



# Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

**About the Book of the Month:** This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A World of Difference® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

## The ABCs of Black History

Rio Cortez (Author), Lauren Semmer (Illustrator)

B is for Beautiful, Brave, and Bright! Letter by letter, this book celebrates a story that spans continents and centuries, triumph and heartbreak, creativity and joy. It's a story of big ideas—P is for Power, S is for Science and Soul. Of significant moments—G is for Great Migration. Of iconic figures—H is for Zora Neale Hurston, X is for Malcom X. It's an ABC book like no other, and a story of hope and love. In addition to rhyming text, the book includes back matter with information on the events, places, and people mentioned in the poem.

ISBN: 978-1523507498

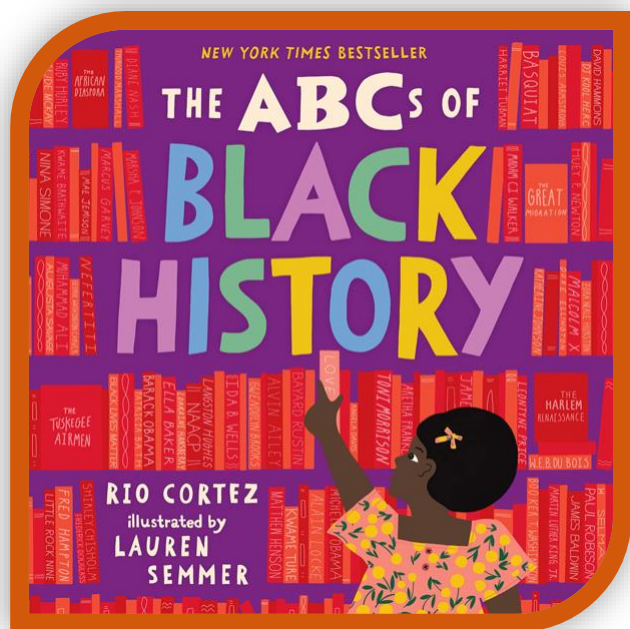
Publisher: Workman Publishing Company

Year Published: 2020

Age Range: 5-18

### Book Themes

Black History, Civil Rights, Racism, Activism, People, Identity and Culture



## Key Words

Discuss and define these words with children prior to reading the book. Do not focus on students' retention of all the words; instead make sure they understand the words enough to follow the story and remind children of the words' meanings as they come up in the book. You can also post the words and point out to students when they appear in the story. For definitions that are differentiated for young children, see ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).

- |              |             |              |               |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| ■ ancestors  | ■ enslaved  | ■ innovative | ■ sit-in      |
| ■ anthem     | ■ expanding | ■ kin        | ■ tilled      |
| ■ bold       | ■ explore   | ■ march      | ■ tough       |
| ■ boycott    | ■ factory   | ■ movement   | ■ trades      |
| ■ challenged | ■ featured  | ■ organize   | ■ unbroken    |
| ■ courage    | ■ freedom   | ■ powerful   | ■ underground |
| ■ creative   | ■ glee      | ■ preach     |               |
| ■ diaspora   | ■ honors    | ■ reclaimed  |               |
| ■ elders     | ■ hue       | ■ rise       |               |

### Note to Teacher:

This book is about Black History so, you might want to kick off the book reading with a discussion about Black History Month. You can elicit/explain that February is Black History Month—an annual celebration of the history, achievements and contributions of Black people in the U.S. Explain that the reason a month is dedicated to honoring Black people, history and culture in the U.S. is because sometimes when history is discussed and taught, Black people are less likely to be included or not included at all. This is due to racism, bias and exclusion. The same is true for other themed months like Women's History Month and Native American Heritage Month. Discuss the importance of focusing on Black history and culture during this month but also stress that Black history is U.S. history and should be part of and incorporated into our teaching and learning throughout the year.

## Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask some or all of these pre-reading questions:

- What and who do you see on the cover of the book?
- What is the title of the book and what do you think it means? What is history?
- What do you think the book might be about?
- What do you think is the goal of ABC books? What do they show about a topic?

As you read the book aloud, ask a few discussion questions periodically throughout reading to check for comprehension and keep the students engaged. Below are some sample questions that correlate to specific page numbers.

- Do you know who Ruby Bridges is? What do you think she did? (page 11)

- What do some of the signs say? What do you think they mean? (page 27)
- What sports do you see on this page? Do you know any of these athletes? (pages 36-37)

After reading the book aloud, ask some or all the following discussion questions:

- What is the book about?
- What thoughts and feelings came up for you as you read the book?
- What did you learn that you didn't know before? What surprised you?
- Who is one person in Black history from the book that stood out to you?
- What is one time period in Black history from the book that stood out to you?
- What is one concept or idea in Black history from the book that stood out to you?
- What is one achievement in Black history from the book that stood out to you?
- What is one aspect of Black culture from the book that stood out to you?
- What is one aspect of joy and celebration from the book that stood out to you?
- How did the illustrations in the book help tell the story of Black history?
- Why is it important to learn about Black History?
- Did anything you learn about challenge what you previously thought or believed? Please explain.
- Why is it important to learn about the people, history and culture of your own identity group(s)? Why is it important to learn about the people, history and culture of other identity group(s)?
- How will you share what you learned with others?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book as an ABCs book?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book?

## Extension Activities

Below are activities for students that can extend learning from the book.

### 1. Favorite Letter/Page(s) and its Meaning

Re-read the book or have students read the book on their own, depending on grade level. After the second reading, have students identify a letter/page(s) that resonates with them, that they like, find meaningful or powerful, or want to learn more about. Ask a few students to share the letter/page they selected and why. With each student that shares (keep this to just a few students), find the corresponding explanation of that page/letter in the back pages of the book ("The ABCs of Black History: Terms and Figures" on pages 54-62) and read that section aloud with the students. Then, have students read on their own their selected letter/page(s) again and reflect on the following: (1) what it means, (2) how they feel while reading it, (3) what they learned, (4) questions they have/what more they want to know. You can then have students share their responses aloud, with a partner or (for older students) have them write a short paragraph essay that responds to the questions. After this, take question #2 "how they feel while reading it" and write all those feeling words and phrases on the board/smart board. Look at the words together and invite students to share their reflections on all the feelings evoked by reading this book.

## 2. Research Project

Show the students the back pages of the book, “The ABCs of Black History: Terms and Figures” on pages 54-62, which provides more information about people, terms, cultural aspects and events in the book. Explain that through the alphabet, the book explores various people, aspects of culture, milestones, moments, terms, and events in Black history, which is integral to U.S. history. Explain that sometimes Black history and the history of racism in the U.S. doesn't get enough attention in school. This happens by covering Black history only a little, or by covering Black history inadequately, incorrectly, or only focusing on it during Black History Month. Explain to students that they are each going to select one of the pages/letters and conduct more research about that person(s), concept, event, place or moment in Black history. They can start with the back pages of the book but should conduct their own research using books and online sources. Students can work individually or in pairs. Have students culminate their research in a project of their choosing—either an essay, PowerPoint presentation, oral or video presentation about the person or event, or a timeline. Younger students can draw a picture with a caption or share aloud what they learned. Some useful websites to use include [History](#), [Biography](#), [Fact Monster](#) and the [Association for the Study of African American Life and History](#).

## 3. Choral Reading of the Book

Divide students into groups of 2 or 3. Explain that the class will work together to do a choral reading of the entire book. Depending on how many small groups you have, break up the alphabet (A-Z) to give each group an equal number of letters (i.e., parts of the book). Assign each group a few consecutive letters and explain that as a small group, they will read aloud their sections. Provide time and space for groups to practice reading their sections aloud. You can invite them to add facial expressions, body movements and/or placards, as an option. Provide time for them to practice over a few days and decide if they will memorize their sections (if age appropriate) or if they will read it. After small groups have practiced, have the whole class practice as a group, doing the choral reading of the whole book with each small group reading in unison. You can then perform this as a class for parents/families, for another class, for the whole school or record it and share on the school's website during Black History Month or other times throughout the year.

## ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and educational resources on Black people identity and culture, Black history and racism.

### Curriculum Resources

10 Ideas for Teaching Black History Month, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/10-ideas-for-teaching-black-history-month](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/10-ideas-for-teaching-black-history-month).

Diverse Books Matter, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/diverse-books-matter](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/diverse-books-matter).

Experiences with Race and Racism, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/experiences-with-race-and-racism](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/experiences-with-race-and-racism).

Lonnie Chavis of 'This is Us' Writes about Racism, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/lonnie-chavis-of-this-is-us-writes-about-racism](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/lonnie-chavis-of-this-is-us-writes-about-racism).

## Websites

### 10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/10-ways-youth-can-engage-in-activism](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/10-ways-youth-can-engage-in-activism)

A list of ideas for bringing social activism into the classroom and outside of the school walls. These strategies can be acted upon individually, organized together as a group and young people can join with a larger effort that is taking place locally or nationally.

### 13 Exceptional Kid Lit Books to Read for Black History Month

[www.adl.org/blog/13-exceptional-kid-lit-books-to-read-for-black-history-month](http://www.adl.org/blog/13-exceptional-kid-lit-books-to-read-for-black-history-month)

Provides a list of recommended children's and young adult books to teach about Black history and the Black experience, a great way to open the door to discussions about these experiences and milestones. Each recommended book comes with discussion guides for educators and families.

### Black History Month

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/black-history-month](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/black-history-month)

Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Here are some lesson plans and resources to help you teach about Black history in your classroom and at home.

### Civil Rights Movement

[www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/civil-rights-movement](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/civil-rights-movement)

Provides historical background information, resources and pictures about the Civil Rights Movement.

### Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/race-talk-engaging-young-people-in-conversations-about](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/race-talk-engaging-young-people-in-conversations-about)

As a society, public conversations about race and racism have increased in volume and intensity. Here are some suggestions and strategies for having classroom conversations with young people about these issues.

## Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

People, Identity & Culture: Black, African American, Caribbean, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[205\]=205](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[205]=205)

Race & Racism, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-8=1&tid\[217\]=217&tid\[218\]=218&tid\[219\]=219&tid\[220\]=220&tid\[221\]=221](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-8=1&tid[217]=217&tid[218]=218&tid[219]=219&tid[220]=220&tid[221]=221)