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

Lilian’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