



# CELEBRATE DIVERSITY WITH HARPERCOLLINS CHILDREN'S BOOKS

## Black History Month Classroom Kit

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### About This Guide

HarperCollins Children's Books is pleased to offer a variety of fiction and nonfiction books that explore African American history and culture. The fabric of the American population is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, and it is crucial that children's books have characters that represent this. The following collection of African American literature is undoubtedly important for all children, both because it provides recognizable histories and cultures for children of color and because it introduces new perspectives for all children. This guide is designed to provide a spectrum of curricular activities and connections among the selected titles.

## CONTENTS

### **Historical**

God Bless the Child



By Billie Holiday and Arthur Herzog, Jr.

Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney

Barefoot: Escape on the  
Underground Railroad

By Pamela Duncan Edwards

Illustrated by Henry Cole

### **African American Biographies**

I've Seen the Promised Land:



The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

By Walter Dean Myers

Illustrated by Leonard Jenkins

Langston Hughes: American Poet

By Alice Walker

Illustrated by Catherine Deeter

Malcolm X: A Fire Burning Brightly

By Walter Dean Myers

Illustrated by Leonard Jenkins

Rosa Parks

By Eloise Greenfield

Illustrated by Gil Ashby

### **Legends**

A Pride of African Tales



By Donna L. Washington

Illustrated by James Ransome

Big Jabe

By Jerdine Nolen

Illustrated by Kadir Nelson

### **African American Artwork**

Beauty, Her Basket



By Sandra Belton

Illustrated by Cozbi A. Cabrera

A Nest Full of Stars



By James Berry

Illustrated by Ashley Bryan

Anesa Lee and the Weaver's Gift

By Nikki Grimes

Illustrated by Ashley Bryan

### **Multicultural**

All the Colors of the Earth

Written and illustrated by Sheila Hamanaka

black is brown is tan

By Arnold Adoff

Illustrated by Emily Arnold McCully

Brown Honey in Broomwheat Tea

By Joyce Carol Thomas

Illustrated by Floyd Cooper

Crowning Glory

By Joyce Carol Thomas

Illustrated by Brenda Joysmith

### **Fight for Freedom**

The first two sections of this guide are organized by Historical titles and African American Biographies and explore slave history and the civil rights movement. The books and suggested activities probe the notion of freedom, and look at how slaves and abolitionists fought for the freedom of black people.

### **Found Identity**

The next two sections include Legends and Art titles and present African American art, poetry, and traditional tales. The suggested activities incorporate black history and illustrate how this history has influenced art, literature, and music.

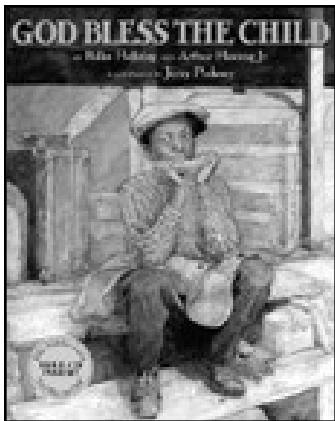
### **Fabric of Faces**

This guide concludes with a selection of Multicultural titles, which convey the message that each of us has a unique history. By sharing our stories with one another, we can weave new communities and greater understanding of our diverse heritage.



# HISTORICAL TITLES

The migration from the South has been a significant part of African American history. Before slavery was outlawed in the United States in 1865, abolitionists formed underground organizations to help slaves escape—these became known as the Underground Railroad. In the early 1900s, thousands of African Americans moved to the North to seek economic and social freedom—a movement known as the Great Migration. Explore these two periods of history in the picture book titles *God Bless the Child* and *Barefoot: Escape on the Underground Railroad*.



## God Bless the Child

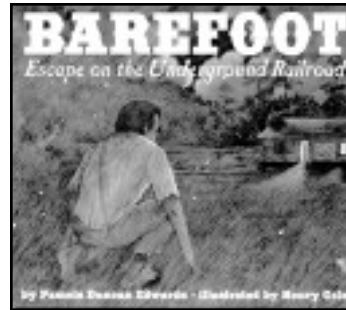
By Billie Holiday and  
Arthur Herzog, Jr.  
Illustrated by  
Jerry Pinkney  
All ages and grades  
Tr 0-06-028797-7  
Lb 0-06-029487-6



Amistad

In this picture book interpretation of the classic jazz song “God Bless the Child,” renowned illustrator Jerry Pinkney has created images of a family moving from the rural South to the urban North during the Great Migration.

At the end of *God Bless the Child*, Jerry Pinkney describes his research process for illustrating this book. After reading his “Artist’s Note,” compare his portrayal of the South and North. Notice the details that are used to differentiate between these two settings during the era of the Great Migration—look at the people’s clothes, surroundings, etc.



## Barefoot: Escape on the Underground Railroad

By Pamela Duncan Edwards  
Illustrated by Henry Cole  
Ages 5–9 • Grades K–4  
Tr 0-06-027137-X  
Pb 0-06-443519-9

In this story of courage, an escaping slave’s experience is seen through the eyes of animals along the Underground Railroad.



## Introduction:

Write the word *freedom* on the blackboard or on chart paper, and ask students what freedom means to them. How would they feel if their freedom was taken away?

## Writing Activity: Underground Railroad

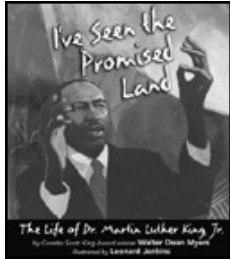
Explain that the Underground Railroad was not literally a railroad but an underground network of people. Introduce famous leaders of the Underground Railroad. Have students imagine that they are “conductors,” working as part of the Underground Railroad network, and ask them to record their experiences in a writing journal. Leading questions are: What would you need to know to help slaves escape to the North? How would you build trust with escaping slaves and their families? Would you tell your neighbors that you were part of the Underground Railroad?

## Art Activity: Read a Song, Paint a Song

Play the song “God Bless the Child,” and have students think about how Jerry Pinkney’s art complements the lyrics and why. Look at the spread in the cotton fields, and discuss how traditional slave songs were sung to express slaves’ hope for freedom while they worked. Log on to the Index of Spiritual Titles website ([http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/TWH/TWH\\_index.html](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/TWH/TWH_index.html)) and read other traditional songs to the class. Select an appropriate slave song (or have the class choose a favorite song) and organize a classroom project to illustrate a picture book to the lyrics, as Jerry Pinkney did for “God Bless the Child.” Before beginning, discuss images and art mediums that would best express the chosen song.

# AFRICAN AMERICAN BIOGRAPHIES

The courageous acts of many people led to the abolition of slavery and the achievement of civil rights. Introduce students to some of these famous people.

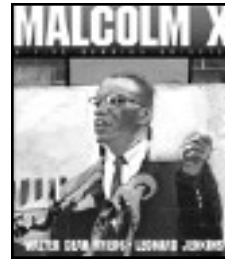


## I've Seen the Promised Land: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

By Walter Dean Myers  
Illustrated by Leonard Jenkins  
Ages 5–8 • Grades K–3  
Tr 0-06-027703-3  
Lb 0-06-027704-1



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., led a nonviolent crusade for social justice and inspired millions of people to seek equality through peaceful protest. Walter Dean Myers tells his dramatic story, set against a backdrop of key moments in the civil rights movement.



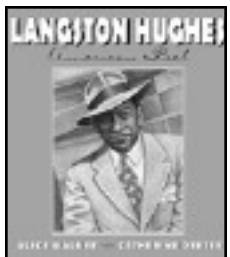
## Malcolm X: A Fire Burning Brightly

By Walter Dean Myers  
Illustrated by Leonard Jenkins  
Ages 5–8 • Grades K–3  
Tr 0-06-027707-6  
Lb 0-06-027708-4  
Pb 0-06-056201-3



- *School Library Journal* Best Book
- Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies (NCSS/CBC)
- New York Public Library's "One Hundred Titles for Reading and Sharing"

From one of America's finest writers for young people comes a straightforward look at one of the most influential and controversial leaders of the civil rights movement.



## Langston Hughes: American Poet

By Alice Walker  
Illustrated by Catherine Deeter  
Ages 7–11 • Grades 2–6  
Tr 0-06-021518-6  
Lb 0-06-021519-4



This is a moving picture book biography of the poet Langston Hughes written by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker.



## Rosa Parks

By Eloise Greenfield  
Illustrated by Gil Ashby  
Ages 7–9 • Grades 2–4  
Lb 0-06-027110-8  
Pb 0-06-442025-6

- Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies (NCSS/CBC)

This is a biography of the courageous woman who helped to spark the modern civil rights movement when she refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger.

## Introduction:

Lead a class discussion about heroism. Ask students to name qualities that are heroic and why. What is the difference between a hero and a leader? Name some famous people who were recognized for their work only after they died.

## Art Activity: Hero Certificates

Read any of the biography titles listed above to introduce the lesson. Ask students to name people who make the world a better place to live. How? Have students think about people in their own lives who have helped them during a difficult time. Photocopy a blank certificate, with space to write a person's name and heroic act. Have students fill in the name of their personal hero on the certificate and write a sentence about what this person did to help them. Students can also draw a picture of their hero.

## Research Activity, Part 1: Gathering Facts

Assign students to small groups to research one of the historical figures listed below. Each group should research a different person. Provide the following guidelines for fact gathering: write the years of this person's lifetime on a *pink Post-it note*; write where

this person lived on a *blue Post-it note*; write the person's major contribution to the American civil rights movement on a *yellow Post-it note*; and write one other interesting fact on a *green Post-it note*.

- Frederick Douglass
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Sojourner Truth
- Nat Turner
- Marcus Garvey
- Malcolm X
- Harriet Tubman
- Booker T. Washington

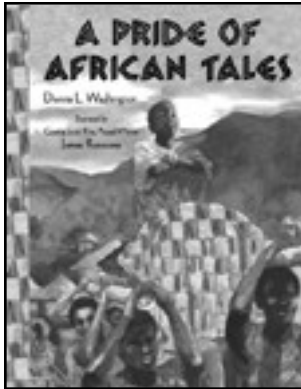
## Research Activity, Part 2: Time Line

On the board or on chart paper, create a time line spanning from 1800 through the present. Use this time line to present students' findings from the above activity. Have each group read aloud facts about the person they researched, and then place their Post-it notes on the time line. Students should record information about each historical figure into their notebooks and use the information to complete the enclosed reproducible [African Americans in History](#) crossword puzzle (answers below). Make arrangements for other classrooms to view this time line of events from the American civil rights movement.

Across: 1. Frederick Douglass 2. Sojourner Truth 3. Harriet Tubman 4. Nat Turner  
Down: 1. Booker T. Washington 2. Martin Luther King, Jr. 3. Malcolm X 4. Marcus Garvey

# LEGENDS

Legends are stories that are handed down from earlier times and provide accounts of historical periods or events. Oftentimes legends are exaggerated with descriptions to keep them interesting and memorable. Storytelling, or oral history, is one way to preserve memories. All families and cultures have oral histories, so that each generation can pass along traditions to the next one.



**A Pride of African Tales**  
By Donna L. Washington  
Illustrated by James Ransome  
Ages 6–10 • Grades 1–5  
Tr 0-06-024929-3  
Lb 0-06-024932-3



This lavishly illustrated full-color collection of African tales has something for everyone. There are stories about wisdom, foolishness, anger, and forgiveness; funny stories and scary stories set in Cameroon, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, and Nigeria.



**Big Jabe**  
By Jerdine Nolen  
Illustrated by Kadir Nelson  
Ages 6 up • Grades 1 up  
Tr 0-688-13662-1  
Lb 0-688-13663-X  
Pb 0-06-054061-3  
• *Publishers Weekly* Best Book



In this original tall tale, Jerdine Nolen has created a John Henry–sized hero with the strength of fifty men, a heart as big as all outdoors, and a mysterious gift at spirited slaves away to freedom.

In the front pages of *Big Jabe*, author Jerdine Nolen's dedication reads: "For all those, long gone, who gave help, tried to help, or wanted to help, and made some lives roll easier." After studying the history of slavery, name some of the people who you think inspired her to write this tale.

## Introduction:

Introduce students to the central components of legends and record them on chart paper:

1. Define myth, legend, folktale.
2. Identify main character and voice in selected reading.
3. Identify the theme or moral in selected reading.
4. Identify the legend's context in selected reading.

Read *Big Jabe* aloud to the class. As a class, identify examples of the above components and write them on the chart paper. This will provide a model for students to complete the following writing activity.

## Writing Activity:

### Speak Your Family's Legend

Students will write their own legends following the above model. The story should revolve around a familiar family tale. Leading questions are: At family gatherings, is there a funny story that is repeatedly told? Think of a grandparent or another older family member and the stories this person has shared about his or her childhood.

Once \_\_\_\_\_ students

have identified a family anecdote, ask them to use steps one through four as a pre-writing exercise. Have students share their completed stories in small groups or to the whole class.

## Geography Activity: Explore Africa!

Photocopy a map of the African continent and have students locate the following countries, where the stories in *A Pride of African Tales* originated.

- Cameroon
- Congo
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Ghana
- Nigeria
- Republic of Zaire

Ask students to color each country and make a corresponding color key. As an extension activity, older students can include population, climate, and topographical information on their maps.

# AFRICAN AMERICAN ART

During the 1920s, between World Wars I and II, African American art, music, and literature gained recognition as a significant cultural movement. This era is known as the Harlem Renaissance. Many people of color from the South and the Caribbean moved to Harlem in New York City during this period, and this blending of cultures helped African American art to flourish. Memory and personal experience provide inspiration for music, art, and literature; thus slave history and the struggle for freedom are an integral part of African American literature.



## Beauty, Her Basket

By Sandra Belton  
Illustrated by Cozbi Cabrera  
Ages 5 up • Grades K up  
Tr 0-688-17821-9  
Lb 0-688-17822-7  
A Greenwillow Book



Nana's sweetgrass basket holds secrets and stories and smells of the sea. A young girl learns about her own family and about African American history when she spends a summer with her grandmother in the islands.



## Aneesa Lee and the Weaver's Gift

By Nikki Grimes  
Illustrated by Ashley Bryan  
Ages 8 up • Grades 3 up  
Tr 0-688-15997-4

Poet Nikki Grimes and artist Ashley Bryan weave thirteen interrelated poems and radiant illustrations into an intricate celebration of the ancient art of cloth making.

To learn more about the illustrator of *A Nest Full of Stars* and *Aneesa Lee and the Weaver's Gift*, log on to [www.cbcbooks.org/html/ashleybryan.html](http://www.cbcbooks.org/html/ashleybryan.html) to read Ashley Bryan's biography, provided by the Children's Book Council.



## A Nest Full of Stars

By James Berry  
Illustrated by Ashley Bryan  
Ages 7 up • Grades 2 up  
Tr 0-06-052747-1  
Lb 0-06-052748-X  
A Greenwillow Book



Like the nest of eggs that becomes, in the title poem, "a mighty nest full of stars," this book awakens us to the magic in our everyday world. Berry draws upon his Caribbean childhood to capture the universal experience of growing up.



## Introduction:

Read *Beauty, Her Basket* by Sandra Belton aloud to the class. Point out how the young girl character and her cousin weave together their Nana's stories to discover the meaning of their African American history.

## Art/Social Studies Activity: Class Quilt

Create a class quilt to celebrate the American civil rights movement.

### Step 1: Poetry and Weaving

Read the poems "Whole Cloth" and "Weaving a World" from *Aneesa Lee and the Weaver's Gift* by Nikki Grimes. Both poems describe weaving as an art form that meshes together separate threads or colors or people into a harmonious whole. In these poems, yarn is a symbol used to represent and express the poet's thoughts.

### Step 2: Creating Fabric

Read aloud *I've Seen the Promised Land: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* by Walter Dean Myers. Introduce civil rights

vocabulary, and brainstorm examples that describe the concepts of equality, freedom, hope, and peace. Provide one-by-four-inch strips of colored construction paper and have students choose four strips. On their strips, challenge students to draw a picture that expresses each of these four concepts. For example, students can draw a picture of an integrated school to illustrate equality.

### Step 3: Freedom Weaving

Assign students to pairs. Have the two students in each pair weave their eight paper strips together to make a four-by-four-inch square. Each square represents an important piece of the American civil rights movement.

### Step 4: Class Quilt

Have students contribute their four-by-four-inch woven squares, and display all squares together on a bulletin board to make a class quilt. Remind students that this quilt represents equality, freedom, hope, and peace in your classroom.

# MULTICULTURAL TITLES

The following picture books celebrate the diversity and unique characteristics of each ethnic group within the American mosaic. Share these books with your class to introduce characters of color to your students, and to send the important message that each of them is special for who they are.

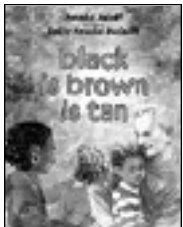


## All the Colors of the Earth

Written and illustrated by  
Sheila Hamanaka  
Ages 3–8 • Grades PreS–3  
Tr 0-688-11131-9  
Lb 0-688-11132-7  
Pb 0-688-17062-5



With soaring text and majestic art, Sheila Hamanaka celebrates the dazzling diversity of children.



## black is brown is tan

By Arnold Adoff  
Illustrated by Emily Arnold McCully  
Ages 4–8 • Grades PreS–3  
Tr 0-06-028776-4  
Lb 0-06-028777-2  
Pb 0-06-443269-6  
Pb (reillustrated) 0-06-443644-6

Written by award-winning poet Arnold Adoff and illustrated by Caldecott medalist Emily Arnold McCully, *black is brown is tan*, about a biracial family, is a tribute to our multicultural world.



## Brown Honey in Broomwheat Tea

By Joyce Carol Thomas  
Illustrated by Floyd Cooper  
All ages and grades  
Tr 0-06-021087-7  
Pb 0-06-443439-7  
Joanna Cotler Books

- Coretta Scott King Honor (Author)
- Coretta Scott King Honor (Illustrator)
- IRA/CBC Teachers' Choice
- Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies (NCSS/CBC)
- New York Public Library's "One Hundred Titles for Reading and Sharing"
- Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts (NCTE)

In this joyous collection of poems, National Book Award–winner Joyce Carol Thomas writes of family, individuality, and pride of heritage.



## Crowning Glory

By Joyce Carol Thomas  
Illustrated by Brenda Joysmith  
Ages 4–8 • Grades PreS–3  
Lb 0-06-023474-1  
Joanna Cotler Books

These poems and images rejoice in the spirit of individuality that comes from having your unique crowning glory, and share what is special about hair that is dreadlocked, braided, adorned, or worn free.

### Introduction:

Lead a class discussion about the ways that all people are the same and prompt students to think about nonphysical attributes that people share.

### Art Activity: All the Colors of Me—A Self-Portrait

Introduce activity by reading *All the Colors of the Earth* by Sheila Hamanaka. Ask students to look carefully at the colors used in the illustrations. Then have students draw pictures that depict their own unique characteristics—including physical qualities (different skin colors, hair colors, eye colors, etc.) and nonphysical qualities (musical, funny, smart, kind, etc.).

### Unity Activity: Friendship

We often learn about diversity and unity through friendships. Pair each student with a classmate and ask them to think about the similarities and differences between themselves. Have students fold a piece of paper in half and list "How we are the same" on one side and "How we are different" on the other side. Leading questions are:

How many people are in your family? How many siblings do you have? This example shows that people are similar because we all have families, but at the same time we all have differences within our families.

\*\*Practice your graphing and math skills with the enclosed reproducible activity sheet!

### Math Activity: Many Places and Faces in Our Community

*Where are you from?* Lead a discussion by asking students where they were born, or where their ancestors were born. Mark each of the countries on a classroom map and point out the diversity among the class. Use the enclosed reproducible and have students create a bar graph of the ethnic backgrounds represented in the class. As an extension activity, research the ethnic population of your city or town and have students chart a bar graph of the community's ethnic backgrounds. Compare the classroom graph to the community graph and make ratios.

# More Black History Titles from HarperCollins Children's Books!



**York's Adventures with Lewis and Clark: An African-American's Part in the Great Expedition**

By Rhoda Blumberg  
Ages 8 up • Grades 3 up  
Tr 0-06-009111-8  
Lb 0-06-009112-6



In time for the two-hundred-year anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, this fascinating biography of York, William Clark's slave, is crafted with historical accuracy and care by Newbery Honor author Rhoda Blumberg. York was so valued that he was the first black person in America to vote, sixty years before the Civil War.

**Ben's Trumpet**  
Written and illustrated by Rachel Isadora  
Ages 4 up • Grades PreS up  
Tr 0-688-80194-3  
Pb 0-688-10988-8  
*A Greenwillow Book*

- Caldecott Honor Book
- ALA Notable Children's Book
- *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award* Honor Book
- Reading Rainbow Book

**Brown Angels:**  
An Album of Pictures and Verse  
By Walter Dean Myers  
All ages and grades  
Tr 0-06-022917-9  
Pb 0-06-443455-9

- ALA Notable Children's Book
- New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age
- Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts (NCTE)
- Library of Congress Children's Books

**Danitra Brown Leaves Town**  
By Nikki Grimes  
Illustrated by Floyd Cooper  
Ages 8 up • Grades 3 up  
Tr 0-688-13155-7  
Lb 0-688-13156-5



**Escape from Slavery:**  
**Five Journeys to Freedom**  
Written by Doreen Rappaport  
Illustrated by Charles Lilly  
Ages 9-12 • Grades 4-7  
Pb 0-06-446169-6

- Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies (NCSS/CBC)

**Honey, I Love**  
By Eloise Greenfield  
Illustrated by Jan Spivey Gilchrist  
Ages 2-5 • Grades PreS-K  
Tr 0-06-009123-1  
Lb 0-06-009124-X



**Honey, I Love and Other Love Poems**  
By Eloise Greenfield  
Illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon  
Ages 2-5 • Grades PreS-K  
Tr 0-690-01334-5  
Pb 0-06-443097-9

- ALA Notable Children's Book
- George C. Stone Center for Children's Books Recognition of Merit Award
- Reading Rainbow Book

**How They Got Over: African Americans and the Call of the Sea**  
By Eloise Greenfield  
Illustrated by Jan Spivey Gilchrist  
Ages 8-11 • Grades 3-6  
Tr 0-06-028991-0  
Lb 0-06-028992-9



**I Have Heard of a Land**  
By Joyce Carol Thomas  
Illustrated by Floyd Cooper  
Ages 7-11 • Grades 2-6  
Lb 0-06-023478-4  
Pb 0-06-443617-9  
*Joanna Cotler Books*

- Coretta Scott King Honor (Illustrator)

**In My Momma's Kitchen**  
By Jerdine Nolen  
Illustrated by Colin Bootman  
Ages 5 up • Grades K up  
Tr 0-688-12760-6  
Lb 0-688-12761-4  
Pb 0-06-443786-8



**Journey to Jo'burg:**  
**A South African Story**  
By Beverley Naidoo  
Illustrated by Eric Velasquez  
Ages 9-12 • Grades 4-7  
Lb 0-397-32169-4  
Pb 0-06-440237-1

- Bank Street Children's Book Award
- Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies (NCSS/CBC)
- New York Public Library's "One Hundred Titles for Reading and Sharing"

**Meet Danitra Brown**  
By Nikki Grimes  
Illustrated by Floyd Cooper  
Ages 3-8 • Grades PreS-3  
Pb 0-688-15471-9

- Coretta Scott King Honor (Illustrator)
- ALA Notable Children's Book

**Now Is Your Time!: The African American Struggle for Freedom**  
By Walter Dean Myers  
Illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon  
Ages 11 up • Grades 6 up  
Pb 0-06-446120-3

- Coretta Scott King Honor
- ALA Notable Children's Book
- ALA Best of the Best Books for Young Adults Children's Book
- ALA Best Book for Young Adults
- Golden Kite Award Honor Book
- Horn Book Fanfare
- Orbis Pictus Award Honor Book (NCTE)
- Jane Addams Book Award Honor Book
- Library of Congress Children's Books
- New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age

**Pictures for Miss Josie**  
By Sandra Belton  
Illustrated by Benny Andrews  
Ages 5 up • Grades K up  
Tr 0-688-17480-9  
Lb 0-688-17481-7  
*A Greenwillow Book*



\*\*For a complete listing of Black History titles published by HarperCollins Children's Books, log on to [www.harpercollins.com](http://www.harpercollins.com). Click on "Planning Calendar" at the top of page, then click on "Black History Month" in the February calendar. All related titles will be displayed.



Visit our website at [www.harpercollins.com](http://www.harpercollins.com) and sign up to Be a Harper Teacher!

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