



Books about Black History and Identity for Children Grades K-6

Stories have the power to open young hearts and minds. Whether you're talking with a child about fairness, bravery, identity, or injustice, books can help start those conversations. Curated by Dr. Jennifer Burke, Assistant Professor, Early, Middle and Exceptional Education at Millersville University, this list brings together powerful children's books that explore the history of abolition and the Underground Railroad, the fight for civil rights, and what it means to stand up for what's right. These titles—full of courage, hope, and humanity—offer age-appropriate ways to learn, reflect, and imagine a more just world. These are all picture books for elementary school-aged audiences and can be used meaningfully up to 6th grade.

Theme: The Underground Railroad & Abolitionist Heroes

***Unspoken: A Story from the Underground Railroad* by Henry Cole**

Told without words, this haunting and beautifully illustrated book relies on visuals to convey a powerful story of courage and moral conviction. I love how it invites readers to interpret and infer, making it perfect for rich classroom discussions. Its silence speaks volumes about bravery and humanity.

***William Still and His Freedom Stories: The Father of the Underground Railroad* by Don Tate**

This book gives overdue attention to William Still, a vital but often overlooked figure in the abolitionist movement. I appreciate the balance of historical accuracy and engaging storytelling. It encourages young readers to explore untold histories and recognize the power of documenting lived experiences with children.

Theme: Civil Rights & Social Justice

***We Shall Overcome: The Story of a Song* by Debbie Levy**

This book beautifully traces the evolution of a powerful protest song that became an anthem for civil rights. I love how it connects historical moments across generations through music. The illustrations and lyrical narrative make the story accessible and emotionally resonant for young readers.

Theme: Addressing Stereotypes and Encouraging Conversations About Racial Identity

***Grandpa, Is Everything Black Bad?* by Sandy Lynne Holman**

This book is a meaningful conversation starter about internalized racism and the importance of positive cultural identity. I appreciate how it uses a child's question to open a dialogue between generations. It empowers young readers to explore and challenge harmful narratives.

***Courtney's Birthday Party* by Dr. Loretta Long**

This book directly addresses prejudice in a way children can understand and discuss. I admire how it presents a real-life situation—an exclusion from a party—and then models inclusive behavior. It's a valuable resource for talking about fairness, empathy, and making thoughtful choices.

Theme: Children as Agents of Change

***The Youngest Marcher* by Cynthia Levinson**

I love this book because it centers a young girl, Audrey Faye Hendricks, who made a big impact during the Civil Rights Movement. It shows children that their voices and actions matter, even in the face of injustice. The story is both inspiring and empowering for students of all ages.

***What Can a Citizen Do?* by Dave Eggers & Shawn Harris**

This book is an energetic, hopeful invitation for kids to recognize their power and responsibility as citizens. I love its inclusive message that citizenship isn't just about laws—it's about care, collaboration, and action. The whimsical illustrations and rhyming text make civic engagement feel joyful and possible.

Theme: Education as Liberation

***Freedom's School* by Lesa Cline-Ransome**

This story follows a determined young girl attending school for the first time after emancipation, reminding us that education is a revolutionary act. I love how it captures both the hardships and hope tied to learning during Reconstruction. There are not many Reconstruction picture books.