

A K-12 Reading List on Slavery, Race, and African American History and Culture

This list includes recommendations for different ages and entry points into the topics of slavery, racial inequality, and the long fight for justice. Some present the hardest parts of American history, some celebrate individuals and moments of triumph, and some offer inspiration for how we can all fight injustice and inequity today. This list is not comprehensive, as no such list can be. Two additional resources for identifying books on this subject are the Coretta Scott King Book Awards, given to outstanding African American authors and illustrators of books for children and young adults that demonstrate an appreciation of African American culture and universal human values, and the Jane Addams Children's Book Award, which recognizes children's books of literary and aesthetic excellence that effectively engage children in thinking about peace, social justice, global community, and equity for all people.

Elementary (K-5)

History and Biography

Sojourner Truth's Step-Stomp Stride

Angela Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney

Grades K-2

The Youngest Marcher

Cynthia Levinson, illustrated by Vanessa Brantley-Newton

Grades K-3

Brick by Brick

Charles R. Smith Jr.

Grades K-5

Mumbet's Declaration of Independence

Gretchen Woelfle, illustrated by Alix Delinois

Grades K-5

Let It Shine: Stories of Black Women Freedom Fighters

Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Stephen Alcorn

Grades K-5

So Tall Within: Sojourner Truth's Long Walk to Freedom

Gary D. Schmidt, illustrated by Daniel Minter

Grades K-5

Before She was Harriet

Lesa Cline-Ransome

Grades K-5

Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom

Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Kadir Nelson

Grades 3-5

Lillian's Right to Vote: A Celebration of Voting Rights Act of 1965

Jonah Winter, illustrated by Shane W. Evans

Grades 3-5

Schomberg: The Man Who Built the Library

By Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Eric Velasquez

Grades 3-5

Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation

Duncan Tonatiuh

Grades 3-5

Friends for Freedom: Susan B Anthony & Frederick Douglass

Suzanne Slade

Grades 3-5

Heart & Soul: The Story of America and African Americans

Kadir Nelson

Grades 3-8

Freedom Over Me

Written and illustrated by Ashley Bryan

Grades 3-8

Ida B. Wells: Let The Truth Be Told

Walter Dean Meyers

Grades 4-6

Ruby Bridges Goes To School: My True Story

Ruby Bridges

Grades 4-6

Stolen into Slavery: The True Story of Solomon Northup, Free Black Man

Judith Bloom Fradin and Dennis Fradin

Grades 4-6

Hidden Figures (Young Readers' Edition)

Margot Lee Shatterly

Grades 5-8

Maritcha: A Nineteenth-Century American Girl

Tonya Bolden

Grades 4-8

Hand in Hand: Ten Black Men Who Changed America

Andrea Davis Pinkney

Grades 5-8

Books for Conversations about Race, Injustice, and Making a Difference

I, Too, Am America

Poem by Langston Hughes, illustrated by Bryan Collier

Grades K-5

Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story about Racial Injustice

Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard

Grades 3-5

Each Kindness

Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by E. B. Lewis

Grades 3-5

Resist: 35 Profiles of Ordinary People Who Rose Up Against Tyranny and Injustice

Veronica Chambers, illustrated by Paul Ryding

Grades 3-6

Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness

Written and illustrated by Anastasia Higginbotham

Grades 3-6

Middle School and High School (Grades 6-12)

Biography, Autobiography, Memoir

Heart & Soul: The Story of America and African Americans

Kadir Nelson

Grades 3-8

Freedom Over Me

Written and illustrated by Ashley Bryan

Grades 3-8

Maritcha: A Nineteenth-Century American Girl

Tonya Bolden

Grades 4-7

Hidden Figures (Young Readers' Edition)

Margot Lee Shatterly

Grades 5-8

Liberty or Death: The Surprising Story of Runaway Slaves who sided with the British during the American Revolution

Margaret Whitman Blair

Grades 6-8

Freedom's Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories

Ellen S. Levine

Grades 6-8

A Young People's History of the United States

Howard Zinn, adapted by Rebecca Stefoff

Grades 6-12

Never Caught, the Story of Ona Judge: George and Martha Washington's Courageous Slave Who Dared to Run Away (Young Readers Edition)

Erica Armstrong Dunbar and Kathleen Van Cleeve

Grades 6-12

She Came to Slay: The Life and Times of Harriet Tubman

Erica Armstrong Dunbar

Grades 6-12

Strange Fruit Volumes 1 & 2: Uncelebrated Narratives from Black History

Joel Christian Gill

Grades 7-12

The Fire Next Time

James Baldwin

Grades 9-12

Between the World and Me

Ta-Nehisi Coates

Grades 9-12

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave As Written by Himself
Grades 9-12

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself
Harriet Jacobs
Grades 10-12

Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Northern Slave
Grades 10-12

Novels

The Seeds of America Trilogy (Chains, Forge, and Ashes)
Laurie Halse Anderson
Grades 5-10

March (Books 1, 2, and 3)
John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell
Grades 6-12

The Color of Fire and Hang a Tree with a Thousand Ribbons
Ann Rinaldi
Grades 6-12

All-American Boys
Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely
Grades 9-12

The Hate U Give and On the Come Up
Angie Thomas
Grades 9-12

The Underground Railroad
Colton Whitehead
Grades 9-12