

BLACK HISTORY

Month

& Beyond!

JOYcabulary

Black History is American History



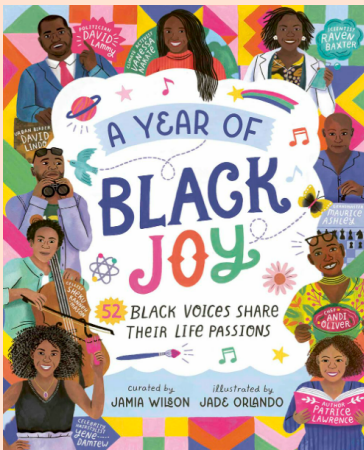
In our current political climate, there is much debate on how and what to teach about the experience and contributions of Black people to US history, society, and culture. Relegating Black History to one month has the potential to trivialize and marginalize anything you are teaching, treating leaders like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. as tokens of their culture and ethnicity. [LearningforJustice.org](https://www.learningforjustice.org) cautions us to be aware of decontextualizing heroes and holidays, separating them from a larger social movement or historical place. Even when celebrating Black music, it is important not to focus on superficial cultural traits based on stereotypes. The **challenge** is to keep **instruction** within the parameters of **child development** while **accurately** communicating that **Black history is American history**.

Read Alouds Celebrating African Americans and the Arts



The 2024 theme for Black History Month is **African Americans and the Arts**. Two new picture books fit perfectly with this theme. The first is **Jason Reynolds' 2023 debut picture book *There Was a Party for Langston: King of Letters***. In his author's note, Reynolds details how this story idea came from a photo of Maya Angelou and Amiri Baraka dancing (*Teaching point: Writing ideas come from many places*). His book celebrates words and *word makers* while embedding concepts in Black history. The illustrations by Juman and Jarrett Pumphrey contain both lighter and deep information, so this book can be shared and understood across age levels. The front and back flyleaf and end papers are set up as books on a shelf: black authors in the front and the books of Lanston Hughs in the back. It is like a menu for older students to expand their reading - from the poems of Nikki Giovanni to a novel by Alex Haley. Older readers who have not yet met Jason Reynolds' work may head to their own library to discover his novels. **All of this is threaded with a beat of music, laughter and celebration.**

Read Alouds Celebrating African Americans and the Arts



Next up is *A Year of Black Joy: 52 Black Voices Share Their Life Passions* curated by **Jamia Wilson**. This book accomplishes so much! While recognizing Black achievements, it can ignite the imagination - expanding the idea around “what I want to be when I grow up.” *A Year of Black Joy* goes beyond Black History Month. It is structured around lesser-known holidays such as February’s *World Wetlands Day* and *International Day of Women and Girls in Science*. Each holiday is matched with a global Black leader connected to the topic. Across a two-page spread, we are given some biographical information and a related activity or further information on the topic. The vocabulary of each career is sprinkled in the content.

Wilson begins this collection by posing the question “*What brings you joy?*” She goes on to write...

“Joy is limitless and can inspire, connect, heal and transform individuals, communities, and the world. And Black joy is as diverse as we are as a diaspora of people with myriad cultures, languages, ideas, and interests.”



Finally, since Black History Month is so entwined in politics, we have *Shirley Chisholm is a Verb!* By **Veronica Chambers**. During this month, we tend to return to familiar biographies: Lincoln, Washington, Rosa Parks, Ruby Bridges, and Martin Luther King Jr. Here is a biography of a woman my fellow New Yorkers may know, but she may be new to most... even though she was a member of Congress and ran for the presidential nomination. There is a verb in bold print on almost every page.

“Verbs are words that move the world forward.”

You will enJOY returning to these collections throughout the year.

Spread the Word. Spread the Joy.

The logo for JOYcabulary features the word 'JOY' in large, colorful, block letters (J is blue, O is green, Y is yellow) with a dashed outline. To the left of 'JOY' is a small icon of a bookshelf with three books. The word 'cabulary' is in a smaller, red, lowercase font.