

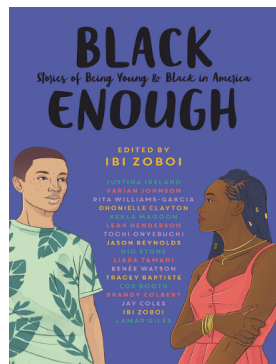
Black History Month Reading Recommendations for Teens

This list is not exhaustive nor completely representative of all of the amazing fiction and nonfiction available for our youth touching upon moments ranging from struggle and grief to hope and joy for our Black and Brown communities. It is, however, what we hope will be a jumping off point for our middle and high school students, and even adults, to seek out other titles by and about people of color.

Please note: if a title you are interested in has a wait list, please don't hesitate to place a hold on it; holds lists are reviewed to ensure that items will most likely be available to borrow sooner than the wait time estimate given.



[Black Birds in the Sky by Brandy Colbert](#) - In the early morning of June 1, 1921, a white mob marched across the train tracks in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and into its predominantly Black Greenwood District--a thriving, affluent neighborhood known as America's Black Wall Street. They brought with them firearms, gasoline, and explosives. In a few short hours, they'd razed thirty-five square blocks to the ground, leaving hundreds dead. The Tulsa Race Massacre is one of the most devastating acts of racial violence in US history. But how did it come to pass? What exactly happened? And why are the events unknown to so many of us today?



[Black Enough edited by Ibi Zoboi](#) - Black is urban and rural, wealthy and poor, mixed race, immigrants, and more—because there are countless ways to be Black enough. *Black Enough* is an essential collection of captivating stories about what it's like to be young and Black in America.



[Dear Martin by Nic Stone](#) - Justyce McAllister is a good kid, an honor student, and always there to help a friend—but none of that matters to the police officer who just put him in handcuffs. Despite leaving his rough neighborhood behind, he can't escape the scorn of his former peers or the ridicule of his new classmates. Justyce looks to the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for answers. But do they hold up anymore? He starts a journal to Dr. King to find out. Then comes the day Justyce goes driving with his best friend, Manny, windows rolled down, music turned up, sparking the fury of a white off-duty cop beside them. Words fly.

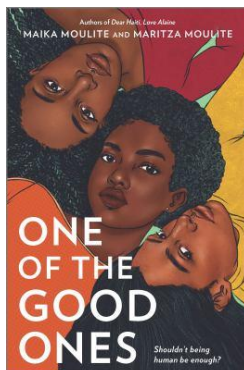
Shots are fired. Justyce and Manny are caught in the crosshairs. In the media fallout, it's Justyce who is under attack.



[The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas](#) - Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed. Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr.

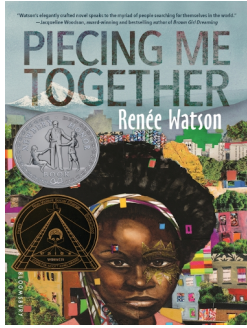


[March by John Lewis & Andrew Aydin, illustrated by Nate Powell](#) - March is a vivid first-hand account of John Lewis' lifelong struggle for civil and human rights, meditating in the modern age on the distance traveled since the days of Jim Crow and segregation. Rooted in Lewis' personal story, it also reflects on the highs and lows of the broader civil rights movement.



[One of the Good Ones by Maika and Maritza Moulite](#) - When teen social activist and history buff Kezi Smith is killed under mysterious circumstances after attending a social justice rally, her devastated sister Happi and their family are left reeling in the aftermath. As Kezi becomes another immortalized victim in the fight against police brutality, Happi begins to question the idealized way her sister is remembered. Perfect. Angelic. "One of the good ones." Even as the phrase rings wrong in her mind--why are only certain people deemed worthy to be missed?--Happi and her sister Genny embark on a journey to honor Kezi in their own way, using an heirloom copy of The Negro Motorist Green Book as their guide.

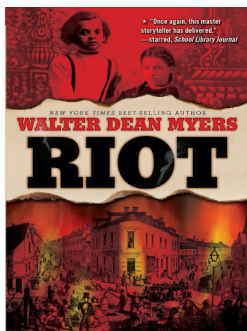
But there's a twist to Kezi's story that no one could've ever expected--one that will change everything all over again.



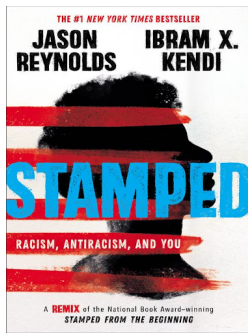
[*Piecing Me Together* by Renée Watson](#) - Jade believes she must get out of her poor neighborhood if she's ever going to succeed. Her mother tells her to take advantage of every opportunity that comes her way. And Jade has: every day she rides the bus away from her friends and to the private school where she feels like an outsider, but where she has plenty of opportunities. But some opportunities she doesn't really welcome, like an invitation to join Women to Women, a mentorship program for "at-risk" girls. Just because her mentor is black and graduated from the same high school doesn't mean she understands where Jade is coming from. She's tired of being singled out as someone who needs help, someone people want to fix. Jade wants to speak, to create, to express her joys and sorrows, her pain and her hope. Maybe there are some things she could show other women about understanding the world and finding ways to be real, to make a difference.



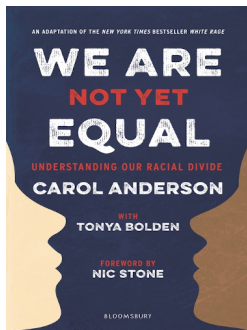
[*Punching the Air* by Ibi Zoboi & Yusef Salaam](#) - Amal Shahid has always been an artist and a poet. But even in a diverse art school, because of a biased system he's seen as disruptive and unmotivated. Then, one fateful night, an altercation in a gentrifying neighborhood escalates into tragedy. "Boys just being boys" turns out to be true only when those boys are white. Suddenly, at just sixteen years old, Amal is convicted of a crime he didn't commit and sent to prison. Despair and rage almost sink him until he turns to the refuge of his words, his art. This never should have been his story. But can he change it?



[*Riot* by Walter Dean Myers](#) - During a long hot July in 1863, the worst race riots the United States has ever seen erupt in New York City. Earlier that year, desperate for more Union soldiers, President Abraham Lincoln instituted a draft--a draft that would allow the wealthy to escape serving in the army by paying a \$300 waiver, more than a year's income for the recent immigrant Irish. And on July 11, as the first drawing takes place in Lower Manhattan, the city of New York explodes in rage and fire. The police cannot hold out against the rioters, and finally, battle-hardened soldiers are ordered back from the fields of Gettysburg to put down the insurrection, which they do--brutally. Fifteen-year-old Claire, the beloved daughter of a black father and Irish mother, finds herself torn between the two warring sides. Faced with the breakdown of the city--the home--she has loved, Claire must discover the strength and resilience to address the new world in which she finds herself, and to begin the hard journey of remaking herself and her identity.



[Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You by Jason Reynolds & Ibram X. Kendi](#) - This remarkable reimaging of Dr. Ibram X. Kendi's National Book Award-winning *Stamped from the Beginning* reveals the history of racist ideas in America, and inspires hope for an antiracist future. It takes you on a race journey from then to now, shows you why we feel how we feel, and why the poison of racism lingers. It also proves that while racist ideas have always been easy to fabricate and distribute, they can also be discredited.



[We Are Not Yet Equal: Understanding Our Racial Divide by Carol Anderson & Tonya Bolden](#) - When America achieves milestones of progress toward full and equal black participation in democracy, the systemic response is a consistent racist backlash that rolls back those wins. *We Are Not Yet Equal* examines five of these moments: The end of the Civil War and Reconstruction was greeted with Jim Crow laws; the promise of new opportunities in the North during the Great Migration was limited when blacks were physically blocked from moving away from the South; the Supreme Court's landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was met with the shutting down of public schools throughout the South; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 led to laws that disenfranchised millions of African American voters and a War on Drugs that disproportionately targeted blacks; and the election of President Obama led to an outburst of violence including the death of black teen Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri as well as the election of Donald Trump.



[X by Ilyasah Shabazz & Kekla Magoon](#) - Malcolm Little's parents have always told him that he can achieve anything, but from what he can tell, that's a pack of lies—after all, his father's been murdered, his mother's been taken away, and his dreams of becoming a lawyer have gotten him laughed out of school. There's no point in trying, he figures, and lured by the nightlife of Boston and New York, he escapes into a world of fancy suits, jazz, girls, and reefer. But Malcolm's efforts to leave the past behind lead him into increasingly dangerous territory. Deep down, he knows that the freedom he's found is only an illusion—and that he can't run forever. *X* follows Malcolm from his childhood to his imprisonment for theft at age twenty, when he found the faith that would lead him to forge a new path and command a voice that still resonates today.