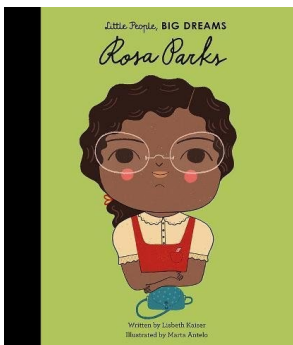


Black History Booklist

A selection of books which highlight Black History across the world. This booklist was originally made to celebrate Black History Month, but these books should be used in your curriculum all year round.

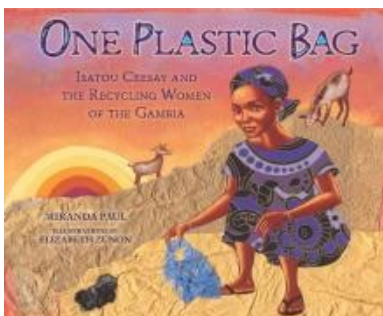
Biographies



Rosa Parks by Lisbeth Kaiser, illustrated by Marta Antelo
Frances Lincoln 9781786030177

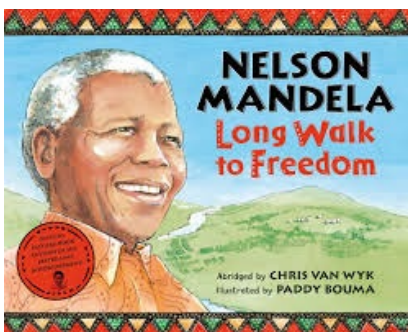
One of a series Little People, Big Dreams aimed at young children and each featuring a woman who has made a significant contribution to society. This book is an account of the life of civil rights activist Rosa Parks, recounted simply and respectfully.

The series also includes *Maya Angelou* 9781847808905



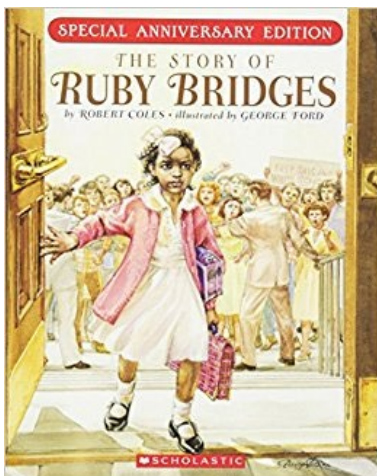
One Plastic Bag by Miranda Paul, illustrated by Elizabeth Zunon
Millbrook Press, USA 9781467716086

The true story of Isatou Ceesay who saw the problem that the proliferation of plastic bags was causing in her country, the Gambia, contaminating the environment and killing the goats that swallowed them. She collaborated with other local women to crochet thread made from the plastic bags to create purses resulting in a thriving trade and reducing pollution. The illustrator grew up in West Africa and has used colourful papers and leftover shopping bags in the creation of her pictures. [A CLPE Power of Reading text.](#)



Long Walk to Freedom by Nelson Mandela, abridged by Chris Van Wyk, illustrated by Paddy Bouma
Macmillan 9781447275541

An admirable distillation of Nelson Mandela's autobiography into a picture book format by a South African writer and illustrator. Mandela describes his childhood, university education, involvement with politics and fight for freedom from apartheid, his long years in prison, and his eventual release and election as President of his country and emergence as one of the most significant figures in recent world history. [A CLPE core book.](#)



The Story of Ruby Bridges by Robert Coles, illustrated by George Ford

Scholastic, USA 9780439472265

The inspiring story of the six year old black girl who had to endure the racism of white people in her community in order to attend elementary school in New Orleans in 1960. A law ordering school integration of black and white children had been passed but still Ruby Bridges had to contend with baying and jeering crowds as she entered her school. She bore the experience with great dignity and with forgiveness in her heart. This picture book was written by a child psychiatrist who knew Ruby during this period. To learn the story from Ruby's point of view and find out what has happened to her in her life subsequently, see

Through My Eyes by Ruby Bridges (Scholastic USA 9780590189231).

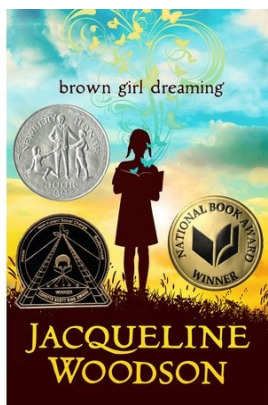
Available from the [Willesden Bookshop](#)



Coming to England by Floella Benjamin, illustrated by Michael Frith

Macmillan 9781509835485

The writer's autobiographical account of her childhood in Trinidad and her family's migration to Britain in 1960. The warmth and strength she gained from her family are strongly evoked, as are her feelings of bewilderment at the ignorance and racism they encountered. This is a new edition to mark the twentieth anniversary of its first publication with a reflective introduction by the author. [A CLPE core book.](#)



Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson

Puffin USA 9780147515827

This book, which has won multiple awards in the USA, is the life story of the author in the style of a verse novel beginning with her birth in 1963. During the course of this beautifully written book readers get to know her extended family within the wider context of African American history. Jacqueline Woodson's evolution as a writer is a strong thread throughout. A Power of Reading teaching sequence is available for Jacqueline Woodson's verse novel [Locomotion](#).

Wangari's Trees of Peace by Jeanette Winter

Harcourt, USA 9780152065454

Mama Miti by Donna Jo Napoli, illustrated by Kadir Nelson

Simon and Schuster, USA 9781416935056

There is a [CLPE teaching sequence](#) for this book

Planting the Trees of Kenya by Claire A. Nivola

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, USA 9780374399184

Wangari Maathai. The Woman Who Planted Millions of Trees

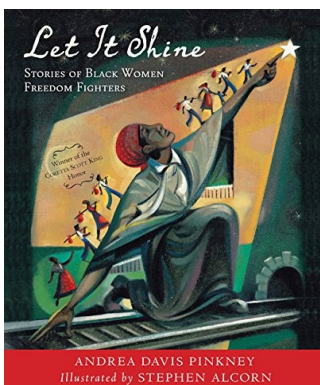
by Franck Prévot, illustrated by Aurélia Fronty, translated from French by Dominique Clément

Charlesbridge, USA 9781580896269

These four picture books describe the life of Wangari Maathai who was the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in encouraging the planting of forests in Kenya and creating the Green Belt movement, contributing to sustainable development and democracy. The illustrator of each book uses different styles and materials to create their pictures. The way Wangari Maathai's life story is told also varies in approach and emphasis. Donna Jo Napoli brings out the healing and useful properties of different kinds of trees, incorporating their Kikuyu names.

Franck Prévot gives more information about the political situation pertaining in Kenya at the time. Claire A. Nivola talks about how the planting of the seeds took place. Jeanette Winter's text is the simplest of the four but does not shy away from the difficulties Wangari encountered.

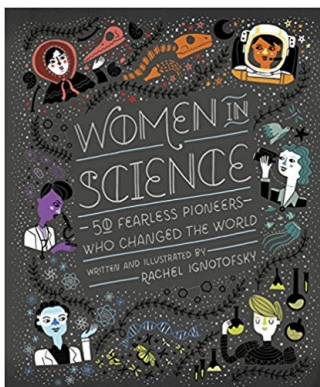




Let It Shine. Stories of Black Women Freedom Fighters by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Stephen Alcorn
Houghton Mifflin 9780547906041

The stories of ten women who contributed to the struggle for American civil rights from the 18th century to the 20th. Some are well known internationally – Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks. All deserve to be. They include Shirley Chisholm, the first African American woman to seek a presidential nomination from a major political party.

Available from [Willesden Bookshop](#)

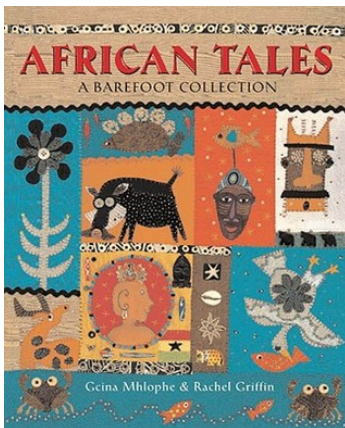


Women in Science: 50 Fearless Pioneers Who Changed the World by Rachel Ignotofsky

Wren & Rook 9781526360519

This appealingly designed book highlights the work of women scientists, ranging widely across the globe and through time. It's really striking what polymaths many of these women were, excelling in several fields of science and across other spheres of knowledge and activity. They include Katherine Johnson, an African-American physicist and mathematician, whose work on calculating flight paths for space missions is featured in the film 'Hidden Figures', and psychologist and civil rights activist Mamie Phipps Clark whose research was instrumental in ending school segregation in the USA. [A CLPE core book.](#)

Traditional Tales



African Tales by Gcina Mhlophe, illustrated by Rachel Griffin
Barefoot Books 9781782853596

These traditional stories from the length and breadth of Africa are retold by a renowned South African storyteller. Each of the eight stories is prefaced by an introduction to the country from which it comes revealing many fascinating cultural and historical details and there is also a contextualising map of the continent. Each is set against a cloth background displaying beautifully crafted illustrations created mainly from fabrics and beads. [CLPE Power of Reading text](#)

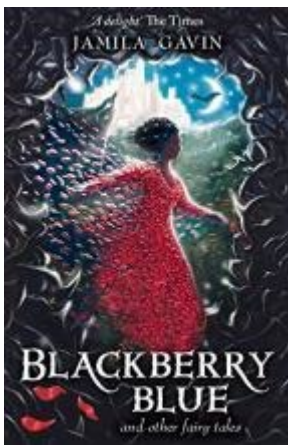


Tales from the Caribbean by Trish Cooke, illustrated by Joe Lillington

Puffin Classics 9780141373089

A terrific collection of tales from all over the Caribbean, retold by an author whose parents came to Britain from Dominica in the 1950s. The stories have a mixture of West African and Amerindian roots. Many are humorous including several about tricksters Anansi and Compère Lapin/Brer Rabbit. Notes at the end of the book contextualise the stories, giving information about the history and cultures of the Caribbean. The style of storytelling makes this collection ideal for reading aloud and ripe for retelling orally.

Also in this Puffin Classics series: *Tales from Africa* by K.P.Kojo
9780141373072



Blackberry Blue by Jamila Gavin, illustrated by Richard Collingridge

Tamarind 9781848531079

Jamila Gavin has fashioned her own set of fairy tales, drawing principally on the European traditions with which she grew up. With the expressed aim of increased inclusivity, she has created characters who are people of colour. For example, the heroine of the title story, which has elements of the Cinderella variant Mossycoat, has 'skin as black as midnight' and 'lips like crushed damsons'. None of the stories is a direct retelling of a traditional story but each incorporates tropes recognisable from folklore and fairy tale. [A CLPE core book.](#)

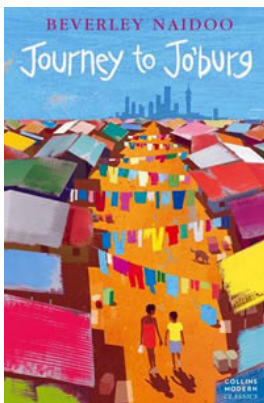
Fiction for Key Stage 2 upwards



A Thief in the Village by James Berry

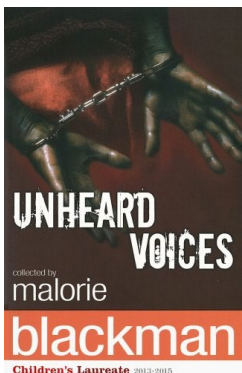
Puffin 9780141368641

These short stories are vignettes of Jamaican village life, full of the rhythms of Caribbean speech. The stories treat of relationships between weak and strong, between generations and among young people. The themes are universal and there is a strong sense of culture and place. [A CLPE core book.](#) One of the first Black writers to receive wider recognition in Britain, sadly James Berry died earlier during 2017 and this is the only children's book by him currently in print. Some of his poems for children are included in the collection of his selected poems *A Story I Am In Bloodaxe* 9781852249175. There is a teaching sequence for his poetry collection *A Nest Full of Stars* [here](#). See James Berry reading from his work on [Poetryline](#).



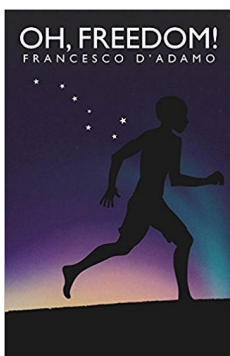
Journey to Jo'burg by Beverley Naidoo, illustrations by Lisa Kopper
HarperCollins 9780007263509

This short novel about two children travelling alone to Johannesburg in apartheid South Africa to find their mother was banned there when it was first published in 1985. Now regarded as a modern classic, this edition has an introduction by Michael Rosen in which he explains its continuing relevance although in some ways it could now be regarded as an historical novel.



Unheard Voices collected by Malorie Blackman
Corgi 9780552556002

This collection was published in 2007 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade act in Britain. It contains stories and poems by modern authors including Sandra Agard, Catherine Johnson, Grace Nichols, John Agard, Benjamin Zephaniah and Malorie Blackman and extracts of writings from and about people who were themselves slaves including Frederick Douglass, Mary Prince, Olaudah Equiano and Harriet Jacobs.

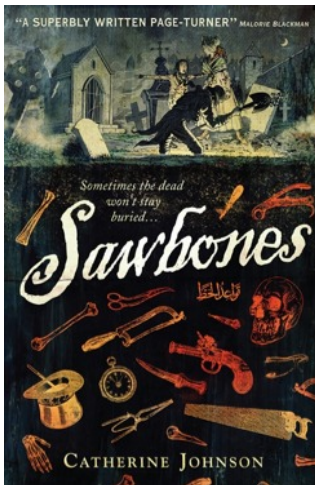


Oh, Freedom! by Francesco d'Adamo, translated from Italian by Siân Williams

Darf Publishing 9781850772859

Tommy and his family are slaves on a cotton plantation in Alabama in 1850. One day a stranger arrives, a free Black man known as Peg Leg Joe and he offers to guide them on a flight to freedom in Canada. And so their journey begins...

Fiction for Key Stage 3 upwards

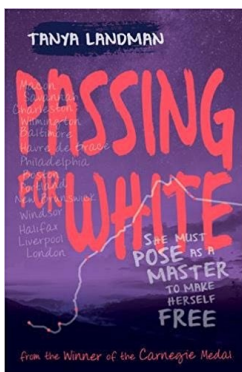


Sawbones by Catherine Johnson

Walker 9781406340570

Set in London in 1792, the hero of this fast-moving novel is Ezra, who was a slave as a child and freed by William McAdam, a surgeon who trains him in his trade in which he becomes very skilled. Their work involves trying to save lives by the amputation of diseased and injured limbs but also dissecting cadavers in order to determine the cause of death. The latter leads to adventure and danger, which is exacerbated when Ezra makes the acquaintance of the redoubtable Loveday Finch. The end of the novel clearly leaves the way open for the sequel *Blade and Bone* (Walker 9781406341874) in which Ezra travels to Paris to seek his friends who have become embroiled in the French Revolution.

Also by Catherine Johnson: *The Curious Tale of the Lady Caraboo*
Corgi 9780552557634



Passing for White by Tanya Landman

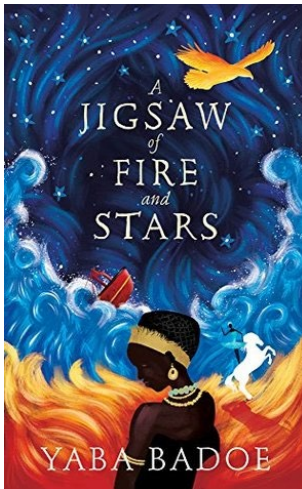
Barrington Stoke 9781781126813

This short teenage novel is inspired by the true story of William and Ellen Craft, slaves in Georgia, USA in 1848 who escaped to the north, only to find their freedom under threat once again. In this fictionalised account, the couple are called Benjamin and Rosa and the story is told from Rosa's perspective, stirring the reader's empathy. As she explains in an afterword, Tanya Landman occasionally uses words which modern readers would consider racist in order to evoke the period accurately.

Also by this author:

Buffalo Soldier Walker 9781406314595 Winner of the CILIP Carnegie Medal

Hell and High Water Walker 9781406366914



A Jigsaw of Fire and Stars by Yaba Badoe, illustrated by Leo Nickolls
Zephyr 9781786695482

Sante, the narrator of this novel, is brought up by Mama Rose and her circus troupe, having been washed up on the shores of Spain as a baby. When she is fourteen she learns of her Ghanaian heritage and that she is named after Asantewaa, an Ashanti warrior queen. The unquiet dead are calling to her in her dreams and she has a destiny to fulfil which is realised when she and her friends become entangled with people-smugglers and sex-traffickers. The first novel for young people by a Ghanaian-British documentary film-maker.