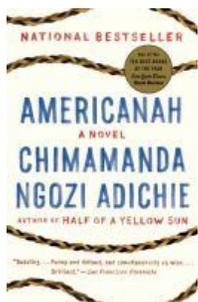


Black History Month – 2021

Fiction by Black Authors

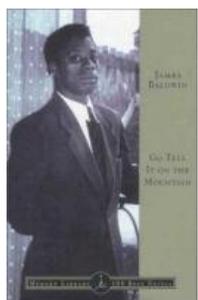


[Americanah](#)

by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Ifemelu and Obinze are young and in love when they depart military-ruled Nigeria for the West. Beautiful, self-assured Ifemelu heads for America,

where despite her academic success, she is forced to grapple with what it means to be black for the first time. Quiet, thoughtful Obinze had hoped to join her, but with post-9/11 America closed to him, he instead plunges into a dangerous, undocumented life in London. Fifteen years later, they reunite in a newly democratic Nigeria, and reignite their passion--for each other and for their homeland. [Winner of *One Book – One Lincoln* in 2015.]



[Go Tell It On the Mountain](#)

by James Baldwin

In one of the greatest American classics, Baldwin chronicles a fourteen-year-old boy's discovery of the terms of his identity. Baldwin's rendering of his protagonist's spiritual, sexual, and moral

struggle of self-invention opened new possibilities in the American language and in the way Americans understand themselves.

With lyrical precision, psychological directness, resonating symbolic power, and a rage that is at once unrelenting and compassionate, Baldwin tells the story of the stepson of the minister of a storefront Pentecostal church in Harlem one Saturday in March of 1935. Originally published in 1953, Baldwin said of his first novel, "Mountain is the book I had to write if I was ever going to write anything else."



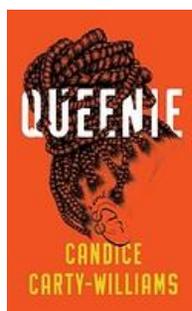
[Kindred](#)

by Octavia Butler

The visionary author's masterpiece pulls us--along with her Black female hero--through time to face the horrors of slavery and explore the impacts of racism, sexism, and white supremacy

then and now.

Dana, a modern black woman, is celebrating her twenty-sixth birthday with her new husband when she is snatched abruptly from her home in California and transported to the antebellum South. Rufus, the white son of a plantation owner, is drowning, and Dana has been summoned to save him. Dana is drawn back repeatedly through time to the slave quarters, and each time the stay grows longer, more arduous, and more dangerous until it is uncertain whether or not Dana's life will end, long before it has a chance to begin.



[Queenie](#)

by Candice Carty-Williams

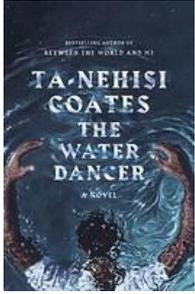
Queenie Jenkins is a twenty-five-year-old Jamaican British woman living in London, straddling two cultures and slotting neatly into neither. She works at a national newspaper, where she's

constantly forced to compare herself to her white middle class peers. After a messy break up from her long-term white boyfriend, Queenie seeks comfort in all the wrong places...including several hazardous men who do a good job of occupying brain space and a bad job of affirming self-worth.

As Queenie careens from one questionable decision to another, she finds herself wondering, "What are you doing? Why are you doing it? Who do you want to be?"--all of the questions today's woman must face in a world trying to answer them for her.

With "fresh and honest" (Jojo Moyes) prose, *Queenie* is a

remarkably relatable exploration of what it means to be a modern woman searching for meaning in today's world.



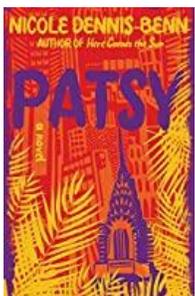
[The Water Dancer](#)

by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Young Hiram Walker was born into bondage. When his mother was sold away, Hiram was robbed of all memory of her--but was gifted with a mysterious power. Years later, when Hiram almost drowns in a river, that same power saves his life. This brush with death births an urgency in Hiram and a daring scheme: to escape from the only home he's ever known.

So begins an unexpected journey that takes Hiram from the corrupt grandeur of Virginia's proud plantations to desperate guerrilla cells in the wilderness, from the coffin of the Deep South to dangerously idealistic movements in the North. Even as he's enlisted in the underground war between slavers and the enslaved, Hiram's resolve to rescue the family he left behind endures.

This is the dramatic story of an atrocity inflicted on generations of women, men, and children--the violent and capricious separation of families--and the war they waged to simply make lives with the people they loved. Written by one of today's most exciting thinkers and writers, *The Water Dancer* is a propulsive, transcendent work that restores the humanity of those from whom everything was stolen. [Top Ten Finalist for **One Book – One Lincoln** in 2020.]



[Patsy](#)

by Nicole Dennis-Benn

Heralded for writing "deeply memorable . . . women" (Jennifer Senior, *New York Times*), Nicole Dennis-Benn introduces readers to an unforgettable heroine for our times: the eponymous Patsy, who leaves her young daughter behind in Jamaica to follow Cicely, her oldest friend, to New York. Beating with the pulse of a long-withheld confession and peppered with lilting patois, Patsy gives voice to a woman who looks to America for the opportunity to love whomever she chooses, bravely putting herself first. But to survive as an undocumented immigrant, Patsy is forced to work as a nanny, while back in Jamaica her daughter, Tru, ironically

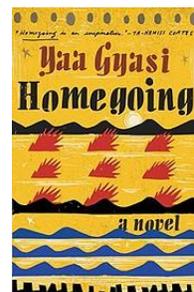
struggles to understand why she was left behind. Greeted with international critical acclaim from readers who, at last, saw themselves represented in Patsy, this astonishing novel "fills a literary void with compassion, complexity and tenderness" (Joshunda Sanders, *Time*), offering up a vital portrait of the chasms between selfhood and motherhood, the American dream and reality.



[Washington Black](#)

by Esi Edugyan

George Washington Black, or "Wash," an eleven-year-old field slave on a Barbados sugar plantation, is terrified to be chosen by his master's brother as his manservant. To his surprise, the eccentric Christopher Wilde turns out to be a naturalist, explorer, inventor, and abolitionist. Soon Wash is initiated into a world where a flying machine can carry a man across the sky, where even a boy born in chains may embrace a life of dignity and meaning--and where two people, separated by an impossible divide, can begin to see each other as human. But when a man is killed and a bounty is placed on Wash's head, Christopher and Wash must abandon everything. What follows is their flight along the eastern coast of America, and, finally, to a remote outpost in the Arctic. What brings Christopher and Wash together will tear them apart, propelling Wash even further across the globe in search of his true self. From the blistering cane fields of the Caribbean to the frozen Far North, from the earliest aquariums of London to the eerie deserts of Morocco, *Washington Black* tells a story of self-invention and betrayal, of love and redemption, of a world destroyed and made whole again, and asks the question, What is true freedom?



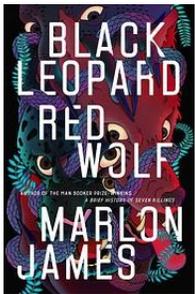
[Homegoing](#)

by Yaa Gyasi

The unforgettable *New York Times* best seller begins with the story of two half-sisters, separated by forces beyond their control: one sold into slavery, the other married to a British slaver. Written with tremendous sweep and power, *Homegoing* traces the generations of family who follow, as their destinies lead them through two continents and three hundred years of history, each life indelibly drawn, as

the legacy of slavery is fully revealed in light of the present day.

Effia and Esi are born into different villages in eighteenth-century Ghana. Effia is married off to an Englishman and lives in comfort in the palatial rooms of Cape Coast Castle. Unbeknownst to Effia, her sister, Esi, is imprisoned beneath her in the castle's dungeons, sold with thousands of others into the Gold Coast's booming slave trade, and shipped off to America, where her children and grandchildren will be raised in slavery. One thread of *Homegoing* follows Effia's descendants through centuries of warfare in Ghana, as the Fante and Asante nations wrestle with the slave trade and British colonization. The other thread follows Esi and her children into America. From the plantations of the South to the Civil War and the Great Migration, from the coal mines of Pratt City, Alabama, to the jazz clubs and dope houses of twentieth-century Harlem, right up through the present day, *Homegoing* makes history visceral, and captures, with singular and stunning immediacy, how the memory of captivity came to be inscribed in the soul of a nation. [Top Three Finalist for **One Book – One Lincoln** in 2017.]



[Black Leopard, Red Wolf](#)

by Marlon James

Tracker is known far and wide for his skills as a hunter: "He has a nose," people say. Engaged to track down a mysterious boy who disappeared three years earlier, Tracker breaks his own

rule of always working alone when he finds himself part of a group that comes together to search for the boy. The band is a hodgepodge, full of unusual characters with secrets of their own, including a shape-shifting man-animal known as Leopard.

As Tracker follows the boy's scent--from one ancient city to another; into dense forests and across deep rivers--he and the band are set upon by creatures intent on destroying them. As he struggles to survive, Tracker starts to wonder: Who, really, is this boy? Why has he been missing for so long? Why do so many people want to keep Tracker from finding him? And perhaps the most important questions of all: Who is telling the truth, and who is lying?

Drawing from African history and mythology and his own

rich imagination, Marlon James has written a novel unlike anything that's come before it: a saga of breathtaking adventure that's also an ambitious, involving read. Defying categorization and full of unforgettable characters, *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* is both surprising and profound as it explores the fundamentals of truth, the limits of power, and our need to understand them both.



[The City We Became](#)

by N.K. Jemisin

Three-time Hugo Award-winning and *New York Times* bestselling author N.K. Jemisin crafts her most incredible novel yet, a "glorious" story of culture, identity, magic, and myths in

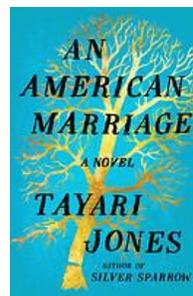
contemporary New York City.

In Manhattan, a young grad student gets off the train and realizes he doesn't remember who he is, where he's from, or even his own name. But he can sense the beating heart of the city, see its history, and feel its power.

In the Bronx, a Lenape gallery director discovers strange graffiti scattered throughout the city, so beautiful and powerful it's as if the paint is literally calling to her.

In Brooklyn, a politician and mother finds she can hear the songs of her city, pulsing to the beat of her Louboutin heels.

And they're not the only ones.



[An American Marriage](#)

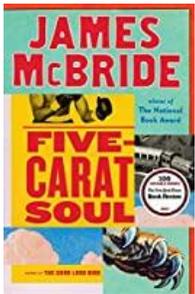
by Tayari Jones

Newlyweds Celestial and Roy are the embodiment of both the American Dream and the New South. He is a young executive, and she is an artist on the brink of an exciting career. But as

they settle into the routine of their life together, they are ripped apart by circumstances neither could have imagined. Roy is arrested and sentenced to twelve years for a crime Celestial knows he didn't commit. Though fiercely independent, Celestial finds herself bereft and unmoored, taking comfort in Andre, her childhood friend, and best man at their wedding. As Roy's time in prison

passes, she is unable to hold on to the love that has been her center. After five years, Roy's conviction is suddenly overturned, and he returns to Atlanta ready to resume their life together.

This stirring love story is a profoundly insightful look into the hearts and minds of three people who are at once bound and separated by forces beyond their control. *An American Marriage* is a masterpiece of storytelling, an intimate look deep into the souls of people who must reckon with the past while moving forward--with hope and pain--into the future.

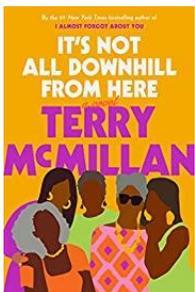


[Five-Carat Soul](#)

by James McBride

The stories in *Five-Carat Soul*—none of them ever published before—spring from the place where identity, humanity, and history converge. They're funny and poignant, insightful and unpredictable, imaginative and authentic—all told with McBride's unrivaled storytelling skill and meticulous eye for character and detail. McBride explores the ways we learn from the world and the people around us. An antiques dealer discovers that a legendary toy commissioned by Civil War General Robert E. Lee now sits in the home of a black minister in Queens. Five strangers find themselves thrown together and face unexpected judgment. An American president draws inspiration from a conversation he overhears in a stable. And members of The Five-Carat Soul Bottom Bone Band recount stories from their own messy and hilarious lives.

As McBride did in his National Book award-winning *The Good Lord Bird* and his bestselling *The Color of Water*, he writes with humor and insight about how we struggle to understand who we are in a world we don't fully comprehend. The result is a surprising, perceptive, and evocative collection of stories that is also a moving exploration of our human condition.



[It's Not All Downhill From Here](#)

by Terry McMillan

Loretha Curry's life is full. A little crowded sometimes, but full indeed. On the eve of her sixty-eighth birthday, she has a booming beauty supply empire, a

gaggle of lifelong friends, and a husband who's still got moves that surprise. True, she's carrying a few more pounds than she should be, but she's not one of those women who thinks her best days are behind her, and she's determined to prove her mother, her twin sister, and everyone else with that outdated view of aging wrong--it's *not* all downhill from here.

But when an unexpected loss turns her world upside down, Loretha will have to summon all her strength, resourcefulness, and determination to keep on thriving, pursue joy, heal old wounds, and chart new paths. With a little help from her friends, of course.



[Devil in a Blue Dress](#)

by Walter Mosley

The year is 1948, the town is Los Angeles.

Easy Rawlins, a black war veteran, has just been fired from his job at a defense factory plant. Drinking in his friend's bar, he's wondering how he'll manage to make ends meet, when a white man in a linen suit approaches him and offers him good money if Easy will simply locate Miss Daphne Money, a missing blonde beauty known to frequent black jazz clubs.

Easy has no idea that by taking this job, his life is about to change forever.

"More than simply a detective novel...[Mosley is] a talented author with something vital to say about the distance between the black and white worlds, and with a dramatic way to say it" (*The New York Times*).

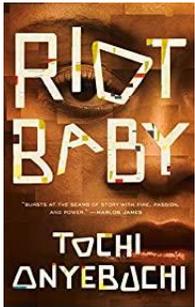


[Binti](#)

by Nnedi Okorafor

Her name is Binti, and she is the first of the Himba people ever to be offered a place at Oomza University, the finest institution of higher learning in the galaxy. But to accept the offer will mean giving up her place in her family to travel between the stars among strangers who do not share her ways or respect her customs. Knowledge comes at a cost, one that Binti is willing to pay, but her journey will not be easy. The

world she seeks to enter has long warred with the Meduse, an alien race that has become the stuff of nightmares. Oomza University has wronged the Meduse, and Binti's stellar travel will bring her within their deadly reach. If Binti hopes to survive the legacy of a war not of her making, she will need both the gifts of her people and the wisdom enshrined within the university itself - but first she has to make it there, alive.



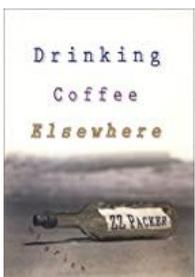
[Riot Baby](#)

by Tochi Onyebuchi

Ella has a Thing. She sees a classmate grow up to become a caring nurse. A neighbor's son murdered in a drive-by shooting. Things that haven't happened yet. Kev, born while Los Angeles burned around them, wants to protect his sister from a power that could destroy her. But when Kev is incarcerated, Ella must decide what it means to watch her brother suffer while holding the ability to wreck cities in her hands.

Rooted in the hope that can live in anger, *Riot Baby* is as much an intimate family story as a global dystopian narrative. It burns fearlessly toward revolution and has quietly devastating things to say about love, fury, and the black American experience.

Ella and Kev are both shockingly human and immeasurably powerful. Their childhoods are defined and destroyed by racism. Their futures might alter the world.



[Drinking Coffee Elsewhere](#)

by Z.Z. Packer

With stories in *The New Yorker's* debut fiction issue and in *The Best American Short Stories*, 2000, and as the winner of a Whiting Writers' Award and a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Award, Z.Z. Packer has already achieved what most writers only dream about—all prior to publication of her first book. Now, in *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere*, her impressive range and talent are abundantly evident. Packer dazzles with her command of language—surprising and delighting us with unexpected turns and indelible images, as she takes us into the lives of characters on the periphery, unsure of where they belong. With penetrating insight that belies her youth—she was only nineteen years old when *Seventeen* magazine

printed her first published story—Packer takes us to a Girl Scout camp, where a troupe of black girls are confronted with a group of white girls, whose defining feature turns out to be not their race but their disabilities; to the Million Man March on Washington, where a young man must decide where his allegiance to his father lies; to Japan, where an international group of drifters find themselves starving, unable to find work. *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere* is a striking debut—fresh, versatile, and captivating. It introduces us to an arresting and unforgettable new American voice.



[Such a Fun Age](#)

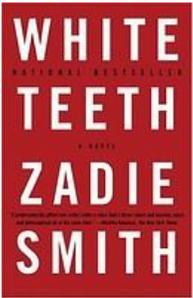
by Kiley Reid

A striking and surprising debut novel from an exhilarating new voice, *Such a Fun Age* is a page-turning and big-hearted story about race and privilege, set around a young black babysitter, her well-intentioned employer, and a surprising connection that threatens to undo them both.

Alix Chamberlain is a woman who gets what she wants and has made a living, with her confidence-driven brand, showing other women how to do the same. So she is shocked when her babysitter, Emira Tucker, is confronted while watching the Chamberlains' toddler one night, walking the aisles of their local high-end supermarket. The store's security guard, seeing a young black woman out late with a white child, accuses Emira of kidnapping two-year-old Briar. A small crowd gathers, a bystander films everything, and Emira is furious and humiliated. Alix resolves to make things right.

But Emira herself is aimless, broke, and wary of Alix's desire to help. At twenty-five, she is about to lose her health insurance and has no idea what to do with her life. When the video of Emira unearths someone from Alix's past, both women find themselves on a crash course that will upend everything they think they know about themselves, and each other.

With empathy and piercing social commentary, *Such a Fun Age* explores the stickiness of transactional relationships, what it means to make someone "family," and the complicated reality of being a grown up. It is a searing debut for our times.



[White Teeth](#)

by Zadie Smith

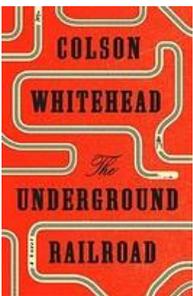
At the center of this invigorating novel are two unlikely friends, Archie Jones and Samad Iqbal. Hapless veterans of World War II, Archie and Samad and their families become agents of England's irrevocable transformation. A second marriage to Clara Bowden, a beautiful, albeit tooth-challenged, Jamaican half his age, quite literally gives Archie a second lease on life, and produces Irie, a knowing child whose personality doesn't quite match her name (Jamaican for "no problem"). Samad's late-in-life arranged marriage (he had to wait for his bride to be born), produces twin sons whose separate paths confound Iqbal's every effort to direct them, and a renewed, if selective, submission to his Islamic faith. Set against London's racial and cultural tapestry, venturing across the former empire and into the past as it barrels toward the future, **White Teeth** revels in the ecstatic hodgepodge of modern life, flirting with disaster, confounding expectations, and embracing the comedy of daily existence.

Like the protagonist of *Gulliver's Travels*, Cora encounters different worlds at each stage of her journey--hers is an odyssey through time as well as space. As Whitehead brilliantly re-creates the unique terrors for black people in the pre-Civil War era, his narrative seamlessly weaves the saga of America from the brutal importation of Africans to the unfulfilled promises of the present day. *The Underground Railroad* is at once a kinetic adventure tale of one woman's ferocious will to escape the horrors of bondage and a shattering, powerful meditation on the history we all share.

**This booklist created for
Black History Month – February 2021**



**Lincoln City Libraries – Lincoln, Nebraska
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[The Underground Railroad](#)

by Colson Whitehead

Cora is a slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia. Life is hell for all the slaves, but especially bad for Cora; an outcast even among her fellow Africans, she is coming into womanhood--where even greater pain awaits. When Caesar, a recent arrival from Virginia, tells her about the Underground Railroad, they decide to take a terrifying risk and escape. Matters do not go as planned--Cora kills a young white boy who tries to capture her. Though they manage to find a station and head north, they are being hunted.

In Whitehead's ingenious conception, the Underground Railroad is no mere metaphor--engineers and conductors operate a secret network of tracks and tunnels beneath the Southern soil. Cora and Caesar's first stop is South Carolina, in a city that initially seems like a haven. But the city's placid surface masks an insidious scheme designed for its black denizens. And even worse: Ridgeway, the relentless slave catcher, is close on their heels. Forced to flee again, Cora embarks on a harrowing flight, state by state, seeking true freedom.