BLACK HISTORY BOOKS

Timeline, Bibliography & Lesson Links

By Carole Boston Weatherford
Award-winning Author
Professor of English
Fayetteville State University
Introduction

This guide was compiled to help educators select grade-appropriate nonfiction and biographies to use across the curriculum. The guide has two parts:

- An annotated bibliography organizing titles by historical period and providing links to activities and lessons; and
- An appendix with a table of books by grade levels, curriculum levels and formats (hardcover, paperback, e-book).

This document includes diverse children’s and young adult books that center African American heritage, heroes and culture. The titles span more than 400 years of African American history--from slavery, segregation and civil rights to the 21st century. The listed books sometimes blend the genres of poetry, nonfiction, biography and historical fiction.

The award-winning author of more than 50 books for children and young adults, I am a professor of English at Fayetteville State University in North Carolina. In addition to training future and current educators and writing children’s books, I coach other creatives. I often collaborate and tour with my son, award-winning illustrator Jeffery Weatherford.

For information about professional development, keynotes or school visits, contact cbwpoet@gmail.com.

For more teaching resources and author information, visit http://cbweatherford.com.

Feel free to share this resource widely.
Historical Timeline of Books by Carole Boston Weatherford

Time Periods, Annotations & Teaching Resources

**Slavery & Reconstruction**

Annotation: Harriet Tubman’s conversations with God lead her on the UGRR.
Awards: Caldecott Honor, Coretta Scott King Award, NAACP Image Award
Themes: Courage, resistance, slavery, freedom, bold women
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, music, STEM
Teachers/Reading Guide Read-aloud

Annotation: A Sunday ritual among enslaved and free Blacks in 18the century New Orleans preserved African traditions.
Awards: Caldecott Honor, Coretta Scott King Honor, Charlotte Zolotow Award
Themes: Slavery, freedom, music
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, music
Teachers/Reading Guide Read-aloud

Annotation: Chronicles the hymn writer’s life and the legacy of his 1772 hymn.
Awards: Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year
Theme: Slavery, abolition, freedom, faith
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, music
Parent/Teachers Guide (for play Amazing Grace) Primary Sources Activity

Annotation: Biography about one of slavery’s most daring escapes.
Theme: Slavery, resistance, freedom
Curriculum: ELA, social studies
Teaching Ideas Lesson Plan for 3-5 Lesson Plan for 6-8

Annotation: Biographer of minister and hymn writer Charles Tindley.
Theme: Literacy, faith, music
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, music
Music Lesson Plan from Maryland State Department of Education (to come) Read-aloud
Annotation: A girl whose family has just moved to Texas experiences Juneteenth, the first African-American holiday. Commemorates the date in U.S. history when the last enslaved people in the country were freed.
Theme: Freedom, slavery
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies
Teachers Guide

Annotation: True story about an all-Black lifesaving crew in North Carolina.
Themes: Heroism, hurricanes, Reconstruction, racism, slavery
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, music, character education
Reading Guide

**Early 20th Century: Harlem Renaissance to Great Depression**

Annotation: Historical fiction about Black sharecroppers building a school.
Awards: NAACP Image Award finalist, Golden Kite Honor for text
Themes: Education, community, segregation
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies
Reading Guide Lesson Plan (NPS) Read-aloud

**Becoming Billie Holiday.** Ill. by Floyd Cooper. Boyds Mills/Wordsong, 2008. (Recorded anti-lynching hymn Strange Fruit, 1941) Grades 7-up
Annotation: Verse biography of the jazz icon’s first 25 years—up to the recording Sher signature song, the anti-lynching anthem, “Strange Fruit.”
Themes: Jazz, Harlem, anti-racism, resistance
Awards: Coretta Scott King Honor for text
Curriculum links: ELA, music
Reading Guide Lesson Plan for One Poem activity on “Coda: Strange Fruit” Discussion Questions on “Strange Fruit”
Annotation: The photographer and story behind the photo “Migrant Mother.”
Themes: Bold women, poverty, empathy, photography, Dust Bowl
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, art
Lesson Plan from NEH  Lesson Plan from PBS
Photo Analysis Worksheet (National Archives)

Annotation: The story behind the 1942 photo “American Gothic.”
Awards: NAACP Image Award
Themes: Anti-racism, resistance, empathy, photography, creativity
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, art
Lessons/Activities from National Gallery of Art
Photo Analysis Worksheet (National Archives)
Read-aloud
Mini-documentary

Grades 2-6
Annotation: Biography of the man who, with Commander Robert Peary, discovered the North Pole in 1909.
Awards:
Themes: Exploration, courage, perseverance, anti-racism
Curriculum links: English, STEM, geography, character education
Lesson Plan (for Jim Haskins’ Henson biography)  Character Education lessons

Annotation: A rhythmic jazz pat-a-cake inspired by the 1938 Ella Fitzgerald recording of the nursery rhyme, “Tisket-A-Tasket.”
Themes: Jazz, dance/movement
Curriculum links: ELA, music
Teachers Guide
Read-aloud

**A Negro League Scrapbook.** Boyds Mills Press, 2004. (1920, Rube Foster founds Negro League) Grades 2-8
Annotation: Rhyming text, fact-filled sidebars and vintage photographs.
Themes: Sports, anti-racism
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, physical education
Reading Guide  Lesson Plan from Ken Burns Baseball
**UNSPKABLE: The Tulsa Race Massacre.** Ill. by Floyd Cooper. Lerner, 2021. (1921) Grades 2-6
Annotation: Chronicles the 1821 race massacre, the worst in U.S. history.
Themes: Racism, social justice
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies
Teachers Guide: to come

Annotation: The lifelong quest and legacy of Afro-Puerto Rican bibliophile Arturo Schomburg, a self-taught historian of the Harlem Renaissance.
Awards: Sibert Honor, WNDB Walter Award, NCSS Carter G. Woodson Honor, North Carolina Award for Young People’s Literature, ILA Social Justice Award
Themes: History, primary sources, anti-racism, resistance
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies
Teachers Guide

Annotation: Rhyming text celebrates the one-time home of prominent Blacks and its heyday during the Harlem Renaissance.
Awards: Arnold Adoff Early Poetry Honor
Theme: Community, achievement
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, music
Harlem Renaissance Lesson Plan
Read-aloud
Nicholas Brothers’ dance video from Stormy Weather

Grades 2-8
Annotation: Poems about Owens winning four medals at 1936 Berlin Olympics.
Themes: Sports, anti-racism, Nazi Germany
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, physical education
Study Guide from National Holocaust Memorial Museum
Lesson Plan from PBS
Owens’ Four Olympic wins video

**World War II to the Civil Rights Movement**

Annotation: Poetry collection about the pioneering Black, WWII pilots.
Awards: ALSC Notable
Themes: Bravery, war, anti-racism
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies
Reading, Discussion, Activity Guide
Lesson Plan (National Park Service)
U.S. Army film about the Tuskegee Airmen
Annotation: Poetic biography of an activist and Hollywood pioneer
Awards: Arnold Adoff Early Poetry Award
Themes: Bold women, anti-racism, resistance, Hollywood
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, music, drama/theater
Read-aloud

Grades 8-up
Annotation: First person poems reflect on the life of the screen icon, who at age 35 is about to sing Happy Birthday to President John Kennedy.
Themes: Talent, foster care, substance/sexual abuse, mental illness
Curriculum links: ELA, drama/theater
Discussion Guide

**Before John Was a Jazz Giant: A Song of John Coltrane.** Ill. by Sean Qualls. Henry Holt, 2008.
Annotation: Poetic riff on how the sounds of the jazz legend’s childhood inspired his creativity.
Awards: Coretta Scott King Honor, SCBWI Golden Kite Honor for text
Themes: Family, community, talent, jazz
Curriculum links: ELA, music
Lesson Plan
Read-aloud

Annotation: Elegy narrated by a fictional eyewitness to the 1963 bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church that left four girls dead.
Awards: Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award, Jefferson Cup, Jane Addams Honor
Theme: Anti-racism, social justice
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies
Lesson Plan (Kids in Birmingham/4-12) Lesson Plan (BCRI/6-12)
Lesson Plan (ALEX/11)

Annotation: Historical fiction about a seminal civil rights protest
Awards: North Carolina Juvenile Literature Award
Theme: Anti-racism, resistance
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies
Teachers Guide Lesson Plan (C-Span) Lesson Plan (MLK Institute)
Annotation: Biography of the opera star who in 1961 broke the color barrier by singing with the Metropolitan Opera. 
Theme: Talent, anti-racism 
Curriculum links: ELA, music

**You Can Be a King: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Dream and You.** Ill. by James E. Ransome. Bloomsbury, 2018. Grades K-5 
Annotation: Braided story of how kids can follow King’s humanitarian example. 
Themes: Service, leadership, anti-racism, anti-bullying, empathy 
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, art 
Teaching Ideas

Annotation: Verse biography of the sharecropper-turned-voting rights activist. 
Themes: Voting, racism, resistance, civic engagement 
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, art 
Teachers Guide

Annotation: Poetic biography of the race car champion. 
Theme: Sports, perseverance, anti-racism 
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, technology 
NASCAR Lesson Plan  NASCAR Hall of Fame article

**Late 20th Century-Present**

Annotation: Poetic biography that riffs on Franklin’s 1967 chart-topper chronicles her success and activism. 
Awards: Society of Illustrators Original Art Show Silver Medal 
Themes: Talent, anti-racism, resistance 
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, music 
Reading Guide: to come 
Playlist
Annotation: Poetic biography of Winfrey got her start speaking in church years before her famous TV talk show premiered in 1986.
Themes: Literacy, public speaking, talent
Curriculum links: ELA

1885, all-black Princeville, NC is incorporated) Grades 2-4
Annotation: Fictional family grapples with disaster relief and recovery after a 1999 hurricane flooded their all-Black town, leaving 1,000 homeless.
Themes: History, disaster preparedness, hurricanes
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, science
Lesson Plan

Annotation: Poetic biography of the first Black president, inaugurated in 2009.
Themes: Preparation, democracy, the presidency
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies
Lesson Plan from NEH

**Michelle Obama: First Mom.** Ill. by Robert Barrett. Two Lions, 2010.
Themes: Bold women, education, goal-setting
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies
Lesson Plan on FLOTUS garden
FLOTUS Let’s Move School Action Plan

Annotation: The story of how the first daughters girls got their dog.
Themes: Family, pets, moving to a new home
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies
First Pets Resource Packet
Top Dogs at the White House article
In Your Hands. Ill. by Brian Pinkney. Atheneum/Simon & Schuster, 2017. All ages
Annotation: A Black mother’s prayer for her son.
Themes: Anti-racism, faith, family
Curriculum links: ELA
Black Lives Matter at School Resources

Annotation: Poetry collection celebrating an urban community.
Themes: Family, community, diversity
Sidewalk Chalk Poetry Fest Activities

Annotation: A poetic history of old school rap and the birth of hip hop.
Theme: Poetry, resistance, self-expression
Curriculum links: ELA, music
Lesson Plans
Playlist
Read-aloud

Historical Surveys Spanning Multiple Centuries

Annotation: A poetic survey of how faith inspired the freedom struggle.
Themes: Social justice, slavery, segregation, resistance
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies
Discussion Guide
Read-aloud

Annotation: A poetry and photo collection celebrating trials and triumphs.
Awards: North Carolina Juvenile Literature Award
Themes: Social justice, slavery, segregation, resistance, resilience
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies
Lesson Ideas
The Sound That Jazz Makes. Ill. by Eric Velasquez. Walker, 2000. All ages
Annotation: A rhythmic verse traces the roots of jazz from Africa to America.
Awards: NCSS Carter G. Woodson Award
Themes: Jazz, Black history, self-expression
Curriculum links: ELA, social studies, music
Jazz Timeline & Discography
Jazz in America Lesson Plan (Grade 5)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Biography or History</th>
<th>Poetry</th>
<th>Sports</th>
<th>STEM Links</th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Primary Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Bat Cave: An Abecedarian Bedtime Chronicle (PB/EB)</td>
<td>Pre-K-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Beatitudes: From Slavery to Civil Rights</td>
<td>2-6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty Mark: A Verse Novel of Marilyn Monroe (EB)</td>
<td>8-up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming Billie Holiday</td>
<td>6-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before John Was a Jazz Giant: A Song of John Coltrane</td>
<td>Pre-K-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham, 1963</td>
<td>3-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX: Henry Brown Mails Himself to Freedom (EB)</td>
<td>3-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By and By: Charles Albert Tindley, The Father of Gospel Music (EB)</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Carolina Parakeet: America’s Lost Parrot in Art and Memory (PB)</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champions on the Bench: The 1955 Cannon Street YMCA All-Stars (OP)</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear Mr. Rosenwald (PB)</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothea Lange: The Photographer Who Found the Faces of the Depression (EB)</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Pooch: The Obamas Pick a Pet (PB/EB)</td>
<td>Pre-K-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom in Congo Square (EB)</td>
<td>K-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-ins (PB)</td>
<td>K-6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon Parks: How the Photographer Captured Black and White America (EB)</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Sweet the Sound: The Story of Amazing Grace (EB)</td>
<td>2-6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I, Matthew Henson: Polar Explorer (PB)</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Your Hands (EB)</td>
<td>K-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazz Baby (PB/SP/EB)</td>
<td>Pre-K-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse Owens: Fastest Man Alive</td>
<td>3-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juneteenth Jamboree (PB/EB/SP)</td>
<td>K-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Legendary Miss Lena Horne (EB)</td>
<td>2-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leontyne Price: Voice of a Century (EB)</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Obama: First Mom (PB &amp; EB)</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom</td>
<td>K-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Negro League Scrapbook (PB)</td>
<td>3-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama: Only in America (PB/EB)</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oprah: The Little Speaker (PB/EB)</td>
<td>K-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeville: The 500-Year Flood (PB)</td>
<td>K-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racing Against the Odds: The Story of Wendell Scott, Stock Car Racing’s African-American Champion (PB/EB)</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember the Bridge: Poems of a People (OP)</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Aretha Franklin, The Queen of Soul (EB)</td>
<td>K-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Roots of Rap: 16 Bars on the 4 Pillars of Hip Hop</td>
<td>2-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library (EB)</td>
<td>3-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidewalk Chalk: Poems of the City (PB)</td>
<td>K-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sink or Swim: African-American Lifesavers Outer Banks (PB)</td>
<td>4-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sound that Jazz Makes (PB &amp; EB)</td>
<td>2-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stormy Blues</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar Hill: Harlem’s Historic Neighborhood (EB)</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tan Chanteuse (PB/OP)</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tar Baby on the Soapbox (PB)</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre (PB/EB)</td>
<td>4-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer, Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement (PB)</td>
<td>3-12</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You Can Fly: The Tuskegee Airmen (PB/EB)</td>
<td>3-12</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MORE TO COME!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>