly history and unspoken secrets, as the story moves seamlessly from present to past, and back again. A fun to read book with a puzzle to solve.

The Season of Styx Malone (2018)

by Keyla Magoon



Caleb and his older brother Bobby Gene are excited for a summer of fun and adventure, but what they don't count on is their new neighbour, Styx Malone. Styx is five years older and convinces Caleb and Bobby Gene that they will pull off the Great Escalator Trade this summer, trading one item for another until they end up with the item of their dreams! It sounds amazing, but there are some risks to following around a teenager; especially one who is secretive about his past. For adult readers, *The Season of Styx Malone* reads as nostalgic, similar to *Stranger Things* or *Stand By Me*, but for younger readers, it's just hilarious!

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The Skin I'm In (1998)

by Sharon G. Flake



Maleeka Madison has faced bullies because of the colour of her skin. Maleeka Madison has been humiliated because of the colour of her skin. Maleeka Madison has had enough. Maleeka Madison is beautiful and will not let others define who she is or how she feels about herself. *The Skin I'm In* is a book about believing in yourself and having faith even when things are difficult.

Some Places More Than Others (2019)

by Renée Watson



Amara yearns to learn more about who she is and her place in the world. She has loving and wonderful parents, but who is she? Where does she come from? When Amara can finally visit her father's family in Harlem, she cannot wait! She's going to learn all about her father's family and see everything in Harlem, from the Apollo to Langston Hughes' home. When she gets there, things are not quite what Amara anticipated, and she realizes how connecting to family, history, places, and our roots is a journey of its own.

Team Fugee (2018)

by Dirk McLean



When Ozzie's parents disappeared from their home in Nigeria, he and his sister Rebecca were taken to an orphanage. Now Ozzie and Rebecca live in Scarborough, Canada with their adoptive family, and Ozzie plays soccer with some other Nigerian kids. Their team mostly competes against a group of largely Syrian refugees, led by Victor. Ozzie and Victor both love soccer, but tempers flare when their teams can't share the field. Both players and teams will need to put aside their differences for the love of the game, to save the tournament, and show that two groups of resilient refugees can unite into one.

Twins (2020)

by Varian Johnson,

Illustrated by Shannon Wright



Twin sisters Maureen and Francine are headed to the sixth Grade. The twins do everything together, until Francine ends up in several classes, and even lunch period, without Maureen. Maureen has a difficult time adjusting and finds herself lacking the confidence needed to make new friends. She is encouraged to apply to run for student council, but Francine is also running and the two find themselves at odds. The sisters struggle to balance being an individual and maintaining the closeness that they have as sisters. They also begin to recognize that even as twins, there will be feelings and experiences that they can't share.

The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963 (1995)

by Christopher Paul Curtis



The summer Kenny is ten, his older brother Byron gets into some trouble. To try to set him straight, the whole Watson family sets out on a road trip to visit their grandmother in Alabama, for some old school straightening out. What happens that summer will change all their lives forever. Set against the backdrop of one of the darkest moments in America's history and the civil rights movement, *The Watsons' Go to Birmingham – 1963* is funny, poignant, and heartfelt. Full of adolescent antics, the Watsons are just like any other family, with lives full of mayhem, life lessons, humour, and hilarious sibling dynamics, all while exploring one of the most difficult time periods for African Americans.

Non-Fiction

While we feel that these are titles which would be appropriate for readers in Grades 4 to 6, some of these books would also be appropriate and may be of interest to Kindergarten to Grade 3 and Grade 7 to 9 readers.

28 Days: Moments that Changed the World (2015)

by Charles R. Smith Jr.,
Illustrated by Shane W. Evans



Featuring simple and bold illustrations that represent different influential figures in African American history including Crispus Attucks, the first man shot in the Boston Massacre, which sparked the Revolutionary War, Madame C. J. Walker, who became one of the wealthiest people in America and Barack Obama, the country's first African American President.

Amazing Black Atlantic Canadians: Inspiring Stories of Courage and Achievement (2021)

by Lindsay Ruck,
Illustrated by James Bentley



Featuring the stories and accomplishments, past and present, of over 50 amazing Black people from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Among these are people who saved lives, set sports records, achieved international superstardom, made change in their own neighbourhoods, overcame injustice, and enacted many other inspiring deeds of courage and perseverance.

Black Women Who Dared (2018)

by Naomi M. Moyer



Bringing to life the stories of anti-slavery activists, radical healers, and community organizers, *Black Women Who Dared* explores and celebrates the lives and contributions of ten Black Canadian women throughout Canada's history. Stunning illustrations by the author showcase each woman in various tribal markings associated with pre-colonial Africa.

Born Curious: 20 Girls Who Grew Up to Be Awesome Scientists (2020)

by Martha Freeman,
Illustrated by Katy Wu



A collection of 20 biographical sketches about female scientists who had a passionate desire to unravel the marvels of the universe. Includes engaging anecdotes about the childhood experiences that shaped each of these amazing scientists and mathematicians.

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***Buzzing with Questions:
The Inquisitive Mind of Charles
Henry Turner (2019)***

by Janice N. Harrington,
Illustrated by Theodore Taylor



Buzzing with Questions is a picture book biography of scientist and zoologist Charles Henry Turner, whose curiosity knew no limits. The book introduces Charles and teaches children about the scientific process and asking lots of questions! The text is straightforward, and the art is vibrant and engaging.

***Call and Response:
The Story of Black Lives Matter
(2021)***

by Veronica Chambers



Veronica Chambers presents the incredible history of The Black Lives Matter movement with facts, narratives, quotes, and photographs of the protests, memorials, and marches. Chronicling the histories of the three female founders, the book tells the story of how #blacklivesmatter spread around the world.

***Canadian Celebrations:
Black History Month (2021)***

by Cynthia J. O'Brien



Through a lens of Black History Month in Canada, the book showcases the various ways people celebrate the cultures, contributions, and lives of Black identifying Canadians.

A Change of Heart (2016)

by Alice Walsh,
Illustrated by Erin Bennett Banks



Growing up in Georgia under the Jim Crow segregation laws, Lanier Phillips hoped that joining the navy when WWII broke out would help him find equality, but segregation was in the navy too. Lanier had just about lost all hope when his ship began to sink. The Black sailors were too afraid of the hatred and violence that might wait for them on shore and chose to stay on the sinking ship. Lanier took a chance on a raft, and when the sailors came ashore in Newfoundland, Lanier found something different. The Newfoundlanders treated them all, even Lanier, as heroes. For the first time, Lanier didn't feel judged by the colour of his skin and much of his resentment disappeared. The kindness the Newfoundlanders showed him as he recovered, gave him hope, and a change of heart.

The Children of Africville (2009)

by Christine Welldon



The children of Africville, Nova Scotia, lived in a community where everyone knew their neighbours and helped and cared for each other. At least they did, before Africville was demolished and its residents were forcefully relocated. *The Children of Africville* is the story of the children who lived there during the community's final years.

A Computer Called Katherine: How Katherine Johnson Helped Put America on the Moon (2019)

by Suzanne Slade,
Illustrated by Veronica Miller Jamison



Katherine Johnson loved math. In 1953, she started working at the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, which would later become NASA. This was rare for a woman, even more so for a Black woman. There Katherine worked as part of a team called "computers," a group of women who would do complex mathematical computations by hand and in their heads. These computers, and Katherine in particular, helped pioneer America's space program, and put a man on the moon. Written by Suzanne Slade, a Mechanical engineer who worked on NASA's Delta IV rockets, *A Computer Called Katherine* follows Katherine's early love of math, the struggles she faced as a Black woman in STEM, and her many accomplishments. Back matter includes pictures of Katherine Johnson and her work, a timeline, and author and illustrator notes explaining their connections to her story.

Earth Magic (1979)

by Dionne Brand,
Illustrated by Eugenie Fernandes



A collection of poems celebrating childhood, life growing up in the Caribbean, nature, and the beauty to be found in the place where you are.

Enslaved People in Canada (2019)

by Julie Kentner



Part of the *Black History in Canada (Coast 2 Coast 2 Coast)* series, *Enslaved People in Canada* explores how Black Canadians shaped Canadian history since the country was first colonized, including the struggles many early Black settlers faced, and how Black Canadians fought for equality throughout history. Readers will learn about the important contributions Black Canadians made from their initial arrival in colonial times through the present day.

Famous Black Canadians (2019)

by Ramona Heikel



Divided by date range rather than by individual, this book provides a good introduction into the Black Canadians who helped shape Canada. Index, glossary, and additional learning sections are critical to navigating this text.

Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table (2013)

by Jacqueline Briggs Martin,
Illustrated by Eric-Shabazz Larkin



Part of the *Food Heroes* series exploring sustainable and innovative food solutions, Farmer Will doesn't see things the way other people do. When he looks at an abandoned city lot in Milwaukee, he sees a huge table, heaped with food. Farmer Will knows that fresh vegetables are hard to find and expensive in the city, but he believes that everyone should have access to healthy food. Farmer Will revolutionized urban farming and now shares his ideas, innovations, and passion with other people.

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The Girl with a Mind for Math: The Story of Raye Montague (2018)

by Julia Finley Mosca,

Illustrated by Daniel Rieley



Raye Montague was determined to become an engineer. It started with a tour of a German submarine in the early 1940s, and after that, Raye was hooked. It didn't matter to her that people didn't think she could become an engineer because she was a girl or because of the colour of her skin. None of that mattered, because Raye was going to work hard, rise to the challenges, and fulfill her dream, even if it meant keeping the greatest accomplishment of her career a secret for decades. Back matter provides more facts, a timeline with pictures, and a bibliography where you can learn more about Raye.

Growing Up Great!: The Ultimate Puberty Book for Boys (2019)

by Scott Todnem



Informative, educational, and engaging, *Growing Up Great!* is an easy-to-read, age-appropriate book designed to help boys understand their changing bodies. The book uses simple, clear, non-judgmental language that focuses on self-respect and positive self-image. The primary focus of this book is how to take care of a changing body, including personal grooming, understand normal changes and when to see a doctor. There is also a section about consent and social media.

Harlem's Little Blackbird (2012)

by Renée Watson,

Illustrated by Christian Robinson



Florence Mills grew up with a big voice. A voice like thunder. A voice that would bring shivers to the spines of those who heard it. As a child, she loved to perform, and quickly word spread about her performances. Soon she was sought by theaters in Washington, D.C., the city of her birth. The family later moved to New York, and she appeared in vaudeville acts with her sisters, The Mills Sisters. Florence was the first African American to have a full portrait in *Vanity Fair* in 1925. A perfect marriage of words and mixed media illustrations.

Have I Ever Told You Black Lives Matter (2021)

by Shani Mahiri King,

Illustrated by Bobby C. Martin Jr.



Celebrating Black role models and successes in music, art, literature, journalism, politics, law, science, medicine, entertainment, and sports, *Have I Ever Told You Black Lives Matter* is an uplifting story about the achievements of 116 Blacks in America. Easy to glance through or read in-depth, back matter includes quotes and biographies for the featured Blacks.

Henry's Freedom Box (2007)

by Ellen Levine,

Illustrated by Kadir Nelson



Henry "Box" Brown is one of the most famous passengers of the Underground Railroad who mailed himself to freedom. A wrenching story about loss, redemption, and the price of freedom, this book is a fantastic introduction to the topics of slavery and the Underground Railroad, with stunning illustrations by Kadir Nelson.

Hidden Figures:

The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race (2018)

by Margot Lee Shetterly and Winifred Conkling,

Illustrated by Laura Freeman



Hidden Figures chronicles the lives of Mary Jackson, Dorothy Vaughn, Katherine Johnson, and Christine Darden and their time working for NASA. Mary, Dorothy, Katherine, and Christine are exceptional at math. In fact, they worked for NASA as "computers", people who did complex calculations in their head! Together, these women battled gender and racial barriers to help put America in space and on the moon.

Howdy, I'm John Ware and This is the Story of My Cowboy Life (2020)

by Ayesha Clough,

Illustrated by Hugh Rookwood



Howdy, I'm John Ware is a graphic novel biography recounting the life of former slave turned cowboy John Ware. Moving from Texas to Canada in the late 1800s, John's legend as one of the most talented, famous, and skilled horsemen was well earned. Back matter includes resources for educators, a timeline of John Ware's life, and helpful maps.

I Remember:

Poems and Pictures of Heritage (2019)

by Lee Bennett Hopkins, Janet S. Wong, Kwame Alexander, Margarita Engle, Douglas Florian, Naomi Shihab Nye, Jorge Tetl Argueta, Marilyn Nelson, Nick Bruel, G Neri, Jane Yolen, Joseph Bruchac, Carole Boston Weatherford, Illustrated by Sean Qualls, Simone Shin, Insoo Kim, Michele Wood, Paula Barragán, Neil Waldman, Jeanne Rorex Bridges, Sawsan Chalabi, Rafael López, R. Gregory Christie, Janine Macbeth, Charlotte Riley-Webb, Julie Downing, David Fadden, Daniel Minter, Juliet Menendez



The book features poems and illustrations from authors and illustrators of diverse backgrounds about heritage and remembrance. Each poet and illustrator explains the importance of their work and what it means to them. Includes topics of family, traditions, microaggressions, slice of life, the magic of childhood, heritage, and racism.

If Sharks Disappeared (2017)

by Lily Williams



If Sharks Disappeared explores what would happen if sharks were no longer part of the global ecosystem. Discussing topics such as overfishing, extinction, and ocean health in a clever and meaningful way appropriate for young readers, *If Sharks Disappeared* shows us that even something as scary as a shark deserves our care, consideration, and conservation.

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***Intersection Allies:
We Make Room for All (2019)***

by Chelsea Johnson, LaToya Council and
Carolyn Choi,

Illustrated by Ashley Seil Smith



Intersectionality explores the ways in which social categorizations such as race, gender, orientation, and class can overlap to create systems of discrimination or disadvantage. In *Intersection Allies*, readers are invited to learn more about intersectionality to recognize how we can better understand ourselves, our peers, and our communities. While the characters are all the same age, that is almost all they have in common, except for their unwavering support of each other. Back matter includes notes, discussion questions, further readings, and a letter to adults for how to make best use of the book.

***Josephine:
The Dazzling Life of Josephine
Baker (2013)***

by Patricia Hruby Powell,

Illustrated by Christian Robinson



An extraordinary portrait of the passionate performer and civil rights advocate Josephine Baker. With beautiful art and captivating word choice, the book brings to life the story of the woman who worked her way from the slums of St. Louis to the grandest stages of the world. Meticulously researched by author and artist, Josephine's powerful story of struggle and triumph is an inspiration.

***The Legendary Miss Lena Horne
(2017)***

by Carole Boston Weatherford,

Illustrated by Elizabeth Zunon



Before Lena Horne became a Hollywood starlet and a household name, she was a small child torn between the dreams of her grandmother and her mother. Lena's grandmother valued education, good manners, and Black pride, where Lena's mother had dreams of making it big and putting Lena on the stage. While Lena does take to the stage and become a star, she is able to honour both her mother and grandmother throughout her career, using her talents to break the glass ceiling and break down racial barriers with a microphone in her hand.

***A Likkle Miss Lou:
How Jamaican Poet Louise
Bennett Coverley Found Her Voice
(2019)***

by Nadia L. Hohn,

Illustrated by Eugenie Fernandes



An excellently written and illustrated depiction of Louise Bennett's early life that incorporates her unique style of poetry and use of Jamaican patois in her writing. Despite being mocked and derided by her teachers for her use of language and finding the beauty in the dialect of her people, Miss Lou kept writing and performing until she found a "safe place to share her beloved words" and a way to flourish into the poet and performer she was destined to become.

Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History (2017)

by Vashti Harrison



Featuring the biographies of abolitionists, pilots, chemists, poets, and role models, *Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History* highlights talented women who made a difference. The book balances mainstream Black leaders everyone will recognize with lesser-known figures who, equally important, trailblazed, broke boundaries, and achieved amazing things.

Little Legends: Exceptional Men in Black History (2019)

by Vashti Harrison



Featuring the biographies of aviators, politicians, artists, activists, and athletes, *Little Legends: Exceptional Men in Black History* highlights talented men who left their mark in their communities and in history. The book balances mainstream Black leaders everyone will recognize as well as lesser-known figures who, equally important, trailblazed, broke boundaries, and achieved amazing things.

Little People, Big Dreams: Martin Luther King Jr. (2020)

by Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara,
Illustrated by Mai Ly Degnan



Part of the *Little People, Big Dreams* series exploring the lives of outstanding people, Martin Luther King Jr. explores the life of the inspiring minister and civil rights activist. Little Martin grew up in a family of preachers—three preachers in two generations so maybe he'd become a preacher too. Martin promised himself that when he grew up, he'd fight injustice with the most powerful weapon of all: words. This moving book features stylish and quirky illustrations and extra facts at the back, including a biographical timeline with historical photos and a detailed profile of the inspiring activist's life.

Little People, Big Dreams: Rosa Parks (2017)

by Lisbeth Kaiser,
Illustrated by Marta Antelo



Part of the *Little People, Big Dreams* series exploring the lives of outstanding people, *Rosa Parks* explores the life of the inspiring civil rights activist. Little Rosa grew up in a family that valued respect for yourself and others, and standing up for your rights. When Rosa is asked to give up her bus seat to a white passenger, she courageously refuses. Rosa's refusal means she's arrested, but her act of civil defiance becomes a symbol and a rallying point for the civil rights movement.

Other titles in this series include Michael Jordan, Nelson Mandela, Prince, Muhammad Ali, Stevie Wonder, Harriet Tubman, Maya Angelou, Michelle Obama, and RuPaul.

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Marley Dias Gets It Done: And So Can You (2018)

by Marley Dias and Ava DuVernay



Marley Dias is the founder of #1000blackgirlbooks, part of the #WeNeedDiverseBooks movement, and part of the Grassroots Community Foundation. Part autobiography, part activist instruction manual, part guidebook for success, part resource guide, *Marley Dias Gets It Done* is readable as a book but organized like a magazine with columns and text boxes.

Meet Viola Desmond (2018)

by Elizabeth MacLeod,
Illustrated by Mike Deas



A thoughtful and clearly presented biography of Viola Desmond for young readers. Starting with a brief overview of Desmond's life but focusing on her fateful trip to Sydney in 1946, and the stop in New Glasgow that would change Canadian history. Viola Desmond and her sister Wanda are shown as a strong, independent woman, who stood up for what was right despite the racist societal norms that surrounded them.

Meet Willie O'Ree (2019)

by Elizabeth MacLeod,
Illustrated by Mike Deas



A comprehensive biography of Canadian Willie O'Ree, the first Black hockey player in the NHL. From O'Ree's childhood love of hockey, sports, and school, the book chronicles his frustration with the racism he and others experienced, highlights moments in his hockey career and ends on his work with the NHL Diversity Task Force. Concepts such as segregation, discrimination, and racism are addressed and explained in thoughtful, age-appropriate ways. The book also discusses the modern consequences to this behaviour in the professional sports world. Back matter includes a timeline.

Moses:

When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom (2006)

by Carole Boston Weatherford,
Illustrated by Kadir Nelson



Harriet Tubman made 19 trips to the South and freed nearly 300 people from slavery. In this lyrically crafted picture book, Harriet's story unfolds, and the voice of God guides Harriet on her journeys. Despite the constant danger and risk of being captured, Harriet never once lost a person she worked to free.

My Daddy Rules the World: Poems about Dads (2017)

by Hope Anita Smith



Celebrating the special relationship between fathers and children, the book includes dads of different races, denominations, and occupations. Told in the voice of the child, each poem shows how dads can be very different, but all love their children completely. The featureless illustrations allow readers to imagine themselves as the child and their father as the dad in each poem.

Out of Wonder: Poems Celebrating Poets (2017)

by Kwame Alexander, Chris Colderley,
and Marjory Wentworth,
Illustrated by Ekua Holmes



Beautifully illustrated with mixed media collage, *Out of Wonder* is a book of poetry to celebrate the art of poetry. Broken into themes, the poems celebrate famous poets whose words made the authors' hearts sing and minds wonder. Includes a brief biography of the poet each poem is dedicated to.

***Patricia's Vision:
The Doctor Who Saved Sight
(2020)***

by Michelle Lord,
Illustrated by Alleanna Harris



Patricia Bath had a dream of becoming an ophthalmologist, a medical doctor who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of injuries, infections, and diseases of the eye. She wasn't going to be deterred by people who told her she couldn't, just because of her gender or her skin colour. Instead, Patricia worked hard, always chose miracles, and spent her long career helping to restore sight to the blind. She co-founded the American Institute for the Prevention of Blindness, invented a specialized laser for removing cataracts, and became the first African American woman doctor to receive a medical patent.

***The People Could Fly:
American Black Folktales (1985)***

by Virginia Hamilton,
Illustrated by Leo Dillon and Diane Dillon



A sampling of carefully and respectfully retold tales in the anthology of 24 short stories complete with illustrations from Leo and Diane Dillon. Tales told include tricksters, fairy tales, supernatural tales, and the tales of enslaved Africans. Most importantly, every story provides a glimpse into the daily lives, fears, and hopes of people of colour during the time of slavery.

***The Revolution and the Black
Loyalists (2019)***

by Julie Kentner



Part of the *Black History in Canada (Coast 2 Coast 2 Coast)* series, *The Revolution and the Black Loyalists* explores the struggles many early Black settlers faced, and the ways Black Canadians fought for equality throughout history. Full of helpful research hints, highlighted glossary terms and text boxes containing additional facts and information, this book is a great starting place to learn more about the Black loyalists in Canada.

Rise Up! The Art of Protest (2019)

by Jo Rippon



Protests can make a difference, and the posters, images, and artwork of protest carry messages of resistance, hope, and a will for change. *Rise Up! The Art of Protest* explores the history of protest movements through the posters that came from the people standing up for change.

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Shaking Things Up: 14 Young Women Who Changed the World (2018)

by Susan Hood, Illustrated by Selina Alko,
Sophie Blackall, Lisa Brown, Hadley
Hooper, Emily Winfield Martin, Oge Mora,
Julie Morstad, Sara Palacios, LeUyen
Pham, Erin K. Robinson, Isabel Roxas,
Shadra Strickland, Melissa Sweet



14 amazing women, 14 amazing poems. *Shaking Things Up* shares the lives of 14 women from history to present day in the form of free verse poetry. Artists, activists, athletes, journalists, and more amazing women grace the pages of this book and the pages of history, shaking things up!

She Persisted Around the World: 13 Women Who Changed History (2018)

by Chelsea Clinton,
Illustrated by Alexandra Boiger



The stories of 13 women who changed history around the world; women who dreamed big dreams, spoke up, spoke out, and fought for what they believed was right. This book celebrates Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Caroline Herschel, Kate Sheppard, Marie Curie, Viola Desmond, Mary Verghese, Aisha Rateb, Wangari Maathai, Jo Rowling, Sisleide Lima do Amor, Leymah Gbowee, Yuan Yuan Tan, Malala Yousafzai.

Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up By Sitting Down (2010)

by Andrea Davis Pinkney,
Illustrated by J. Brian Pinkney



"We must... meet hate with love" begins *Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up By Sitting Down*, a non-fiction picture book that details the Civil Rights Movement with a special emphasis on the sit-ins and their importance. Written in a lyrical style, *Sit-In* is a great starting point for those who want to learn more about the civil rights movement. The book's back matter includes a helpful timeline, a picture of the four boys who initially started the sit-ins, and resources for further discovery.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: race and racism.

Something Happened in Our Park: Standing Together After Gun Violence (2021)

by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and
Ann Hazzard,
Illustrated by Keith Henry Brown



Something Happened in Our Park explores the perspectives of a Black boy and a white girl as they learn about a horrific incident of brutality and gun violence in their town. While each family approaches the situation differently, each helps children learn about race, racial injustices and how they can help stop these patterns from continuing. This book is an incredible resource for parents, educators, and community leaders when needing to address the very difficult, but very real topic of gun violence with children.

Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice (2018)

by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard,
Illustrated by Jennifer Zivoin



Something Happened in Our Town explores the difficult and complex topic of the American Justice system through tragedy. A Black man is shot by a police officer and two families, one Black and one white, must grapple with what that means, what equality means, what racial injustice can do, and address the hard questions children ask when tragedy strikes. This book is an incredible resource for parents, educators, and community leaders when needing to address the very difficult topic of police and systemic violence with children.

Starstruck: The Cosmic Journey of Neil DeGrasse Tyson (2018)

by Kathleen Krull and Paul Brewer,
Illustrated by Frank Morrison



The first time Neil DeGrasse Tyson walked into the sky theatre at the Hayden Planetarium, he was beguiled, enamored, starstruck, and his passion for space and the night sky was born. Follow Neil DeGrasse Tyson from the moment he discovered what his path would be to becoming a renowned scientist. Perfect for young scientists, star gazers, and astrophiles alike.

Story of Nina Simone (2021)

by Traci Todd,
Illustrated by Christian Robinson



Nina Simone was a talented pianist and vocal prodigy. Growing up in North Carolina in the 1940s, she faced prejudice and injustice, so much so that Simone eventually turned away from the piano, but not from music, or performing. Instead, Simone lent her voice and talent to the civil rights movement, raising her voice along with thousands of others against discrimination and injustice.

Strange Fruit: Billie Holiday and the Power of a Protest Song (2017)

by Gary Golio,
Illustrated by Charlotte Riley-Webb



In 1939, two cultural outsiders combined their talents to create something amazing. Abel Meeropol, the son of Jewish immigrants, wrote a song about the "Strange Fruit" that could be found hanging on a tree. Billie Holiday was a young Black woman who became one of the most celebrated jazz singers of all time. Together, they popularized a song about lynching, a pastoral about racism and human rights. The illustrations show amazing aspects of Billie Holiday's life, as well as the turmoil and chaos of the times. The book includes the lyrics to the song as well as historical notes.

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This Book is Anti-Racist (2020)

by Tiffany Jewell,
Illustrated by Aurélia Durand



In what feels like a conversation between the author and the reader, *This Book is Anti-Racist* discusses racism, personal growth, identity, and general lessons on how to be a good person. Helpful and engaging activities are included throughout the book to provide historical content and lessons.

This is your Brain on Stereotypes: How Science is Tackling Unconscious Bias (2020)

by Tanya Lloyd Kyi,
Illustrated by Drew Shannon



Clear, concise, readable, and engaging, *This is your Brain on Stereotypes* discusses stereotypes, prejudice, their effects, and how to change them and mitigate their effects. The illustrations are charming, and the research is informative and clearly explained, largely focusing on the real-world impacts of stereotyping.

This Promise of Change: One Girl's Story in the Fight for School Equality (2019)

by Jo Ann Allen Boyce and Debbie Levy



In 1956, fourteen-year-old Jo Ann Allen was one of the first 12 African American students to attend Clinton High School in Tennessee. Nicknamed the Clinton Twelve, they were the first Blacks to attend a previously whites-only school. At first things went smoothly, but soon outside agitators began pitting the townspeople against one another. Uneasiness turned into anger, and even the Clinton Twelve wondered if it would be easier just to go back to their old school. Jo Ann finds herself thrust into the national spotlight when she becomes the Twelves spokesperson, as they all become trailblazers in history.

Ticktock Banneker's Clock (2016)

by Shana Keller,
Illustrated by David C. Gardner



Ticktock Banneker's Clock is the thoughtful biography of genius Benjamin Banneker and his quest and determination to figure things out. Born in 1731, Benjamin Banneker is a very early example of a Black man pursuing STEM not as a career, but because he was curious and had a thirst for knowledge. Includes an author's note with more about Banneker.

Tiny Stitches: The Life of Medical Pioneer Vivien Thomas (2016)

by Gwendolyn Hooks,
Illustrated by Colin Bootman



Vivien Thomas faced a great deal of adversity in his life: he lost money in the stock market crash and wasn't allowed to attend Vanderbilt as a student. When he finally attended Vanderbilt as a researcher, he was paid the same wage as the janitorial staff, not as his peers. Despite these challenges, Thomas helped to save the lives of thousands of infants and children through his life saving medical innovations.

Trailblazers: The Black Pioneers Who Have Shaped Canada (2020)

by Tiyahna Ridley-Padmore,
Illustrated by Merryl-Royce Ndema-Moussa



In *Trailblazers* we hear the stories of more than 40 Black Canadians who changed history, some through bravery, others through advocacy or invention. Meant to be savoured and not rushed, each short biography is poetically crafted and accompanied by stunning illustrations.

Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Boy (2021)

by Emmanuel Acho



Based on Acho's *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man*, but rewritten for both parents and young readers, *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Boy* is meant to be an open dialogue about systemic racism for white and non-Black parents to use as a tool to help support an open, honest, and judgement-free space in which to have a conversation about race, white privilege, racism. The book encourages everyone to sit with the discomfort, grow, and support each other as we learn how to dismantle racism and mend the racial divide.

The Underground Railroad (2019)

by Rachel Seigel



Part of the *Black History in Canada (Coast 2 Coast 2 Coast Series)*, *The Underground Railroad* discusses the development of the Underground Railroad used by people who were escaping enslavement to travel north to freedom. The book also discusses the challenges faced by these Black settlers after reaching Canada.

The Vast Wonder of the World: Biologist Ernest Everett Just (2018)

by Mélina Mangal,

Illustrated by Luisa Uribe



A stunningly illustrated biography of biologist Ernest Everett Just, a brilliant scientist born in 1883 in Charleston, South Carolina. Just faced several difficulties including the death of his father at age four, severe lasting impact of typhoid fever, the death of his mother before college, and making his way in the world of academia as a Black man during the years of segregation. Nevertheless, his contributions to science were ground-breaking.

Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer (2015)

by Carole Boston Weatherford,

Illustrated by Ekua Holmes



Fannie Lou Hamer is regarded as one of the most powerful and impactful voices to exist during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. By using her singing voice, and running for Congress, Fannie became the spirit of the civil rights movement. The book uses free-verse poem to explore the inspirational and heartbreaking story of Fannie Lou.

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Wait, What?:

A Comic Book Guide to Relationships, Bodies, and Growing Up (2019)

by Heather Corinna,

Illustrated by Isabella Rotman



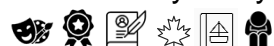
Join five friends as they explore their unique experiences with growing up. Topics include changing bodies, sex, puberty, relationships, consent, and all the questions you don't want to ask, but would love the answers to.

When I Get Older:

The Story Behind Wavin' Flag (2011)

by K'Naan,

Illustrated by Rudy Gutierrez



The inspirational story of poet and rapper K'naan (Keinan Abdi Warsame) and his experiences as a child living in Somalia and then fleeing to Canada. Sharing the meaningful influence of his poet grandfather who, during the early days of the Somali Civil War, penned the words: "When I get older, I will be stronger. They'll call me freedom, just like a waving flag." These words are repeated throughout the story in times of difficulties, in times of loneliness, and in times of triumph. Musical score and lyrics for Wavin' Flag, plus to a brief history of Somalia, are included in the book.

When Stars Are Scattered (2020)

by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed



When Stars Are Scattered is a look at daily life in a Kenyan refugee camp through the eyes of Omar and his brother, Hassan. When Omar gets the chance to go to school, he knows it will mean better opportunities. It also means leaving Hassan, who is nonverbal and relies on Omar to understand what he needs. Filled in equal parts with hope, heartbreak, and humour, this is a story of waiting and the importance of creating family and home no matter where you find yourself.

Whoosh!:

Lonnie Johnson's Super-Soaking Stream of Inventions (2016)

by Chris Barton,

Illustrated by Don Tate



A story of trial and error, getting messy, and trying again, proving that sometimes, the best things happen by making mistakes. Through perseverance and hard work, Lonnie Johnson earned a degree in engineering from the Tuskegee Institute, worked for NASA and with the U.S. Air Force and was trying to create a cooling system for rockets when he wound up with the mechanics for one of the top twenty toys of all time: The Super Soaker.

Woke:

A Young Poet's Call to Justice (2020)

by Mahogany L. Browne,

Elizabeth Acevedo, and Olivia Gatwood,
Illustrated by Theodore Taylor III.



Penned by three women of colour, this book of poetry explores concepts crucial to being an activist at any age. Each piece focuses on one concept at a time (conveniently noted at the bottom of each page) and makes for an excellent read aloud or conversation starters. From identity to race, gender, ability and privilege, this book calls for young people to examine the complex layers of the world around them and use their voices to create positive change.

Junior High School – Grades 7 to 9

Fiction

While we feel that these are titles which would be appropriate for readers in Grades 7 to 9, these books would also be appropriate and may be of interest to Grade 10 to 12 readers.

All American Boys (2015)

by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely



In this fast-paced novel we meet Rashad and Quinn, nodding acquaintances and classmates at the same school. One night, a series of innocent moments sets off a chain of events that will change both boys' lives forever. Rashad is unwarrantedly arrested and savagely beaten by a police officer, while Quinn witnesses the entire encounter. Rashad, villainized in the media when he followed all the rules, and Quinn, shocked and horrified by seeing his mentor and best friend's brother savagely beat an innocent boy, are bound by this moment in time and the fear and anger that may rip their entire community apart. A story about standing up for what's right, even when those you love and care about stand against you.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: race, racism, systemic violence, and police brutality.

Anger is a Gift (2018)

by Mark Oshiro



When Moss's friend is murdered by police at a protest, it brings up a lot of memories and trauma of when Moss's father, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, was also murdered by the police. Exploring the effects of trauma, tragedy, and anger, and the way righteous anger is a gift and can be channeled towards making a difference.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: race, racism, systemic violence, and police brutality.

The Black Mage (2019)

by Daniel Barnes and D. J. Kirkland



Tom Token is the first Black student to ever be accepted into the exclusive St. Ivory Academy of Magic, a historically white wizarding school. To say this book is tongue in cheek would be an understatement. Everything from the character's name, Tom Token, to his pet crow, Jim (yup, as in Jim Crow), clues the reader in that this is not your average graphic novel. Dark and deliciously sinister *The Black Mage* explores racism, The Civil War, The Klan, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, while sending a very clear and direct message about the importance of diversity in predominantly white spaces.

The Arts | Award | Biography | Canadian | Contemporary | Diversity | Folktales | Fantasy | Graphic Novel | Historical | Learning About | Levelled Reading | LGBTQ2+ | Magical Realism | Mystery | Neuro or Physical Divergence | Picture Book | Poetry | Reader's Choice | Romance | Science Fiction | Self-Esteem | Short Stories | Social and Emotional Development | Sports | STEM | Storytime | Tough Stuff

Black Panther: The Intergalactic Empire of Wakanda (2019)

by Ta-Nehisi Coates, Illustrations by Daniel Acuña, Jen Bartel, Triona Farrell, and Joe Sabino



If Black Panther and Star Wars had a baby, it would be something like this book. Slave-turned-hero T'Challa remembers nothing of his past, or how he arrived in this place, but many believe him to be the legendary hero of the empire from "Wakanda Prime" making his prophesied return. T'Challa, Nakia, and M'Baku join the rebellion to bring down the empire. Even the Goddess Bast makes an appearance.

A Blade So Black (2018)

by L. L. McKinney



Wonderland is a dreamscape version of Earth, where human fears manifest themselves as monsters called Nightmares. Alice has been recruited as a dreamwalker, a human fighter tasked with keeping the monsters at bay, while coping with her real life of teenage angst, curfews, a slumping GPA, and police and gun violence in her neighbourhood. When Alice's mentor is poisoned, it is up to Alice to venture deep into Wonderland for the antidote, a very important date Alice does not want to be late for.

Blood Like Magic (2021)

by Liselle Sambury



Witches in Voya Thomas' family receive a Calling, a task unique to that witch and assigned by an ancestor before they can come into their powers. Everyone in Voya's family has received their Calling, so Voya wasn't prepared to fail. Usually, if a witch fails in her Calling, she doesn't get her powers. When Voya fails, she's given another opportunity, another task. If she fails again, not only will she not gain her powers, but her family will also lose theirs, powers they depend on to survive. Voya's task is straightforward, though by no means easy: Destroy her first love.

Broken Memory: A Novel of Rwanda (2007)

by Elisabeth Combres



When Emma was five, she heard her mother being murdered as she hid behind an armchair. Haunted by the sounds she can never unhear and her mother's last words: "You must not die, Emma!" Emma finds her way to Mukecuru, an old Hutu woman who risks her own life by sheltering Emma. When the genocide ends, thousands of children and survivors are left orphaned. When Emma, still haunted by nightmares, meets Ndoli, who has experienced his own traumas, they start to help each other heal and move forward. When the government establishes courts where victims can face the tormentors from their villages, Emma and other child survivors are guided through a healing journey by an elderly gentleman charged with helping child survivors. Emma finds the courage to return to the house where her mother was killed and begin the journey to healing.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: genocide and the bystander effect, tragedies seen in the media

Chasing Freedom (2011)

by Gloria Ann Wesley



During the American Revolution the British Crown recruited Black soldiers to fight for His Majesty's Army, in exchange for their freedom, and the freedom of their family. The promise of land, provisions, and freedom in British North America (Canada) is a difficult offer to pass up. Sarah Redmond, a slave on a South Carolina plantation, watches as her father slips into the night to join the British army and give them all a better life. Before her father can return, the war ends, and thousands of Loyalist slaves are given precious Certificates of Freedom and sent to New York, including Sarah and her grandmother Lydia, to await their fate. The Redmonds are sent to Birchtown, Nova Scotia, the first all-black community in North America, uncertain of what the future holds.

Chlorine Sky (2021)

by Mahogany L. Browne



Maintaining friendships can be difficult, especially when you're growing into your own person and seeking to find your self worth. Chlorine sky is a novel-in-verse about broken promises, fast rumours, and a young girl's coming-of-age and the hard decision to step out of the shadow of her former best friend and become her own person. Sometimes, growing up means growing apart.

Cold White Sun (2019)

by Sue Farrell Holler



Tesfaye's life is good. The beloved son of an important father in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Tesfaye's life is safe and happy. He goes to a good school, plays soccer and is taken care of by his mother and older sisters. When rebel forces take over the capital, Tesfaye goes with his father when he gives political speeches and distributes leaflets, Tesfaye doesn't pay much attention to what's being said, instead being caught up in the excitement of it all. When suddenly his father is arrested and Tesfaye's life is in danger his mother sends him away, by human smuggler, through Kenya, Europe and finally to Canada. Where Tesfaye's new life begins while wondering what happened to the family he had to leave behind.

Come On In:

15 Stories About Immigration and Finding Home (2020)

by Adi Alsaid, Maria E. Andreu, Nafiza Azad, Varsha Bajaj, Sona Charaipotra, Zoraida Córdova, Sara Farizan, Maurene Goo, Alaya Dawn Johnson, Justine Larbalestier, Yamile Saied Méndez, Sharon Morse, Lilliam Rivera, Misa Sugiura and Isabel Quintero



Come On In is the fictional telling of real and multifaceted immigrant experiences, showcasing fears around deportation, struggles with cultural identity, and inspiring journeys. Some stories are personal whereas others are stories of the witnessed effects of immigration on loved ones.

The Field Guide to the North American Teenager (2019)

by Ben Philippe



Being a Black French-Canadian transplant in Texas isn't easy, particularly as all Norris Kaplan knows about Texas he's learnt from watching American sitcoms. To cope, or to pass the time until he can go back to Canada, Norris starts to catalogue everyone he meets. A fun, charming, and at times hilarious fish-out-of-water story of a teen figuring out life, love, and friendship.

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Flygirl (2009)

by Sherri L. Smith



Ida Mae Jones' father didn't let being Black stop him from becoming a pilot. For Ida Mae, a Black woman, her dream of flying might be harder to achieve. When America enters World War Two, the Army creates the WASPs, the Women Airforce Service Pilots. Even if Ida Mae can be accepted as a female pilot, she's forced to "pass," to pretend to be white, denying herself and her heritage, to be accepted into the program.

The Gilded Ones (2020)

by Namina Forna



Deka lives in fear of the ritual. At sixteen years old, a priest will cut her. If she bleeds red, all is well and Deka will stay in her village, will belong, and go about her life. If she bleeds gold, Deka will be deemed a demon with the ability to heal. She will be sold, tortured, enslaved, and killed over and over again. After Deka's blood runs gold, a mysterious woman offers her a choice: stay in her village, and let the villagers decide her fate, or leave and fight for the emperor in an army of gold blooded girls just like her.

How to Be Remy Cameron (2019)

by Julian Winters



Confident, likeable, and out-and-gay, everyone on campus knows Remy Cameron. The only person who might not know Remy Cameron is... Remy Cameron. When a simple assignment to write an essay describing himself throws Remy for a loop, he embarks on a journey of discovery to reconcile the many labels that people have attached to him to get to know the Real Remy Cameron.

I Am Alfonso Jones (2017)

by Tony Medina,

Illustrated by Stacey Robinson and John Jennings



Alfonso Jones is excited to play Hamlet in a hip-hop version of the Shakespearean classic at his school. While out buying his first suit, he is murdered. Alfonso wakes up in the afterlife to find himself on a ghost train full of other well-known victims of police shootings. A complicated weaving together of multiple stories, *I Am Alfonso Jones* is the story of the murder of an unarmed Black teen by a white police officer; a hip-hop rendition of Shakespeare's Hamlet; an examination of the historical systemic violence against Black people in the United States; and a calling out of media's bias and complacency in police shooting narratives.

Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky (2019)

by Kwame Mbalia



Tristan Strong feels that he, in no way, lives up to his name, particularly after he failed to save his best friend, Eddie, from the bus accident they were in together. To help Tristan cope with the tragedy, he's sent to his grandparents' farm in Alabama. On the first night, a creature shows up in Tristan's room and tries to steal Eddie's journal. Full of Eddie's stories and thoughts, Tristan isn't about to lose it to some sticky thief. When Tristan pursues the thief, Tristan ends up punching a hole in a Bottle Tree, and opening a chasm to another place, a place with haunted bone ships, iron monsters, burning seas, where John Henry and Brer Rabbit and Anansi are all too real. *Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky* is the first book in a new series where Kwame Mbalia's tale embraces African Mythology, weaving a tale of fantasy, adventure, and the past.

Like Home (2021)

by Louisa Onomé



Chinelo, or Nelo as her friends call her, is dedicated to her community. For now, that means not letting a deadly incident at the local arcade change how people see her neighbourhood, even if it has driven many of her close friends away. For Nelo, as long her friend Kate is still here, there's nothing to worry about. When Kate's parents' corner store is vandalized, the police and media are quick to point fingers, and a media storm descends on Ginger East. It could've been survivable if only Kate wasn't pushing Nelo away and acting so weird. Nelo's entire world is changing, and she hates it! She must figure out how to get things back on track, so she doesn't lose everything and everyone that she loves.

Loving vs. Virginia: A Documentary Novel of the Landmark Civil Rights Case (2017)

by Patricia Hruby Powell,

Illustrated by Shadra Strickland



In Virginia in 1950 interracial marriage is illegal. Written in blank verse, *Loving vs. Virginia* is the story of how Mildred Jeter, an African American girl, and Richard Loving, a Caucasian boy, fall in love. Set over 15 years and switching back and forth between Mildred and Richard's perspectives, Powell traces the events leading up to the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision to overturn Virginia's anti-miscegenation statute. Peppered with photographs and touching on other important civil rights topics, *Loving vs. Virginia* is the story of two people in love, and the mountains of legislature they moved to be together.

Legendborn (2020)

by Tracy Deonn



On her first night at UNC-Chapel Hill, Bree Matthews didn't want to witness anything—certainly not a flying demon, the human it was trying to file, or the “Legendborn” secret society cleaning up the mess. But she did. *Legendborn* covers topics not always seen in fantasy, such as the consequences of slavery on modern day education systems and family structures. The book seamlessly weaves history and myth and combines it with a protagonist you are rooting for.

Long Way Down (2017)

by Jason Reynolds



When Shawn, Will's brother, is murdered, Will knows the rules. No snitching. No crying. Revenge. Will steps onto the elevator at the seventh floor, ready. But as the elevator descends, Will learns there is more to the story. Written in powerful verse, *Long Way Down* is a story of grief, revenge, and the cycle of violence.

Look Both Ways:

A Tale Told in Ten Blocks (2019)

by Jason Reynolds,

Illustrated by Alexander Nabaum



A collection of ten interconnected short stories taking place at the end of the school. Sometimes humorous and sometimes heartwarming, *Looking Both Ways* is an easy and enjoyable read and would be suited to younger readers as well. The stories are highly relatable and deal with tough topics: ill parents, living with illness, coming to terms with one's sexuality, exploring friendships, and supporting family.

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Love is a Revolution (2021)

by Renée Watson



Nala just wants to have an easygoing summer: ice cream, Netflix, girlfriends, and maybe getting a boyfriend. When Nala meets Tye, a handsome activist, she adds a few white lies as embellishments to give them more in common. The more interested Tye becomes, the more complicated Nala's life gets, and the further away Nala's summer of Netflix and loafing gets. Instead, Nala's summer will be full of self-love, activism, and balancing who you are, and who you want to be. *Love is a Revolution* is full of beautiful moments of teen awkwardness, Jamaican food, and heaps of body positivity.

The Meet-Cute Project (2021)

by Rhiannon Richardson



Mia needs a meet-cute: a device used in books, movies, or television where two people, who will later form a romantic attachment, meet for the first time in unusual, humorous, or cute circumstances. Not that Mia really wants a relationship, but her friends have other ideas, and Mia has to admit that having a date to her sister Sam's wedding—Sam who at the moment is being a total bridezilla—would make Mia's life a whole lot easier. When Mia's friends plan meet-cutes for Mia in hopes of finding her a date, Mia reluctantly plays along. Who knows who she'll meet?

The Only Black Girls in Town (2020)

by Brandy Colbert



Alberta is the only Black girl in her small beach town. That was until Edie and her family move into the bed and breakfast across the street. Alberta and Edie embrace their own identities while becoming fast friends. When they discover an old journal in Edie's attic, they begin an adventure to discover the journal and its history.

One of the Good Ones (2021)

by Maika Moulite and Maritza Moulite



When teen social activist and history buff Kezi Smith is killed under mysterious circumstances after attending a social justice rally, her sister Happi keeps hearing the same phrase over and over: *One of the Good Ones*. Happi wonders if only certain people are deemed worthy of being missed. In looking for a way to honour their sister Kezi's memory, Happi and Genny learn there is much more to Kezi's death than they ever knew.

This Poison Heart (2021)

by Kalynn Bayron



If you like creepy old houses, mysteries, poisonous plants, and walled gardens, this book is for you. Briseis has a talent for plants. It's more than just a green thumb, it's actual powers: with a single touch tiny seeds grow and bloom. When a member of Bri's birth family dies she inherits a sinister and decaying estate. Bri decides to allow herself to grow and flourish, exploring her powers and embracing her identity.

Raybearer (2020)

by Jordan Ifueko



Growing up, Tarisai had everything she could possibly dream of, except a loving family. Instead, she was raised largely in isolation by The Lady, an absentee mother who sees Tarisai as a political tool and the child of the djinn who will someday grant her third and final wish. When Tarisai is chosen to compete for a spot on the Crown Prince's Council, The Lady's political maneuvering has come to fruition. Being accepted into the Council will provide Tarisai with the family and connection she's always desired, but it will also bring her closer to fulfilling The Lady's final wish: kill the Crown Prince. Blending Nigerian folklore with other folklore and influences, Ifueko has created a multicultural, robust, and complicated world.

Slay (2019)

by Brittney Morris



By day, seventeen-year-old Kiera is your average college student. By night, Keira becomes Emerald, a character from SLAY, the VR game she developed in secret. SLAY is a safe space for Black gamers to duel each other, be whoever they want to be, and learn about Black history and culture. When a boy in the real world is murdered over his SLAY account, everything Keira has built is in jeopardy. Media and her friends are calling for Emerald and the game developer to come forward and take responsibility for SLAY's role in the young man's death.

Stricken, Keira struggles to preserve her secret identity, her game, and the safe space she's created for gamers. In trying to protect SLAY, will she lose everything?

Shuri: Wakanda Forever (2020)

by Nnedi Okorafor and Vita Ayala,
Illustrated by Leonardo Romero, Paul Davidson and Rachael Stott



T'Challa is missing, there is a giant space bug in Wakanda, and Wakanda needs a Black Panther. If Shuri doesn't want to get roped into being the next Black Panther it's up to her, with the help of some familiar faces, to find the wayward T'Challa, defend Wakanda's borders, and save the entire cultural history of the continent of Africa from an energy-sapping alien. No longer a child, we see Shuri taking on a leadership role in addition to showing off her serious brain, knack for invention, and preference for resolving conflict through science and negotiation rather than her admittedly impressive fists.

Superman Smashes the Klan (2020)

by Gene Luen Yang,
Illustrated by Gurihiru



It's 1946, and the Ku Klux Klan is alive and well in Metropolis, and every person who doesn't look exactly like them, is a target. The Lee's, Doctor Lee and his children Tommy and Roberta, have just moved from Chinatown to Downtown Metropolis, and have caught the attention of The Klan. Even if Tommy and Roberta didn't have to battle racism and terrorism, they would still need to deal with the ups and downs of trying to fit into a new community. When the Klan kidnaps Tommy, attacks the Daily Planet, and threatens the local YMCA, it's time for Jimmy Olsen, Roberta, and Superman to come together and embrace the uniqueness which sets us all apart.

Wakanda Forever (2018)

by Nnedi Okorafor,
Illustrated by Alberto Jiménez
Albuquerque, Ray-Anthony Height, Erick Arciniega



A graphic novel about Spiderman and the Dora Milaje might not seem like a natural pairing, but as one of the Dora puts it, Spiderman is "the one Anansi blessed." A disgraced former Dora Milaje turned villain is in America and has stumbled upon a stolen Wakandan artifact: a talking drum. With it, Nakia can do real damage, so a team of Dora Milaje are sent to retrieve both Nakia and the drum from Spidey's home turf.

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Non-Fiction

While we feel that these are titles which would be appropriate for readers in Grades 7 to 9, these books would also be appropriate and may be of interest to Grade 10 to 12 readers.

Africville:

An African Nova Scotian Community is Demolished—and Fights Back (2019)

by Gloria Ann Wesley



Founded in the late 1800s on the Bedford Basin, the northern edge of Halifax, Africville was home to African Nova Scotians, descendants of Black Loyalists, freed and escaped slaves, and many more. While rich in community and culture, racist attitudes prevented residents from having basic services such as running water, sewage disposal, and garbage collection. In the name of urban renewal, Africville was razed in the 1960s, and residents moved into public housing projects across the city, with no input from the community and no thought to keeping them together. Part of the *Righting Canada's Wrongs* series, *Africville: An African Nova Scotian Community is Demolished* is a series of historical photographs, documents, and first-person narratives, telling the story of Africville, its destruction, and how the spirit of the community lives on.

Birchtown and the Black Loyalists (2014)

by Wanda Lauren Taylor



Birchtown and the Black Loyalist recounts the incredible story of the settlement of Birchtown in Nova Scotia by a group of Black American Loyalist soldiers. During the war, the British Crown, particularly Lord Dunmore (Governor of Virginia), promised freedom to any slave or indentured servant who would side with the British. The book details their struggle to claim what was promised to them and includes an index, informational side bars, glossary terms, recommended reading, historic timeline, and dozens of historical and contemporary images.

Fights:

One Boy's Triumph Over Violence (2020)

by Joel Christian Gill



Growing up poor and Black in the 1980s was tough, so Joel Christian Gill was tougher. Constantly having to fight to defend himself, and others Gill worked hard to break the cycle of violence and to learn to fight with not just his fists.

Infinite Hope:

A Black Artist's Journey From World War II to Peace (2019)

by Ashley Brya



When we think of the World Wars and Remembrance Day, we cannot overlook the contributions of those who, ironically, fought to end racial prejudices and bigotry in Europe, only to face those very same issues at home. Ashley Bryan was eighteen in May of 1942 when he was drafted as a Black soldier into a segregated army. A collection of artwork, letters, and diary entries, *Infinite Hope* is a memoir of Bryan's time during World War Two, and a lesson in history, horror, and hope.

The March Trilogy

March: Book One (2013)

March: Book Two (2015)

March: Book Three (2016)

by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin,

Illustrated by Nate Powell



The March Trilogy (*March: Book One*; *March: Book Two*; *March: Book Three*) is the memoir of Congressman John Lewis in a three-part graphic novel series. It includes reflections on his life, his quest for equality, and the impact the big six civil rights leaders had on the March on Washington and the civil rights movement. John Lewis was the last surviving member of the big six and the only one to see a Black Man as President.

P.K. Subban:

Fighting Racism to Become a Hockey Superstar and a Role Model for Athletes of Colour (2020)

by Catherine Rondina



The thoughtful and inspiring story of Canada's own P.K. Subban, professional hockey player and philanthropist. Captivating and easy to read, the book includes a comprehensive glossary.

Rolled & Told (2019)

by E. L. Thomas



Rolled & Told is a collection of one-shot Dungeons & Dragons campaigns that includes seven adventures (5-6 play hours), six mini-adventures (2-3 play hours), four ready-to-use characters, stunning illustrations, and articles full of tips for new and veteran Dungeon Masters alike. Appropriate for players of all ages.

Say Her Name (2020)

by Zetta Elliott,

Illustrated by Loveis Wise



An inspiring and uplifting collection of 49 poems celebrating the power, courage, and empowerment of Black girls and women. Haikus about strength, self-love, autonomy, and self-acceptance. Inspired by the #SayHerName campaign, these poems are a tribute to victims of police brutality and Black Lives Matter activists, but also encourages readers to speak and act when they witness injustice.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: race, racism, systemic violence, and police brutality.

Talking About Freedom: Celebrating Emancipation Day in Canada (2012)

by Natasha L. Henry



A discussion of the history of Black Canadians in Canada written as a high-level overview of Emancipation Day including information about historical figures in Canadian history dating from slavery emancipation.

To Stand and Fight Together (2008)

by Steve Pitt



A comprehensive overview of the history of slavery, enslaved people, and racism in America and Canada from the 18th Century through Richard Pierpont's history and ending at WWII. Helpful and full of additional interesting and fascinating facts with pictures and word studies.

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Senior High School – Grades 10 to 12

Fiction

While we feel that these are titles which would be appropriate for readers in Grades 10 to 12, these books would also be appropriate and may be of interest to Grade 7 to 9 readers.

American Street (2017)

by Ibi Zoboi



Fabiola Toussaint thought she was ready. Ready to leave her home in Haiti. Ready to move to Detroit to live with her American cousins. Ready to start at a new school. But she wasn't ready for her mother to be detained at US customs and to have to face all these new things alone. Ibi Zoboi carefully weaves together strong and complex characters, real world experiences, and sprinkles in Haitian voodoo and lore to create an authentic, thought-provoking, and enjoyable read.

Annaka (2020)

by Andre Fenton



When Annaka returns to Yarmouth for Grampy's funeral, she finds his journal, filled with sketches, stories, and memories. The snapshots of a happy childhood. There's something else waiting in Yarmouth for Annaka: her imaginary friend, Clay. It turns out that Clay is real and can transport them into the moments in the journal. Equal parts beautiful and heartbreaking, *Annaka* is the story of a woman coming to terms with her past, her present, and herself.

Between Sisters (2010)

by Adwoa Badoe



Set in Ghana in the 1990s, *Between Sisters* is the story of Gloria and Christine. Gloria is a poor girl with very few prospects, and her dreams of being a seamstress seem almost unattainable. When Christine, a married and secure relation who lives in the city, offers Gloria help with her schooling in exchange for nannying her son, Gloria willingly accepts. Struggling with education, cultural dynamics, and the special attention of older men in positions of power, Gloria is a teenage girl trying to navigate her life.

Binti (2015)

by Nnedi Okorafor



Short and action packed, *Binti* is the story of a teenager named Binti, who is the first of her people to attend Oomza University, the most prestigious university in the galaxy. To attend Oomza, Binti will need to give up her place in her family and travel into the path of the wronged Meduse, an alien race that has become the stuff of nightmares, with Oomza in their sights.

***The Black Flamingo* (2019)**

by Dean Atta



Half Jamaican and half Greek-Cyprian, acceptable male activities in both cultures are clearly defined. Michael has always been more interested in Barbies and singing, than cars and girls, meaning Michael has always struggled to fit in, and being both biracial and gay has not made it easy. When Michael discovers a Drag Society at university, Michael feels seen, confident, and fierce for the first time in his life. A celebration of youth, love, Blackness, and queerness, *The Black Flamingo* is a beautiful story in verse about quiet truths and being who you are.

***The Black Kids* (2020)**

by Christina Hammonds Reed



In the spring of 1992, Los Angeles caught fire in the wake of the Rodney King Trial. Riots erupted around the city in protest of the police brutality, rampant racial profiling, and acquittal of the police involved in the violent beating of an unarmed Black man. For Ashley Bennett, spring of 1992 is the end of senior year, and she wants nothing more than to spend her last summer with her high school friends, going to the beach, drinking, smoking, going to prom, and then going off to her dream college in the fall. When the riots kick off, everything changes. Suddenly Ashley's charmed and privileged life is starting to come off the rails as she's now one of the Black Kids, and it is no longer clear on who exactly is "us" and who is "them." Part biography, part diary, part history lesson, part love letter to the 1990s, *The Black Kids* explores what is happening in the lives and minds of teenagers while the world is caught up in enormous social upheaval.

***Blackout* (2021)**

by Dhonielle Clayton, Tiffany D. Jackson, Nic Stone, Angie Thomas, Ashley Woodfolk, and Nicola Yoon



A summer heatwave causes an epic blackout in New York City. Tensions mount, chaos reigns, and sparks fly in this collection of six YA short stories about love, friendship, and possibilities.

***The Book of Negroes* (2007)**

by Lawrence Hill



A wonderfully written novel about the harrowing, heartbreaking, and sometimes horrific experiences of a young girl sold into slavery and eventually settling in the Black Loyalist enclaves of Nova Scotia. Raw and beautiful, *The Book of Negroes* focuses on the life and story of Aminata Diallo but echoes the experiences and emotions of so many whose lives and families were torn apart by the slave trade, while exploring what it means to survive and to be free.

***Brother* (2017)**

by David Chariandy

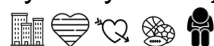


Set in Scarborough, Ontario in the summer of 1991, *Brother* explores the trauma and heartache of a single parent family, the marginalization of BIPOC and immigrant communities, the constant battle to give our children more, and growing up in a place where violence is a given. Brothers Michael and Francis spend their time escaping into the cool air of the Rouge Valley, a jagged swatch of green wilderness cutting through the neighbourhood. When a tragic shooting and police crackdown ensue, their lives change forever.

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Bruised (2021)

by Tanya Boteju



For Daya, physical pain helps to keep her emotional pain at bay. Sometimes, hurting is the only thing that can help stop the hurt. Ever since her parents died in an accident that Daya survived, she's avoided most interactions, but when she ends up at a roller derby bout, Daya is hooked. The rough and tumble opportunities seem endless, but what Daya doesn't expect is the ways Derby will help her confront her losses and find her own path to healing.

Charming as a Verb (2020)

by Ben Philippe



Destined to become a Netflix Original Movie, *Charming as a Verb* lives up to its name. Fun, charming, and ambitious first-generation Henri always has a hustle on the go. Henri is determined to attend Columbia, and as a star debater at the prestigious FATE academy, that dream may be within his grasp. Except that, to Henri's shame, his family isn't rich unlike everyone else at Henri's private school. A story about fitting in, following your dreams, and everything else that teenagers juggle.

Children of Blood and Bone (2018)

by Tomi Adeyemi



Zélie Adebola remembers a time when the soil of Orisha hummed with magic. Then came the betrayal, and now, the magic, and hope, is gone. If Zélie is clever and strong, she might be able to bring back magic and strike a blow to the corrupt monarchy that betrayed them all. The first book in a now series, *Children of Blood and Bone* is a unique blend of Adeyemi's imagination and West-African folklore.

Concrete Rose (2021)

by Angie Thomas



Concrete Rose is the prequel to Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* and follows the life of Starr's father Maverick. With the blood of a legacy King Lord running through his veins, seventeen-year-old Maverick Carter, son of a gang legend, knows how important it is to take care of your own. In the King Lords, you follow two rules: deal and take care of your own. When Maverick becomes a father, dealing drugs, finishing school, and raising a child become much more complicated. In a world that expects him to amount to nothing outside of his role in the King Lords, Maverick wants to be different, to choose differently for himself, his baby, and his family. Torn by loyalty, the revenge cycle, and his new responsibilities, Maverick needs to decide what success looks like to him, even if it now looks different to everyone he's ever loved.

The Cost of Knowing (2021)

by Brittney Morris



Imagine: being Black + male + anxious + afraid. All. The. Time. Being too anxious to touch someone because then you'll envision what will happen in their immediate future: a break-up, an accident, a death. For Alex, who has lost his parents and his best friend, this is life, and the death he cannot stop seeing is that of his brother Isaiah. Alex isn't the only one with powers, Isaiah has powers too. Where Alex sees the future, Isaiah is forced to relive the past. Old regrets and painful moments repeatedly—like that night both Alex and Isaiah got their powers, in the accident that killed their parents. *The Cost of Knowing* is an incredibly powerful story about brotherhood, toxic masculinity, and love. In Brittney Morris' own words, it's a love letter to all the Black men who had to grow up too early.

Cry of the Giraffe (2010)

by Judie Oron



The fictionalized account of the true story of a young Ethiopian Jewish girl's struggle to survive and reunite with her family. Wuditu's life is forever changed by war and anti-Jewish violence in her home country. During their harrowing escape Wuditu and her family are separated while on their way to be airlifted to Israel, and Wuditu must survive on her own, as a teenager hiding her identity, in hopes of rejoining them.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: genocide and the bystander effect, tragedies seen in the media, sexual abuse, rape, informed consent, slavery and enslavement, how to prepare for conversations about slavery and enslavement and for tips on how to teach children about slavery.

Dear Martin (2017)

by Nic Stone



Amazing story about Justyce McAllister, a young Black man who writes letters to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as he tries to come to terms with the racism, microaggressions, and police violence that he keeps experiencing. Throughout his journey, Justyce begins to realize the ways in which, for some people, his skin colour will always define how he is treated and understood—especially those at his elite, predominantly white high school and in the eyes of the city police.

Dread Nation (2018)

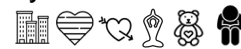
by Justina Ireland



Civil War + Zombies? Absolutely! In Jane McKeene's world, the dead walk, and children of colour are trained for battle. In a hope to avoid conscription, Jane enrolls at Miss Preston's School of Combat for Negro Girls, where she'll train to become a socialite's bodyguard. When Jane, close to graduating, stumbles on a plot that could change everything. Blending real and imagined horrors Justine Ireland's *Dread Nation* explores racial discrimination, equality, and what it means to be free.

Felix Ever After (2020)

by Kacen Callender

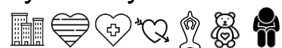


Black, queer, and transgender, Felix Love has never been in love. Secretly Felix fears that he has one diversity marker too many to find love. When a student anonymously starts sending Felix transphobic messages and posts Felix's deadname along with pre-transition pictures, Felix comes up with a plan for revenge. This leads Felix down a complex journey of self-discovery, identity, honesty, falling in love, and recognizing the love you deserve.

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Full Disclosure (2019)

by Camryn Garrett



Simone contracted HIV from her birth mother and having HIV is an experience she has, not something that defines her. When Simone starts dating Miles, one of her school's most eligible bachelors, Simone starts getting threatening messages: disclose her HIV status to Miles, or else. Simone has an amazing support system of two dads who love her and best friends that are central to her life, but that doesn't help when Simone's HIV status is outed to her whole school. Powerful and uplifting, *Full Disclosure* provides information and attempts to diminish some of the stigma and misinformation surrounding HIV and the AIDS virus.

Frying Plantain (2019)

by Zaliqa Reid-Benta



Kara Davis is a girl caught in the middle. With her Canadian friends, Kara feels too Jamaican, with her Jamaican cousins, Kara feels too Canadian. Set in Toronto's "Little Jamaica" in Eglinton West, we watch Kara grow from girlhood through her teen years as she navigates the tensions between mothers and daughters, first- and second-generation immigrants, and cultural expectations.

The Gilded Years (2016)

by Karin Tanabe



In 1897, Anita Hemmings passed as white to be the first Black student to attend Vassar college. Anita, the daughter of a janitor and the descendant of slaves, is rooming with Louise "Lottie" Taylor, the daughter of one of New York's most prominent families. Pulled into the glittering world of privilege, old money, and the social elite, Anita's struggles to maintain her perilous position while risking everything for the chance at a better life.

Grown (2020)

by Tiffany D. Jackson



Inspired by the story of a rapper and his under-age protégé, *Grown* is the chilling tale of the grooming and abusive relationships that often take place behind the limelight. Enchanted Jones is so close to getting everything she's ever dreamt of, but when she wakes up, her hands covered in the blood of her mentor, with no memory of the previous night and her dream is rapidly becoming a nightmare.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: sexual abuse, rape, informed consent, assault, child abuse, kidnapping, substance addiction, and addiction to opioids.

For resources for domestic violence help in Canada: Ending Violence Association of Canada; Domestic Abuse Services; Assaulted Women's Helpline

Happily Ever Afters (2021)

by Elise Bryant



Sixteen-year-old Tessa Johnson has never seen herself reflected in the pages of a romance novel. In fact, the only place Tessa has ever felt like a leading lady, has been in her own writing. When a case of writer's block threatens Tessa's spot in a prestigious creative writing program, her best friend Caroline has the solution: Tessa needs real world inspiration. Tessa and Caroline set off with the classic romance novel list of steps to achieve your happily ever after.

***A Hare in the Elephant's Trunk* (2010)**

by Jan L. Coates



Based on a true story, *A Hare in the Elephant's Trunk* details Jacob Deng's escape from Sudan after his home is torn apart by the civil war. At the age of 7, Jacob begins the long and dangerous trek to Ethiopia on foot, facing starvation, disease, and war. He eventually finds refuge in a United Nations camp and learns to read. His hunger for an education stems from his desire to use reason and discussion, rather than violence, to solve conflicts. Both heartbreaking and inspiring, is based on the true story of and his hope to create a peaceful future.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: genocide and the bystander effect, tragedies seen in the media, child soldiers

***The Hate U Give* (2017)**

by Angie Thomas



A classic of modern Black literature, *The Hate U Give* is the story of Starr Carter torn between two worlds: the poor neighbourhood where she lives, and the suburban prep school she attends. When Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend, she tries to continue to keep her lives separate, but when the media calls Khalil, a drug dealer and a gangbanger, Starr can no longer keep silent. Starr's journey through grief for her friend and slowly growing into her activism is relatable, reminding readers to stay true to themselves, have hope, and challenge the status quo in the name of what's right.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: race, racism, systemic violence, police brutality, death, violence, and loss.

***How It Went Down* (2014)**

by Kekla Magoon



Teenager Tariq Johnson is dead, murdered when he was shot twice in the back. Now, the trial and mysteries surrounding his murder are retold by family members, friends, political activists, and enemies. The community is in an uproar, everyone has something to say, no two accounts are the same, and every day there are new twists that further obscure the truth. There are two facts that won't change: Tariq was Black, and the shooter, Jack Franklin, is white. A uniquely told story of racially charged shooting, the changing narrators help to increase the reader's understanding, adding further depth and insight.

***Hurricane Summer* (2021)**

by Asha Bromfield



Tilla is desperate for her father's love and has been for as long as she can remember. When he is here, it's as though the sun is brighter and everything is better, even if her parents fight constantly when he's around. This summer will be different though. This summer, Tilla and her sister will be spending the whole summer in Jamaica with her father. Three whole months, and Tilla is as excited as she is terrified, but wonders if while there she'll learn what Jamaica holds for him, and why he keeps leaving them to go back.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: sexual abuse, informed consent, an absent parent, or how to reconcile with estranged teens.

The Arts | Award | Biography | Canadian | Contemporary | Diversity | Folktales | Fantasy | Graphic Novel | Historical | Learning About | Levelled Reading | LGBTQ2+ | Magical Realism | Mystery | Neuro or Physical Divergence | Picture Book | Poetry | Reader's Choice | Romance | Science Fiction | Self-Esteem | Short Stories | Social and Emotional Development | Sports | STEM | Storytime | Tough Stuff

Kingdom of Souls (2019)

by Rena Barron



Arrah is the daughter of two converging lines of powerful witchdoctors. As Arrah fails to live up to her family's legacy, she becomes increasingly desperate. When the Kingdom's children begin to disappear, Arrah is desperate enough to turn to a forbidden, dangerous ritual. If she has no magic of her own, she'll have to buy it—by trading away years of her own life.

Little & Lion (2017)

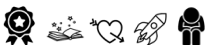
by Brandy Colbert



From love triangles, to the complexities of navigating race, mental health, and sexual orientation while trying to figure out classes and where to apply for university, *Little & Lion* explores the vast complexities of life as a teenager. At the heart of this story though, is the love two siblings share for each other.

Noughts & Crosses (2001)

by Malorie Blackman



Noughts & Crosses is the story of Callum and Sephy. Callum is white and a nought, a second-class citizen. Sephy is Black and a Cross, the ruling elite. The noughts used to be slaves, and only now, and only selectively permitted, to enter formerly all-Cross educational institutions. There are still public executions, and the idea of a nought and a Cross being together is unthinkable. Callum wants to make more of himself than just some nought, worth nothing. He wants equality but struggles against the Cross government's feeble attempts at integration. Meanwhile, Sephy sees the injustice her people have wrought on the noughts and works almost ceaselessly as an advocate for nought rights, even while Sephy's father is a staunch anti-noughtist. To love Sephy means to love the source of all his pain, hatred, anger. Callum hates himself for loving her but cannot help it. Reminiscent of *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, and *The Power*, *Noughts & Crosses* is a revisionist history must read.

Pet (2019)

by Akwaeke Emezi



In utopian Lucille, everyone is accepted, and bad things simply don't exist. When Jam, a selectively mute transgender teen, accidentally bleeds on one of her artist mother's canvases, a creature is formed of the blood. Now the hunt is on to find and capture the monster that threatens all of Lucille. The fantasy-horror crossover, utopian turned dystopian society, good vs. evil, and themes of bravery and vengeance are sure to win over any reluctant reader.

Piecing Me Together (2017)

by Renée Watson



Jade attends a rich, predominantly white private school, and dreams of travelling and learning Spanish. Not that Jade or her family is rich—her mother works hard to put food on the table, and her largely absent father is largely absent. When Jade's school recommends her for an "at risk" youth mentorship program for Black girls, she feels like she's being singled out because she's Black. She is deeply disappointed that she hasn't been selected for the travel abroad program that will help her land a spot at her first-choice college. Jade navigates microaggressions, racism, and coming to terms with her own identity as a young woman, a Black girl, and someone straddling many divides. *Piecing Me Together* would make an amazing book club book for teens.

Punching the Air (2020)

by Ibi Aanu Zobo, Yusef Salaam, and Omar T. Pasha



Sixteen-year-old Black and Muslim Amal has been convicted of a crime he didn't commit. Tried as an adult this crime will live on Amal's record forever, meanwhile his co-accused, a white boy, was tried as a child for the same supposed crime. In prison Amal discovers that prison is a new form of slavery, and the only way for Amal to stay sane is to set his mind free and spit poetry.

Remote Control (2021)

by Nnedi Okorafor



Remote Control is a beautiful tale of Afrofuturism, following Sankofa as she seeks to find the mysterious seed that bestowed upon her the power of death that follows her like a shadow. She is revered as the Adopted Daughter of Death, but she is also feared as many people do not understand the nature of Sankofa's power. A novella about purpose, a feeling of hopelessness and moving through it, and of finding purpose in a world that has many expectations.

Some Other Now (2021)

by Sarah Everett



When Jessi Rumfield was seven, the Cohens became her substitute family. Jessi always felt closer to Mel Cohen than to her own mother. Jessi's mother, who spent most of Jessi's life suffering deeply from depression, or her father who didn't want to upset the status quo, or Jessi's extended family who shut them out when Jessi's mum married her Black father. Rowan, Luke, and Mel are fixtures in Jessi's life, but when Mel is diagnosed with cancer, all Jessi wants to do is take care of Mel, all Rowan wants to do is pull away, and all Luke wants is to be near Jessi. Told in a split timeline, the reader follows Jessi both before and after the event that ripped her relationship with the Cohens apart.

A Song of Wraiths and Ruin (2020)

by Roseanne A. Brown



Inspired by West African folklore, *A Song of Wraith and Ruin* is told from the alternating perspectives of Malik, a desperate refugee, and Karina, a grieving and equally desperate crown princess. Two people who should never have met are converging on a collision course of murder, betrayal, and growing attraction that neither of them may survive.

The Stars and the Blackness Between Them (2019)

by Junauda Petrus



When Audre is sent to live in Minneapolis, she's devastated. Audre doesn't want to leave Trinidad and all she knows behind. Her strict religious mother won't hear about Audre staying after she was caught with the pastor's daughter. When Audre arrives in Minneapolis, she meets Mabel who quickly decides she wants to take care of Audre as she navigates a new American high school, a new life, and their burgeoning romance. When Mabel's medical test results come in, the tables shift again, and everyone faces an uncertain future. A stunning debut novel by author Junauda Petrus.

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This Book Betrays My Brother (2012)

by Kagiso Lesego Molohe



Naledi has always looked up to Basi, her charming, confident, and handsome older brother. In one moment, everything Naledi knows about Basi changes. Set against the backdrop of South Africa in the mid-1990s, and exploring gender norms, sexual assault, colourism, elitism, sibling love, loyalty, and postcolonial racism, *This Book Betrays My Brother* examines what it means to grow up in a small town where body policing, catcalling, and gender expectations rule everyday life.

Tyler Johnson Was Here (2018)

by Jay Coles



Twins Marvin and Tyler Johnson decide to go to a party, but what starts as harmless fun turns into a shooting, followed by a police raid. The next morning, Tyler is still missing, and as Marvin starts the search, chilling truths start to emerge. First, Tyler is found dead. Next, a video turns up showing Tyler's murder, by a police officer. Life for Marvin, his rapidly unravelling mother, and his brother who is now a hashtag will never be the same. *Tyler Johnson Was Here* explores the emotional trauma and grief of the family left behind in the aftermath of a police shooting, examines what it means to be caught up, even at the edge, of "the wrong crowd," and how racial profiling can have far reaching and deadly consequences.

Parents and Educators should be prepared to have conversations about: race, racism, systemic violence, police brutality, death, violence, and loss. Parents and Educators should also be aware of the heavy mature language in this book.

Upgrade Soul (2018)

by Ezra Clayton Daniels



Upgrade Soul is a thought provoking and cautionary tale about technology, technological advancement, ambition, desire, and what it means to be human. Hank and Molly, for their anniversary, decide to undergo an experimental procedure. The procedure is meant to help them recapture their youth, but instead, Molly and Hank end up with clones. An absolute page-turner with twists and turns at every step.

War Girls (2019)

by Tochi Onyebuchi



In a futuristic reimagining of the Nigerian Civil War that took place in the late 1960s, we meet two sisters, Onyii and Ify. It's 2172 and earth is almost unlivable: climate change, nuclear disasters, widespread famine, and scrabbling warlords have sent the lucky ones escaping for the space colonies. Body augmentation is common in the now harsh and largely toxic environment, particularly for soldiers. Two sisters are caught in the middle of a raging war, desperate to fight their way back to each other.

Wings of Ebony (2021)

by J. Elle



When Rue arrives in Ghizon, a hidden island of magic wielders, she discovers she is a half-god, half-human, and the only one. In Ghizon, the leaders jealously protect their magical powers at all costs and thrive on human suffering, and secrecy. Miserable, Rue breaks one of Ghizon's sacred laws, returning to Houston on the anniversary of her mother's death to see her sister. She finds Tasha, and the other Black kids from the neighbourhood, are being forced into crime and violence. Worse, there is an evil there that also lurks in Ghizon and will stop at nothing to steal everything and everyone from Rue.

With the Fire on High (2019)

by Elizabeth Acevedo



Emoni is dealing with a lot. As a high school senior, Emoni is struggling to hold down a job, keep up with her studies, and taking care of her young daughter. Time and money are tight, but there is one place Emoni can be carefree and that's in the kitchen. When an opportunity to follow her dreams presents itself, Emoni hesitates, unsure if following her dream is a frivolous endeavour with so many responsibilities to balance. *With the Fire on High* is an amazing story of strength, determination, a passion for cooking, the importance of setting your own boundaries, and most importantly, love.

When You Look Like Us (2021)

by Pamela N. Harris



As much as Jay looks out for his sister, he also works hard to be the opposite of her. While he is earning good grades and teaching Sunday school, Nic is skipping school and partying with her boyfriend and his questionable friends. Jay is aware that he has additional barriers to overcome in life because of his skin colour, and these prejudices become apparent when Nic goes missing. The apathetic local police force is unwilling to do much about his sister's disappearance, so Jay must gather his own information about what may have happened to Nic. Harris' debut novel is both exciting and brutally honest about the prejudice experienced by BIPOC communities, promising that teen readers will stay hooked until the last word.

You Should See me in a Crown (2020)

by Leah Johnson



In Campbell, Indiana prom is more than a rite of passage, it's an obsession. For Liz Lighty, prom is now the means to an end. The end: Get into the elite Pennington College, join their world class orchestra, become a doctor. The means: win her school's scholarship, awarded annually to the prom king and queen. It's a daring plan that requires navigating catty competition, social media trolls, and of course actually becoming prom queen. When a new girl arrives at school, the stakes get even higher. How hard is it to become prom queen when you're falling for your rival to the crown?

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Non-Fiction

While we feel that these are titles which would be appropriate for readers in Grades 10 to 12, these books would also be appropriate and may be of interest to Grade 7 to 9 readers.

All Boys Aren't Blue (2020)

by George M. Johnson



From gender identity and toxic masculinity to consent, Black joy and family to marginalization, *All Boys Aren't Blue* is a series of essays relevant to everyone including members of the LGBTQIA+ community and those wishing to be an ally. Part how to guide and part social discourse, journalist and activist George M. Johnson explores the intersectionality of being Black and queer.

Dear Ijeawele: Or, A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions (2017)

by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie



Approached by a childhood friend seeking advice on how to raise her baby as a feminist, *Dear Ijeawele* is the response. The book encourages the reader to unlearn their own implicit biases and teach children to avoid letting gender norms constrict them—at every opportunity. A must read.

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks (2009)

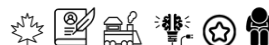
by Rebecca Skloot



In 1951, the cells of a woman named Henrietta Lacks were taken without her knowledge or consent. These cells were vital for developing the polio vaccine, in vitro fertilization, cloning, gene mapping, and more—yet her family didn't learn about her contribution to science until more than 20 years after her death. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* raises important questions about the history of experimentation on African Americans, the birth of bioethics, and the legal battles over who owns, and controls, cells.

A Love Letter to Africville (2021)

by Amanda Carvery-Taylor



True to its name, *A Love Letter to Africville* provides personal accounts and stunning photographs of the community and shares with the reader the love and sense of safety the former citizens of Africville felt growing up there. Focusing on the positives, rather than the mourning and heartbreak that are usually synonymous with Africville, demonstrating how Africville persists in the hearts and minds of its former citizens.

Pourin' Down Rain: A Black Woman Claims Her Place in the Canadian West (2020)

by Cheryl Foggo



Exploring the history and inherent racism in Canada, *Pourin' Down Rain* is the coming-of-age memoir of Foggo's youth growing up as a Black girl on the Canadian prairies. Sharing her experiences of interracial dating, embracing natural hair, coming to terms with family history, and growing up in western Canada.

***The Skin We're In:
A Year of Black Resistance and
Power (2020)***

by Desmond Cole



Canada, where racism is often passive aggressive and hypocritical, pretends not to have a race problem. In *The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power*, Desmond Cole, former Toronto Star journalist and radio host, documents and discusses the systemic racism prevalent across the Greater Toronto Area's Police Forces and education systems. He explores the treatments of Black cisgender and transgender women in Canada while discussing police carding, police profiling, police violence, police presence in Toronto schools, and child deportation.

***They Call Me George:
The Untold Story of Black Train
Porters and the Birth of Modern
Canada (2019)***

by Cecil Foster



They Call Me George is a historical non-fiction about the Pullmen of the Canadian rail lines. These Black porters helped shape and define Canada: shaping the structure of unions, building race relations, and affecting travel and business across North America. An outstanding investigation into the history, the struggles, and the impact of these men on Canadian society.

***Policing Black Lives:
State Violence in Canada from
Slavery to the Present (2017)***

by Robyn Maynard



Canada has a carefully crafted veneer of multiculturalism. Behind this illusion of inclusivity is systemic racism that perpetuates Black poverty, racial profiling, police violence, immigration detention, expulsions, and child discipline. *Policing Black Lives* is a call to dismantle systemic racism and build a better society.

***When They Call You a Terrorist:
A Black Lives Matter Memoir
(2018)***

by Patrisse Khan-Cullors and Asha Bandele



When They Call You a Terrorist is the passionate memoir from Patrisse Khan-Cullor that covers everything from her childhood experiences of police profiling and unjust law enforcement to her fractious relationship with her father, her brother's mental health struggle, her sexuality and romantic relationships and of course, her activism and the founding of the Black Lives Matter movement.

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Meet the Team

This resource list has been compiled by Librarian Ariel Kleber (Edmonton Public Library), and Dr. Jean Walrond (Sickle Cell Foundation of Alberta) and Readers Haley Kleckner, Gina Malaba, Janelle Olughor, and Naomi Virgo.

Please direct any comments or suggestions to: ariel.kleber@epl.ca



Librarian Ariel

Ariel is a Librarian with the Edmonton Public Library.

A passionate advocate for literacy, diversity, and representation in literature, Ariel is a huge fan of graphic novels and the rights of children to read whatever their hearts' desire.

When not at work, Ariel enjoys posting the adorable things her obligatory cats (cats are required as a librarian), dog, and toddler do to the 'gram, engaging in all things nerdy, listening to mystery audiobooks and true crime podcasts, and working on her novel.



Reader Haley

Haley is currently a library technician at Saskatchewan Polytechnic.

When not reading, Haley enjoys watching movies (especially Marvel or Star Wars), and spending time outdoors with her family.

Haley dreams of becoming published one day and plans on learning how to use her new typewriter for her poems! Haley would love to one day work at a public library in Southern Alberta, which has always been home.



Reader Gina

Gina is pursuing an English Honours with a double minor in Philosophy and Political Science from the University of Alberta.

Gina is also a proud cat mom of Clint and Bijou, her two snuggly boys who take up most of her free time.

When not playing with her cats and studying, you can find Gina at her local park reading horror manga or literature, having a picnic, baking cookies, or painting with her friends.



Reader Janelle

Janelle is pursuing a double major in Psychology and Philosophy at the University of Calgary.

When her face isn't buried in the pages of a Richard Evans novel, you can find her welding pots together at her local pottery studio, or rewatching the Matrix trilogy with her friends.

Janelle enjoys all things science fiction, studying in local cafes, and reading up on recent psychology. Her passion and pursuits have made Janelle the student and advocate she is today.



Reader Naomi

Growing up, representation was a huge part of Naomi's life, so she's found ways to incorporate it into her life.

Passionate about diversity, Naomi likes reading slice-of-life and coming-of-age novels, with the occasional realistic fantasy novel such as the *Children of Blood and Bone* series.

When she doesn't have her nose in a book, Naomi can be found writing random nonsense or spending time with her family. She can't wait until she can get an English Bulldog, who she plans on naming Bubba, from *How Lamar's Bad Prank Won A Bubba-Sized Trophy*.



Dr. Jean Walrond

Of the Taino Indigenous people in the Caribbean, Dr. Jean Walrond can trace her Black heritage back to enslavement in Barbados, but not beyond. During her 53 years in Canada, Dr. Walrond has lived in three Canadian provinces, raising her two daughters and welcoming her grandson in Edmonton, Alberta.

When her daughters were in school, Dr. Walrond became curious about how education and health structures impact goals for self-actualization, leading Dr. Walrond to return to university in 1988 to study the nexus of culture and education.

Additional funding for this project provided by:



Friends of Barbados Association

