



ST. HILDA'S & ST. HUGH'S

Ms. Perna's Top Starr Books: African American History Month

Picture Books Celebrating Black Culture and Heritage for Younger Readers

ABCs of Black History – written by Rio Cortez and illustrated by Lauren Semmer

B is for Beautiful, Brave, and Bright! And for a Book that takes a Bold journey through the alphabet of Black history and culture. (Picture book nonfiction. 4-10)

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Bedtime Classics) – written by Lewis Carrol and illustrated by Carly Gledhill

A charmingly illustrated board book edition of perennial favorites reimagined and simplified for the youngest readers! Many other classic tales are also available including Jack in the Beanstalk, The Wizard of Oz and The Princess and the Pea. (Board book. Ages 0-3)

[Before She Was Harriet](#)* – written by Lesa Cline-Ransome and illustrated by James E. Ransome

An evocative poem and opulent watercolors come together to honor a woman of humble origins whose courage and compassion make her larger than life. (Picture book biography. 4-8)

[The Book Itch: Freedom, Truth and Harlem's Greatest Bookstore](#)* – written by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson and illustrated by R. Gregory Christie

Relates the story of the National Memorial African Bookstore, founded in Harlem by Louis Michaux in 1939, as seen from the perspective of Louis Michaux Jr., who met famous men like Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X while helping there. (Picture book biography. 7-10)

[Bunheads](#) – written by Misty Copeland and illustrated by Setor Fiadzigbey

A young Misty Copeland discovers her love for dance through the ballet of Coppélia. (Picture book fiction. Ages 3 and up)

[Exquisite: the Poetry and Life of Gwendolyn Brooks](#)* – written by Suzanne Slade and illustrated by Cozbi A. Cabrera

A picture-book biography of celebrated poet Gwendolyn Brooks, the first Black person to win the Pulitzer Prize. (Picture book biography. 7-11)

The Highest Tribute: Thurgood Marshall's Life, Leadership, and Legacy – written by Kekla Magoon and illustrated by Laura Freeman

A brilliant picture book biography about Thurgood Marshall, who fought for equality during the Civil Rights Movement and served as the first Black justice on the Supreme Court. (Picture book biography. 5-8)

Juneteenth for Mazie – written and illustrated by Floyd Cooper

Little Mazie wants the freedom to stay up late, but her father explains what freedom really means in the story of Juneteenth, and how her ancestors celebrated their true freedom. (Picture book fiction. 5-8)

[Kamala Harris: Rooted in Justice](#) – written by Nikki Grimes and illustrated by Laura Freeman

Discover the incredible story of a young daughter of immigrants who would grow up to be the first woman, first Black person, and first South Asian American ever elected Vice President of the United States. (Picture book biography. 7-10)

[Overground Railroad](#) – written by Lesa Cline-Ransome and illustrated by James E. Ransome

A girl named Ruth Anne tells the story of her family's train journey from North Carolina to New York City as part of the Great Migration. (Picture book fiction. 4-8)

[A Place to Land](#) – written by Barry Wittenstein and illustrated by Jerry Pinkney

The true story behind the writing of Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. (Picture book nonfiction. 7-10)

[R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Aretha Franklin, the Queen of Soul](#)* – written by Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrated by Frank Morrison

With words that sing and art that shines, this vibrant portrait of Aretha Franklin pays her the R-E-S-P-E-C-T this Queen of Soul deserves. (Picture book biography. 4-10)

[A Ride to Remember](#) – written by Sharon Langley and Amy Nathan and illustrated by Floyd Cooper

The true story of how a ride on a carousel made a powerful Civil Rights statement *A Ride to Remember* tells how a community came together—both black and white—to make a change. (Picture book memoir. 6-9)

[Testing the Ice: A True Story About Jackie Robinson](#)* – written by Sharon Robinson and illustrated by Kadir Nelson

As a testament to his courage, Jackie Robinson's daughter shares memories of him, from his baseball career to the day he tests the ice for her, her brothers, and their friends. (Picture book biography. 7-10)

[The Undefeated](#)* – written by Kwame Alexander and illustrated by Kadir Nelson

A love letter to black life in the United States, this collection of poems highlights the unspeakable trauma of slavery, the faith and fire of the civil rights movement, and the grit, passion, and perseverance of some of the world's greatest heroes. (Picture book poetry. 6-14)

[The Vast Wonder of the World: Biologist Ernest Everett Just](#) – written by Mélina Mangal and illustrated by Luisa Uribe

Presents the life and accomplishments of the African American scientist, whose keen observations of sea creatures revealed new insights about egg cells and the origins of life. (Ages 5+)

[Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer, Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement](#)* – written by Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrated by Ekua Holmes

Presents a collage-illustrated treasury of poems and spirituals inspired by the life and work of civil rights advocate Fannie Lou Hamer. (Ages 8+)

[We Wait For the Sun](#) – written by Katie McCabe and illustrated by Raissa Figueroa

Adapted from Roundtree and McCabe's book for adults, *Mighty Justice* (2019), a powerful episode from the childhood of the real-life activist is presented as an adventure. (Picture book memoir. 3-8)

[William Still and His Freedom Stories: The Father of the Underground Railroad](#) – written and illustrated by Don Tate

Don Tate brings to life the incredible, stranger-than-fiction true story of William Still, a man who dedicated his life to recording the stories of enslaved people fleeing to freedom. (Picture book biography. 5-9)

African American Leaders, Legends, Legacies: Titles for Older Readers

[All the Days Past, All the Days to Come](#)* – written by Mildred D. Taylor

The saga of the Logan family--made famous in the Newbery Medal--winning Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry--concludes a long-awaited and deeply fulfilling story. (YA Historical Fiction. 12+)

[The Awakening of Malcolm X](#) – written by Ilyasah Shabazz and Tiffany D. Jackson

While in Charlestown Prison in the 1940s, young Malcolm Little reads all the books in the library, joins the debate team and the Nation of Islam, and emerges as Malcolm X. (YA Biography. Ages 13+)

Betty Before X – written by Ilyasah Shabazz with Renée Watson.

Raised by her aunt until she is six, Betty, who will later marry Malcolm X, joins her mother and stepfamily in 1940s Detroit, where she learns about the civil rights movement. (Historical Fiction. 9+)

Black Heroes of the Wild West – written and illustrated by James Otis Smith

Black Heroes of the Wild West" celebrates the extraordinary true tales of three black historical figures in the Old West: Mary "Stagecoach" Fields, a card playing coach driver; Bass Reeves, the first black Deputy U.S. Marshal west of the Mississippi; and Bob Lemmons, a cowboy famous for his ability to tame mustangs. (Nonfiction Graphic Novel. 9-14)

Chasing Space – written by Leland Melvin

When the former Detroit Lions' football career was cut short by an injury, Leland Marvin didn't waste time mourning his broken dream. Instead, he found a new one—something completely out of this world. He joined NASA, braved an injury that nearly left him permanently deaf, and traveled to space on the shuttle Atlantis to help build the International Space Station. (Autobiography. 10+)

[Changing the Equation: 50+ US Black Women in STEM](#) – written by Tonya Bolden

This book celebrates African American women who have shattered the glass ceiling, defied racial discrimination, and pioneered in the fields of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). (Nonfiction. 10+)

Hand in Hand: Ten Black Men Who Changed America*– written by Andrea Davis Pinkney

Presents the stories of 10 African American men from different eras in American history, organized chronologically to provide a scope from past to present day. (Nonfiction. 10+)

Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans* – written and illustrated by Kadir Nelson

Presents an introduction to African American history, from Revolutionary-era slavery up to the election of President Obama. (Nonfiction. 8+)

Have I Ever Told You Black Lives Matter – written by Shani Mahiri King and illustrated by Bobby C. Martin Jr.

Celebrating Black accomplishments in music, art, literature, journalism, politics, law, science, medicine, entertainment, and sports, Shani King summons a magnificent historical and contemporary context for honoring the fortitude of Black role models, women and men, who have achieved greatness despite the grinding political and social constraints on Black life. (Nonfiction. 6-12)

[Lifting as We Climb: Black Women's Battle for the Ballot Box](#)* – written by Evette Dionne

For African American women, the fight for the right to vote was only one battle. An eye-opening book that tells the important, overlooked story of Black women as a force in the suffrage movement--when fellow suffragists did not accept them as equal partners in the struggle. (Nonfiction. 10+)

Lewis Latimer: Engineering Wizard – written by Denise Lewis Patrick

Why is Lewis Latimer important? His invention of the carbon filament made light bulbs more affordable and longer lasting. Readers follow his journey from working with Alexander Graham Bell to improving Thomas Edison's light bulb. (Biography. Ages 8-12)

[March: Book One](#)* – written by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin; illustrated by Nate Powell

March is a vivid first-hand account of John Lewis' lifelong struggle for civil and human rights, meditating in the modern age on the distance traveled since the days of Jim Crow and segregation. Rooted in Lewis' personal story, it also reflects on the highs and lows of the broader civil rights movement. (YA Graphic Novel Memoir. 12+)

Never Caught, the Story of Ona Judge: George and Martha Washington's Courageous Slave Who Dared to Run Away; Young Readers Edition – written by Erica Armstrong Dunbar and Kathleen Van Cleve

From her childhood, to her time with the Washingtons and living in the slave quarters, to her escape to New Hampshire, Dunbar, along with Van Cleve, shares an intimate glimpse into the life of Ona Judge, a little-known, but powerful figure in history, and her brave journey as she fled the most powerful couple in the country. (Biography. 9+)

[The Promise of Change: One Girl's Story in the Fight for School Equality](#) – written by Jo Ann Allen Boyce

In 1956 in the small town of Clinton, Tenn., 12 African American students integrated the all-white high school. Jo Ann Allen Boyce, one of the "Clinton 12," narrates this first-person account. (Biography. 10+)

The Rebellious Life of Rosa Parks (Young Reader's Edition)– written by Jeanne Theoharis; adapted by Brandy Colbert

This definitive biography of Rosa Parks accessibly examines her six decades of activism, challenging young readers perceptions of her as an accidental actor in the civil rights movement. (Biography. 12+)

Timelines from Black History – edited by DK Publishing

Amazing visual timelines take readers through the people and the issues that have shaped Black history. (Nonfiction reference. 8+)

This Is What I Know About Art – written by Kimberly Drew

In this powerful and hopeful account, arts writer, curator, and activist Kimberly Drew reminds us that the art world has space not just for the elite, but for everyone. (YA Nonfiction. Ages 12+)

Children's Literature by Black Authors and Illustrators

[Before the Ever After](#)*– written by Jacqueline Woodson

ZJ's friends Ollie, Darry and Daniel help him cope when his father, a beloved professional football player, suffers severe headaches and memory loss that spell the end of his career. (Novel in verse. 10+)

[Black Is a Rainbow Color](#) – written by Angela Joy and illustrated by Ekua Holmes

A child reflects on the meaning of being Black in this anthem about a people, a culture, a history, and a legacy that lives on. (Picture book. 3-8)

[From the Desk of Zoe Washington](#) – written by Janae Marks

Avid baker Zoe Washington receives a letter on her twelfth birthday from her biological father, who is in prison for a terrible crime. (Mystery. 8-12)

[Ghost](#) – written by Jason Reynolds

Ghost, a naturally talented runner and troublemaker, is recruited for an elite middle school track team. He must stay on track, literally and figuratively, to reach his full potential. (Realistic fiction. 10+)

[Clean Getaway](#) – written by Nic Stone

While suspended from school, eleven-year-old, racially-mixed William "Scoob" Lamar joins his white grandmother on a road trip, during which he learns about life in the Jim Crow South and a shocking secret about G'ma. (Realistic fiction. 9+)

[Here Comes Lolo](#) – written by Niki Daly

Lolo skips through life, leaving a trail of laughter and a few frowns. In these four easy-to-read stories, follow Lolo as she gets a gold star at school, longs for a cute floppy hat, finds a missing ring, and helps to rescue a dog. (Fiction. 5-9)

[King and the Dragonflies](#)* – written by Kacen Callender

In a small but turbulent Louisiana town, one boy's grief takes him beyond the bayous of his backyard, to learn that there is no right way to be yourself. (Realistic fiction. 10+)

[I Am Every Good Thing](#) – written by Derrick Barnes and illustrated by Gordon C. James

The confident Black narrator of this book is proud of everything that makes him who he is. (Picture book. 4-8)

[The Jumbies](#) – written by Tracey Baptiste

Corinne La Mer isn't afraid of anything. Not scorpions, not the boys who tease her, and certainly not jumbies. They're just tricksters parents make up to frighten their children. Then one night Corinne chases an agouti all the way into the forbidden forest. Those shining yellow eyes that followed her to the edge of the trees, they couldn't belong to a jumbie. Or could they? (Fantasy. 9+)

[Little Mermaid](#) – written and illustrated by Jerry Pinkney

In this reinvention of Hans Christian Andersen's classic tale, a little mermaid trades her voice for legs and makes a new friend on land, but must return to the sea to save her family. (Picture book. 5-9)

[Magnificent Homespun Brown](#)* – written by Samara Cole Doyon and illustrated by Kaylani Juanita

A children's picture book that celebrates in verse being a girl of color. (Picture book. 6-12)

[Me & Mama](#)* – written and illustrated by Cozbi A. Cabrera

Mama's love is brighter than the sun, even on the rainiest of days. This celebration of a mother-daughter relationship is perfect for sharing with little ones! (Picture book. 2-5)

[Milo Imagines the World](#) – written by Matt de la Peña and illustrated by Chrstian Robinson

While Milo and his sister travel to a detention center to visit their incarcerated mother, he observes strangers on the subway and draws what he imagines their lives to be. (Picture book. 4-10)

[Nana Akua Goes to School](#) – written by Tricia Elam Walker and illustrated by April Harrison

Zura is worried about how her classmates will react to her Ghanaian Nana's tattoos on Grandparents Day, but Nana finds a way to show how special and meaningful they are. (Picture book. 5-9)

[Off to See the Sea](#) – written by Nikki Grimes and illustrated by Elizabeth Zunon.

Night has fallen and Mom and Dad need to get their little one in the tub. To make it more fun, Mom brings a magical adventure out at sea to life, where the faucet is a waterfall, a rubber ducky is a sea creature, and the splashing water is a raging sea! (Picture book. 2-5)

[The Old Truck](#) – written and illustrated by Jarrett Pumphrey and Jerome Pumphrey

On a small family farm, an old truck falls into disrepair and lies nearly forgotten, except by the family's daughter. The truck has been part of her daydreams as she grows up and develops strength and independence. As an industrious young woman, she pulls the rusted and overgrown vehicle from its almost-grave and restores it. (Picture book. 3-8)

[One Crazy Summer](#)* – written by Rita Williams-Garcia

In the summer of 1968, after travelling from Brooklyn to Oakland, California, to spend a month with the mother they barely know, 11-year-old Delphine and her two younger sisters arrive to a cold welcome as they discover that their mother, a dedicated poet and printer, is resentful of the intrusion of their visit and wants them to attend a nearby Black Panther summer camp. (Historical fiction. 8+)

[The Parker Inheritance](#)* – written by Varian Johnson

Spending the summer in Lambert, South Carolina, Candice discovers the letter that sent her grandmother on a treasure hunt, and with her new friend Brandon, sets off to expose the injustice once committed against a local African American family. (Mystery. 10+)

[Season of Styx Malone](#)* – written by Kekla Magoon

Brothers Caleb and Bobby Gene Franklin dream of venturing beyond their small town. Their neighbor, Styx Malone, promises the brothers that they can pull off the Great Escalator Trade—exchanging one small thing for something better until they achieve their wildest dream. The brothers soon find themselves in over their heads. Styx has secrets so big they could ruin everything. (Realistic fiction. 10+)

[Stella's Stellar Hair](#) – written and illustrated by Yesenia Moises,

Stella travels planet to planet visiting her aunties looking for a stellar hairdo for the Big Star Little Gala, but she is not convinced by any of their suggestions. (Picture book. 3-7)

[A Story About Afiya](#) – written by James Berry and illustrated by Anna Cunha

Some people have dresses for every occasion but Afiya needs only one. Her dress records the memories of her childhood, from roses in bloom to pigeons in flight, from tigers at the zoo to October leaves falling. A joyful celebration of a young girl's childhood. (Picture book. 3-8)

[Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky](#)* – written by Kwame Mbalia

Seventh-grader Tristan Strong tumbles into the MidPass and, with allies John Henry and Brer Rabbit, must entice the god Anansi to seal the hole Tristan ripped in the sky. (Fantasy. 10+)

[Ways to Make Sunshine](#) – written by Renée Watson

Acclaimed author Renée Watson writes her own version of Ramona Quimby, one starring a Black girl and her family, in this start to a charming new series. (Realistic fiction. 8-10)

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