

Ideas for Black History Month

Introduction

In the UK Black History Month is celebrated every October. This is a fantastic opportunity to amplify Black voices and histories. Integration of Black History in the academic curriculum should be embedded throughout the year, but this month is a useful way of ensuring that these often marginalised stories are given the time and attention they deserve.

Assemblies and Talks

During this month in particular, schools may want to provide talks and assemblies to pupils on cultural diversity and anti-racism. The City of Portsmouth is rich in cultural diversity and within your own school there are likely to be many cultures. Inviting pupils, parents and staff to share their experiences can be a great way to celebrate difference, and to build empathy in the pupils. There are also many external speakers you may want to invite.

Food and Music

One of the best ways to make this month feel like a celebration is to showcase food and music from around the world. Projects leading up to this month can be used to prepare for this and to engage as many members of your community as possible. A word of warning – Avoid a Focus on superficial cultural traits based on stereotypes. It is great to celebrate Black music, but teachers should also explore the political and social contexts that give rise to musical forms like hip hop.

TV & Movies

- Black and British : A forgotten History
 - Historian David Olusoga explores the enduring relationship between Britain and people whose origins lie in Africa. BBC. 4 Episodes Available [here](#)
- Small Axe
 - Love letters to Black resilience and triumph in London's West Indian community, directed by Oscar winner Steve McQueen. Vivid stories of hard-won victories in the face of racism. BBC. 5 Episodes Available [here](#)
- Malcolm X
- Say Her Name:: The Life and Death of Sandra Bland
- Hidden Figures
- Twelve Years a Slave
- The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
- When They See Us
- 13th
- Selma
- Fruitvale Station
- Rest in Power: The Treyvon Martin Story
- One Night in Miami

- The Underground Railroad
- One Night in Miami

Reading Lists

- You can use these excellent recommendations [here](#) for younger and older pupils
- Check out these fantastic Wakelets from the Portsmouth Grammar School librarian:
 - <https://wakelet.com/wake/LebqnGp6GO3SobzVW0voV>
 - <https://wke.lt/w/s/RMv55R>
 - https://drive.google.com/file/d/18XPI2qiN1FCpAyG_Qw2yVQM_3ZD511QR/view?usp=sharing

Activities

- **Quote or fact of the day**
 - Every morning, greet your pupils with a new quote or fact that's relevant to Black history. Say them aloud during your lesson, add them to a bulletin board or send them in an online message. After this, you can open a discussion with your class about the relevance of each quote or fact.
 - - 'I am asking you not to be colour blind, but to be colour brave' Melody Hobson
- **Person of the day or week**
 - Take time to talk about Black influencers and their accomplishments. Highlight a different person every day or week and center your lessons around them! Explore categories like: actors, artists, writers, athletes, activists, musicians, politicians, filmmakers, historical figures, heroes and iconic leaders, scientists and mathematicians. *Tip: Try to look beyond typical historical figures and popular celebrities. There are plenty of Black contributors pupils may not have even heard of yet — use this chance to introduce them!*
- **Timeline activity**
 - Provide more context on important events in Black history with a bit of chronology. Have students put together their own timelines, whether individually or in groups, that focus on specific historical events or people. They'll have fun putting all the events together *and* learn lots along the way!
- **Study (and create) art**

- o Art in the Black community carries so much historical and cultural significance that can inspire some great, illuminative lessons.
- o Assign one of these activities from [Creative Child](#), or get students to:
 - Write a story
 - Make a video or podcast
 - Create visual art or crafts
- **Use literacy to explore British history**
 - o Narratives of the African American experience and South African apartheid are important for young people to learn about, but it is equally important to learn about the experiences of Black people in Britain. One way to explore key events from history is through creative writing and poetry.
 - o An event schools often choose to study is [Windrush](#) – you may have missed the day to mark it back in June if your school was closed, but there are lots of resources out there to help, such as these informative [resources from the Black Cultural Archives](#) to provide context, a range of creative ideas from [Brent Museum & Archives](#), these [writing ideas from The British Library](#), and [this Royal Museums Greenwich resource](#) that includes a spoken word activity.
 - o The [Black in the Day Instagram account](#) is a submission based archive of Black life in Britain - you could choose a selection to look at with pupils and practice visual literacy by [reading the photos](#).
- **Celebrate the achievements of Black Britons**
 - o Instead of simply sharing a short biography of a person with your class, you could challenge them to do their own research and put together a [creative fact-file](#), or use drama to role-play key events

and hot-seat as individuals. The [Black History Month website](#) is a useful tool for information and profiles on a variety of people and events. This year they have created a resource pack including posters, worksheets and teaching notes.

- o [The Black Curriculum](#) have learning packages and some [free resources](#) for KS2 and KS3 which focus on some notable figures such as Lilian Bader and Fanny Eaton, and include an animation with prompts for pupils to respond to, from portrait drawing to poetry.
- o You can find video and sound profiles of some notable figures on [the BBC](#) along with creative activities and ideas. For example, why not use [this video about Victorian Showman Pablo Fanque](#) to inspire performances in P.E? Or have a go at designing and writing your own show advertisements?

Black History Month – Recommendations:

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hear from people from ethnic minorities 'nothing about us without us' ● Remind pupils that Black history <i>is</i> British history ● Find opportunities to embed Black history and voices throughout your curricular ● Make the celebration meaningful ● Pay Black speakers/ experts for their time ● Connect issues from the past to current issues ● Allow lots of opportunity for discussion and reflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Only focus on American Black history ● Be tokenistic – this is not a 'one and done' ● Traumatise pupils. If you are going to teach slavery do so in context, not as the only part of Black history you are focusing on ● Taalk about Black history in solely "feel-good" language, or as a thing of the past. This fails to help students examine how racism manifests itself today. ● Stop your regular curriculum (integrate Black stories/ scholars instead)