

Michigan Celebrates

BLACKHISTORYMONTH

with Literature

WEEK 4

February 2023

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
		1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

Student literacy engagement increases as students see themselves (mirrors) and others (windows) portrayed accurately in their reading as presented in the work of [Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop](#). By raising the consciousness about great Black authors and lifting up their works, we seek to create conditions for greater engagement with literature among Michigan students.

In celebration of Black History Month, the Michigan Department of Education and the Library of Michigan are excited to showcase Black authors and their literary works during each week in the month of February as featured below. The weekday recommendations were selected from nominations submitted by Michigan Teachers of the Year, Michigan Regional Teachers of the Year, and MDE educators and are intended for use by educators. Additionally, each weekend of February features a recommendation from a Michigan student.

February

20

Black is a Rainbow Color

Angela Joy

Grade: preK – 12

ISBN: 978-1626726314

Nominator: Rané Garcia

School/District/Institution:

Director, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Michigan Department of Education

Favorite Quote: 'Black is a rhythm.

Black is the blues. Black is side-walking in spit-shined shoes.'

This 2-page spread in the book refers to the bus boycott of 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama. The imagery on these two pages is rich, and worthy of deep discussion. Additionally, the back of the book

provides more details about the boycott including a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "We came to see that, in the long run, it is more honorable to walk in dignity than ride in humiliation."

Incorporation in Curriculum: "This book connects to all grade levels and my former district used it as a Community Reads book. Young children appreciated the sing song words and beautiful artwork. High school students dug deeper into the historical connections. The book provides multi-disciplinary resources that connect history, great American poets, and music. A local chef and news station created a related instructional cooking video and each family received the ingredients to cook black-eyed peas. As a culminating activity we celebrated by creating a community mural."



February

21

You Matter

Christian Robinson

Grades: K – 2

ISBN: 978-1534421691

Nominator: Laura Chang

School/District/Institution: 2019 Michigan Teacher of the Year, Vicksburg Community Schools

Favorite Quote: “Sometimes you feel lost and alone. But you matter.”

Incorporation in Curriculum:

“This text is a beautifully written and illustrated story to read. It can be used to start open-ended conversations with your students. It addresses different points of view and hints at why a child would feel that they don’t matter. During the times when a child might feel lost, alone, different, or not significant, they may not have the words to express those feelings. This story highlights various situations when a child may need to hear the words ‘You Matter’ as an encouragement.”

February

22

The Color of Water

James McBride

Grades: 9 – 12

ISBN: 978-1594481925

Nominator: Karen Sleno

School/District/Institution: Math Teacher, Flushing High School

Favorite Quote: “God is the color of water. Water doesn’t have a color.”

Incorporation in Curriculum:

“This text was the Flint area Book of the Year. This is a relevant and compelling walk through a young man’s questions about his race.

In *The Color of Water*, McBride retraces his mother’s footsteps and, through her searing and spirited voice, recreates her remarkable story. The daughter of a failed itinerant Orthodox rabbi, she was born Rachel Shilsky (actually Ruchel Dwara Zylska) in Poland on April 1, 1921. Fleeing pogroms, her family emigrated to America and ultimately settled in Suffolk, Virginia, a small town where anti-Semitism and racial tensions ran high. With candor and immediacy, Ruth describes her parents’ loveless marriage; her fragile, handicapped mother; her cruel, sexually-abusive father; and the rest of the family and life she abandoned.”

Goodreads.com



February

23

Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat

Javaka Steptoe

Grades: 3 – 8

ISBN: 978-0316213882

Nominator: Leah Porter

School/District/Institution: 3rd grade teacher, 2021-22 Michigan Teacher of the Year, Wilcox Elementary, Holt Public Schools

Favorite Quote: “Art is the street games of little children, in our style and the words that we speak. It is

how the messy patchwork of the city creates new meaning for ordinary things.”

Incorporation in Curriculum:

“This book, a true story of artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, personifies resilience, perseverance, and never giving up, despite numerous hurdles. The story showcases creative expression, and how each of us has a gift to bestow upon the world. After reading the book, we examine pieces of art by Jean-Michel Basquiat, and create our own art inspired by his work.”

February

24

Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut

Derrick Barnes

Grades: K – 4

ISBN: 978-1572842243

Nominator: Cheldora Haynes

School/District/Institution: Teacher, Martin G Atkins, Bridgeport-Spaulding Community Schools

Favorite Quote: “Who knows? You might just smash that geography

exam tomorrow and rearrange the entire principal’s honor roll. A fresh cut does something to your brain, right?”

Incorporation in Curriculum: “This text is a high-spirited, engaging salute to the beautiful, raw, assured humanity of black boys and how they see themselves when they approve of their reflections in the mirror.”

Agate Publishing

February

25
&
26

The Light We Carry: Overcoming in Uncertain Times

Michelle Obama

Grades: 9 – 12

ISBN: 978-0593237465

Student Nominator: Hiba

[Watch the Student Interview Online](#)

Thank you to all of the Michigan teachers of the year, regional teachers of the year, and MDE educators who nominated Black authors and their literary works, and shared how the educators used the writings with students. Thank you also to the students for sharing their perspectives. Look for the next set of authors and titles on Friday, February 24, 2023.

For additional diverse literature recommendations please visit MDE’s [Equity in Literacy webpage](#).