

Issue 57

CONTENTS

1	Diversity In Publishing: What's Changed?	27	Spotlighting the Work of Leading Illustrators
2	Upcoming Books By Black Authors	29	Job Opportunities
3	From Firebrand Fiction to Personal Memoirs	31	Spotlight on gal-dem Magazine
5	Activism in Literature: Angela Davis, Audre Lorde and bell hooks	33	Campaign Spotlight: You Are a Champion
7	Our Anticipated Reads	35	Our Favourite Reads Celebrating the LGBTQ+ Community
9	Celebrating Black Narration	37	The Jhalak Prize for British BAME Authors
11	Latest Acquisitions & Adaptations	39	Upcoming Publishing Events
13	Highlights in the Charts	41	Shuffling of the Shelves October Part One
15	Celebrating Literature that has Wind Rushing Through its Pages	43	Not to be Overlooked
19	Translated Fiction by Translators of Colour	45	The Best 2022 Debuts by Black Authors
21	The StoryGraph: A Spotlight	47	Upskilling Tips for Dissecting the School Curriculum
23	Black Voices in Children's Publishing	49	Black Authors Spotlited on TikTok
25	Modern Classic Predictions	51	<i>Manorism</i> by Yomi Sode: A Review

EDITOR'S NOTE

Being part of the team at *The Publishing Post* which celebrates members of the BIPOC community in every issue for two years has enabled us to provide authentic representation, celebrate and uplift Black/BIPOC voices and highlight issues within the publishing industry. As publishing hopefuls ourselves, we are aware of the barriers we face, particularly with the diversity and inclusivity issues that have been an ever-present feature across the creative industries. [The Publisher's Association's Diversity Survey of the Publishing Workforce](#) (March 2022) revealed that, although the Publisher's Association's target of increasing representation to 15% was achieved in 2022, only 3% of those individuals identified as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British. Publishing has a responsibility to be inclusive, to create opportunities for BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ individuals, and to reflect our diverse

population. Systematic inclusion is imperative at all levels, from senior roles in the industry to the people who write and sell books.

This Celebrating Black Voices Issue highlights a plethora of voices, cultures and diasporas, honouring their contribution to literature and publishing. From important voices from the Windrush generation to an interview with *gal-dem* and modern classic predictions from pioneering Black voices, this issue aims to celebrate Black voices and what it means to be Black in contemporary society, and in publishing. We hope that the stories in this issue enrich, educate and inspire. Our audiobook team beautifully illustrates that: "voicing one's story is just as important as the story itself," and these voices should be celebrated all year round – not just in October.

Lastly, we would like to thank Chelsea and the teams at *The Publishing Post* for the

opportunity to edit this issue and use this platform to champion underrepresented voices that have been forced into the margins for so long. Black History Month is an important time for us both and we want this issue and the stories encapsulated within to represent, to educate and most importantly to take up space.

Guest Editors,

Leanne Francis and Shaniah Shields

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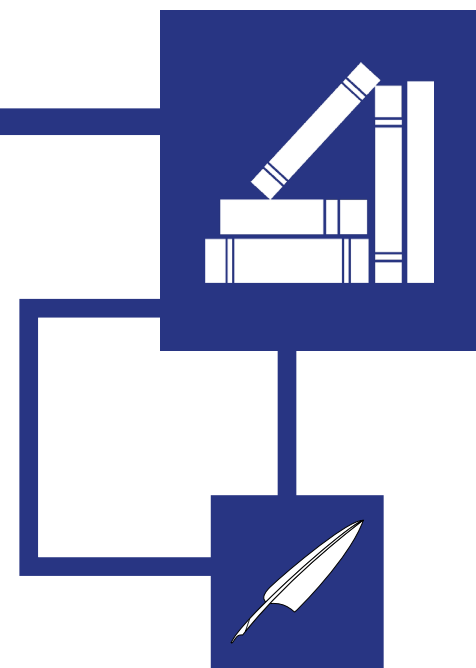
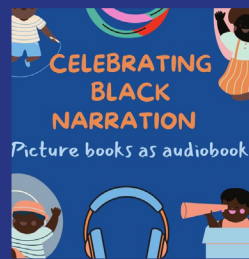
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The Publishing Post



Diversity In Publishing: What's Changed?

By MEGAN WHITLOCK

In recent years, the publishing industry has been forced to reckon with its shocking diversity statistics and work towards long-overdue change that enables systematic inclusion for everyone. However, after the introduction of initiatives from publishers in the aftermath of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, it is important to examine how much has actually been implemented and sustained two years on. As Booker Prize Winner Bernardine Evaristo addressed the [Hay Festival this year](#): “This is a really good time for Black writers to be published. Whether that will be the case in five or ten years, we’ll have to see. What I’m interested in is for our literature to be embedded in the culture rather than being part of a trend or fashion” (quoted from *The Guardian*).

[The Publisher's Associations Diversity Survey of the Publishing Workforce](#) (released March 2022) reports that “representation of people from ethnic minority groups [...] has increased to 15%, achieving the Publishers Association’s target set for 2022.” However, the proportion of this percentage who identify as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British remains “unchanged from 2019 and 2020 at 3%, which

was lower than the estimated population of England and Wales (4%)” (The Diversity Survey).

One example of a Big Five publisher initiative is Penguin Random House’s annual [Diversity and Inclusion Report](#) (launched in 2020), and their subsequently introduced targets, such as having senior leaders represent UK society identity proportions by 2026. As well as The Scheme trainee programme (a paid, six-month traineeship targeted at people from ethnic minority or lower socio-economic backgrounds), employees at PRH have also established the Colour[Full] network to support minority ethnic colleagues, and have begun to publish ethnic pay gap data and action plans. Another example is at HarperCollins UK, who run a BAME Development Circle, launched in 2018 to encourage, support, retain and train ethnic minority talent within the company. Though we should all continue to question whether these targets and schemes do anything to tackle the experiences of Black employees once they have joined the company and whether they are further supported and made to feel welcome thereafter, a big problem within publishing.

Outside of the Big Five, there have always been many brilliant independent publishers that are led by and amplify diverse voices. [Jacaranda Books](#) is an award-winning publishing house, who launched their #Twentyin2020 campaign (a mission to publish 20 titles by 20 Black British authors in 2020) the same year they won Small Press of the Year at the British Book Awards. They continue year on year to do what bigger publishers don’t. Another example is [Peepal Tree Press](#), founded in 1985, who aim “to bring you the very best of international writing from the Caribbean, its diasporas and the UK.” They run the “Inscribe” programme, which aims to professionally support and develop writers of colour across England with mentoring, workshops, residencies and more.

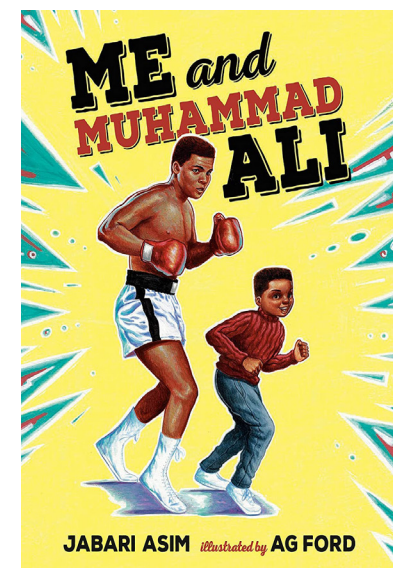
Yet, there is still a long way to go. Even the tendency in major publisher’s reports to group different identities into one “BAME” or “ethnic minority” category makes it difficult to establish exactly how much progress has been made for individual groups, like those who identify as Black. It is as much down to publishers as it is those already working within these companies to make space, ensure everyone feels welcome.

Upcoming Books By Black Authors

By MALACHI MARTIN

As we celebrate Black voices this October, this week’s feature commemorates Black voices within the publishing landscape and highlights upcoming books written by authors of Colour.

First on the list is a Marvel graphic novel titled *Sabretooth: The Adversary*. Based on the adversary of the famous Marvel Comics character Wolverine, *Sabretooth: The Adversary* is written by Victor LaValle. LaValle has several written works consisting of both comic books and novels, including *The Ballad of Black Tom*, which won the 2016 Shirley Jackson Award for best novella. *Sabretooth: The Adversary* will be released on 4 October 2022.



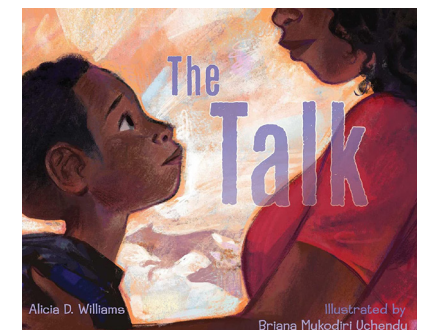
The 11 October will see the release of *Me and Muhammad Ali* written by Jabari Asim, illustrated by A.G. Ford and published by Penguin Random House. *Me and Muhammad Ali* is a children’s picture book about a young boy named Langston who gets to meet his hero, the boxing champion. Asim has been described as one of the most influential African American critics of his generation and is a poet, playwright and fictional writer. Additionally, Asim was the former Editor-in-Chief of the NAACP.

On the same day, Macmillan will publish *Will Do Magic For Small Change*, which was written by Andrea Hairston. A historical fantasy, the book’s hardcover description details its plot, stating: “a tale of alien science and earthbound magic and the secrets families keep from each other.” Hairston is an accomplished author, having won the James Tiptree Jr. Award in 2011 for her novel *Redwood* and *Wildfire*, alongside winning the Carl Brandon Parallax Award for her first novel, *Mindscape* (2006). She is also a playwright.

On 18 October, *The Talk* is set to be published by Simon & Schuster’s Atheneum/

Caitlyn Dlouhy Books imprint. *The Talk* is a picture book which will touch upon the real-world issues that Black people face in an age-appropriate fashion, told through the eyes of a young boy who is given “the talk” by his mother. Alicia D. Williams and Briana Mukodiri Uchendu wrote and illustrated the picture book respectively. Williams has written several books which have featured Black protagonists and her debut novel, *Genesis Begins Again* (2019), won the Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe Award for New Talent in 2020. Meanwhile, Briana Uchenda’s illustrative debut will be in *The Talk*.

This is just the tip of the iceberg of what’s to come. More books by Black authors can be found on the [African American Literature Book Club](#), a website that aims to highlight Black-centred stories written by Black authors.



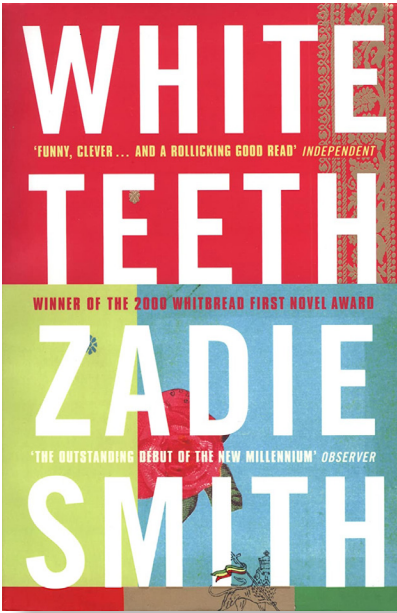
From Firebrand Fiction to Personal Memoirs

BY ELEANOR BOWSKILL, VICTORIA BROMLEY, DAISY WARD AND SARAH LYDON

A diverse bookshelf gives a reader access to a lesser-known but extraordinarily important perspective – and one that is often overlooked. It enables the reading of stories told by people from different cultural backgrounds to your own who have had vastly different life experiences. This process is key to understanding and to celebrating difference among every person. With themes of internalised racism, wrongful convictions of Black men, and racial marginalisation, these books serve as not only their author’s truth but also works that have transcended into recognition of Black heritage, culture, and achievements.

Such a Fun Age by Kiley Reid

Kiley Reid’s debut novel navigates the complicated nuances of race and privilege through her razor-sharp and authentic prose. When Emira is confronted for “kidnapping” the white child she is actually babysitting, she and her employer Alix find themselves grappling with everything they think they know – about each other, racial biases, transactional relationships and performative activism. Reid’s beautifully observed



study of human relationships dives deeply into the uneasy performances of “wokeness” and the complicated nature of human relationships.

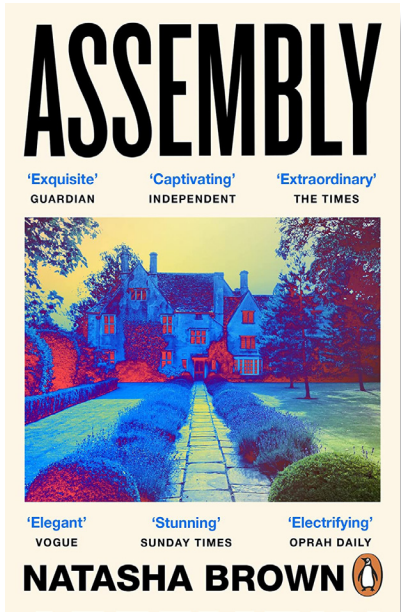
White Teeth by Zadie Smith

Winner of multiple honours, including the 2000 James Tait Black Memorial Prize, Zadie Smith’s novel creates an unforgettable portrait of multicultural London across three generations. Smith is unafraid of tackling heavy themes and explores them with both lightness and wit. This novel follows two unlikely friends and their

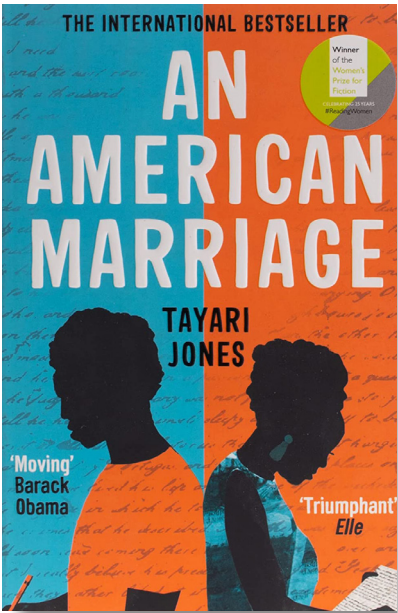
families as they explore England’s unalterable transformation. Smith expertly explores Britain’s evolving relationship with immigrants whilst also dealing with friendship, love, war, and above all else, the past.

Assembly by Natasha Brown

Driven by the power of its writing, this slim yet impactful novel narrates a Black woman’s struggle day-to-day, navigating a world which is systematically sexist and racist. Building up to her attendance at a garden party in the country



with her boyfriend, her mind is filled with thoughts of who is in control of her life. The heavy weight of mental health clouds her judgement and exacerbates her hardship. This book is perfect to read on the go, since the prose is snipped up into digestible scenes and vignettes, where you can’t help but pick it up whenever you have the chance.



An American Marriage by Tayari Jones

Winner of the Women’s Prize for Fiction 2019, this book explores the wrongful conviction of an innocent Black man and the subsequent strain this puts on his marriage. Through an exchange of letters, the couple try to salvage their relationship while he serves time in jail. Through stunning language, this book doesn’t shy away from raw

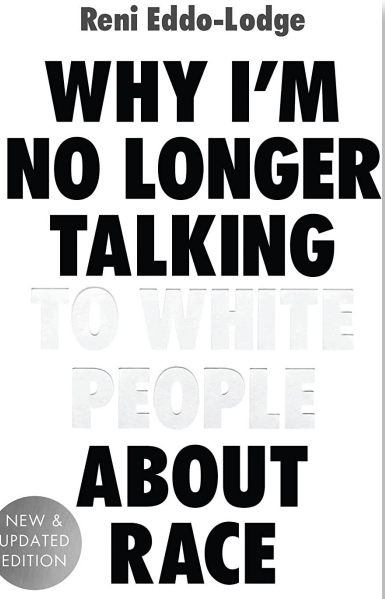
honesty and strong emotion, challenging these prejudiced ideologies.

Me and White Supremacy by Layla F. Saad

Given its emphasis on self-examination, complete with difficult reflective exercises for those prepared to deconstruct their internalised racism, this book should not be regarded as a primer on white supremacy but a workbook crucial to the emotional development of all white people. Saad understands that antiracism must transcend intellectual discourse; change is brought about through action alone. She is not just an author but an educator. What began as an Instagram challenge that encouraged participants to own up to their racist behaviours, the chronicled version expands upon the historical and cultural context around racial injustice.

Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race by Reni Eddo-Lodge

Motivated by an enormous response to her blog post with the same title, Eddo-Lodge’s searing polemic reframes the debate about race so that those with the greatest experience of its resonances can take the lead. Her words have galvanised racial discussions across a nation that was once in denial about the pervasive



racial marginalisation of Black people. This book is a personal one; it does explore socio-political context, yet from her perspective. Such an intimate exploration of white dominance, intersectional feminism and class structures makes this work indispensable.

Activism in Literature:

Angela Davis, Audre Lorde and bell hooks

BY EMMA REGAN, ELLA O'NEILL, JORDAN MAXWELL RIDGWAY AND HAYLEY GRAY

In this issue, we are excited to take a look at how Black authors have powerfully used their voices throughout literature to highlight the oppression the Black community regularly faces.

Literature is one of the most powerful forces of activism you can find. Activists must use thought-provoking narratives to highlight to others where oppression lies. Meanwhile, authors respect the intelligence of their readers and use powerful literary tools that challenge them to question the world they live in.

You may be familiar with names like Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde and bell hooks, all Black authors whose books are celebrated as modern classics for their literary prowess and impactful storytelling. This article will delve into the works of some of those authors discussing their activism and why they have been celebrated for so long.

Black women have a long history of survival and resistance – from civil rights and social justice movements; slavery to emancipation; and waves of feminism – through undertaking leadership roles (especially through literature and education) as a means of imparting their knowledge and experiences to the next generations. Hence, forty years ago, activist, educator and author, Angela Davis wrote her groundbreaking book *Women, Race & Class* (1981) as a means of offering an alternative and intersectional perspective of feminine struggles for liberation.

Throughout *Women, Race & Class*, Davis traced an intertwined history of women's suffrage and abolition movements through the examination and criticism of racism, class prejudice and homophobia inherent in traditional or white feminist ideologies. While Davis' text does critique masculinist ideologies and patriarchal hierarchies of power, she also advocates for all forms

of social inequality and exposes the disconcerting path of a “universal” notion of feminism.

Thus, *Women, Race & Class* became a foundational text for what is now regarded as “multicultural feminism.” Davis has allowed generations of racial and ethnic minority, working-class and LGBTQIA+ women to benefit from her radical and integrative activist literature as her work has touched, informed and empowered those that are often ignored or silenced.

Audre Lorde is probably best known for her poetry, but she was also a prolific essayist and prose writer, and her work focused on intersectional topics of race, gender, sexuality, illness, disability and ageism. Lorde was able to craft work of deep emotion, giving light to the issues she experienced in her own life and serving as another form of activism through its power to evoke empathy.

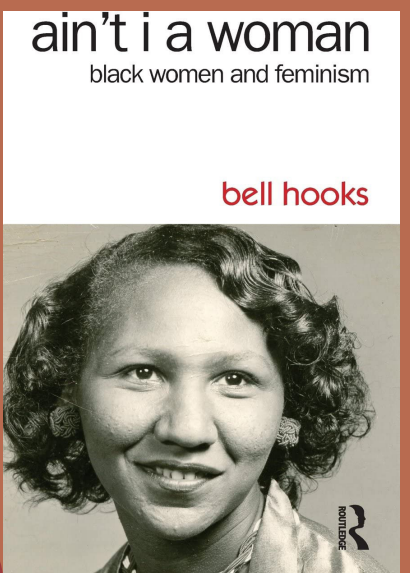
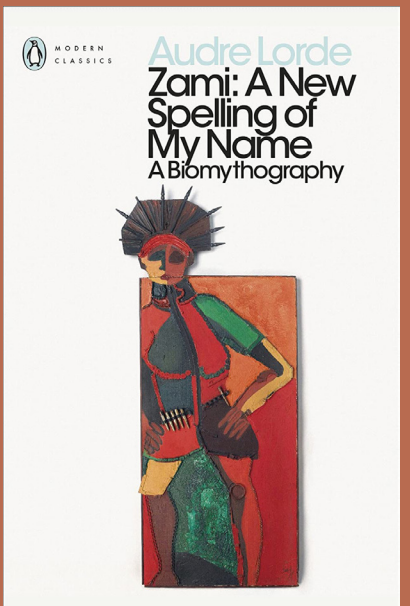
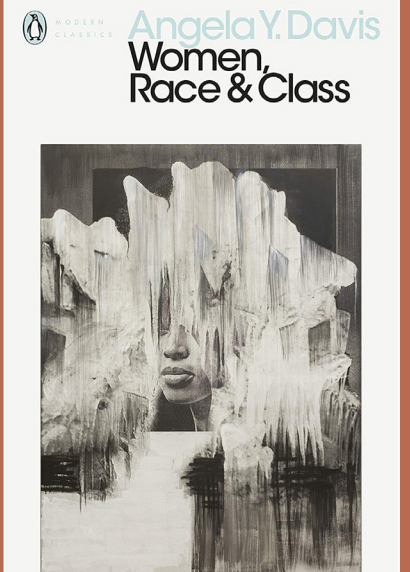
In *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982), Lorde gave voice to a new genre she called “biomythography” – a blend of history, myth and biographical details. Early in the story, Lorde is declared legally blind and she regularly describes feeling isolated and disconnected from her family. Despite her family's attempts to shield her from racism in Jim Crow's America, Lorde gives detail of shocking interactions. As the novel progresses into her early adulthood, Lorde begins romantic relationships with several women, who each help her form her identity.

Zami has been routinely hailed as one of the most influential novels of all time, namely for its marked ability to confront and express pain. Her vivid use of metaphor and imagery helps to illustrate a trailblazer who was not afraid to forge her path. As [The New York Times](#) wrote reflecting on her work, “to read it is to feel one has lived her life.”

bell hooks (whose given name was Gloria Jean Watkins) was a powerful cultural figure, known for her trailblazing status as a writer and cultural activist. Whilst writing and exploring intersectional topics of race, class and feminism, she centred on the Black

woman's experience and articulated and powerfully identified such phenomena to enlighten those that had predominantly upheld liberation movements – primarily white women of class privilege – to the extent that Black women were pushed to the margins.

Ain't I a Woman (1981) was hooks' first major work, named after the speech Sojourner Truth delivered at the 1851 Women's Rights Convention. hooks began writing it when she was just nineteen and spoke out for the rights of African Americans and women during and after the Civil War. hooks critically examines how Black women were oppressed by white men, and Black men oppressed by white women. She rejects the view that race and gender aren't inextricably intertwined and evaluates the historical past, examining the treatment of Black women during enslavement to provide social and critical commentary on the continuing injustices of the present.



Our Anticipated Reads

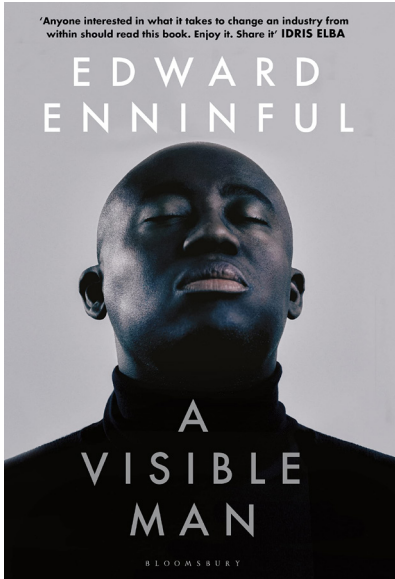
BY GEORGIA WELLS, ANNA ROBINSON, CHARLOTTE BARBER AND MAISY TWADDLE

A Visible Man by Edward Enniful

6 September, Bloomsbury Publishing

In a world saturated by white, middle-class men, Edward Enniful enters the fashion industry ready to break the mould.

As British Vogue’s first Black editor, Enniful turns heads. *A Visible Man* tells the story of how a Black, gay, working-class refugee came to find a home in fashion, and to change it for all those around him. He discusses how he worked to reframe the idea of beauty and how fashion should be accessible to all.



Edward Enniful fought against adversity and continuously championed for inclusivity. This memoir tells the story of how someone can be brave enough to enter a space that they have been told is not for them and to make a change anyway. Here is the story of the time that the fashion industry changed forever.

Light Skin Gone to Waste: Stories by Toni Ann Johnson

15 October, University of Georgia Press

Winner of this year’s Flannery O’Connor Award for Short Fiction, Toni Ann Johnson’s *Light Skin Gone to Waste* is a series of stories interconnected around a Black family living in a predominantly white neighbourhood in New York. The protagonist is family head Philip Arrington, and in 1962 he arrives in Monroe, NY as a psychologist with a doctorate. Through Philip, we meet his wife Velma, daughter Livia and unborn child Madeline. Moving to a blue-collar town, they are contrasted against many of their neighbours, they are cosmopolitan and sophisticated, but also



troubled and falling apart. As we follow the linked stories through the swinging sixties and beyond, Johnson writes of mundane moments, such as buying new homes, going on holiday and opening businesses.

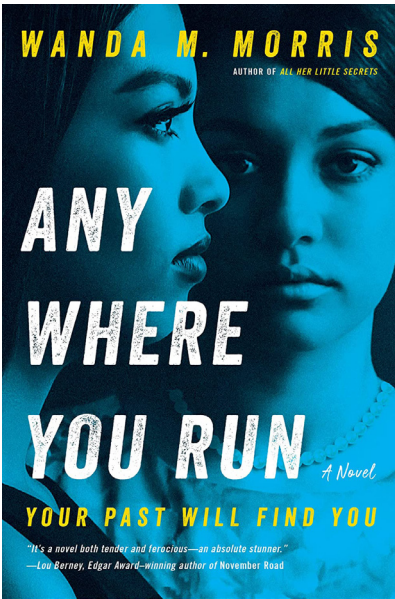
But Maddie, as one of the only Black children in the town, finds herself at the forefront of the racism and invisible barriers she cannot be freed from. As she learns family truths of adultery, violent mood swings and resentments, Maddie must decide who she is against. An engrossing read, this collection of interwoven stories sheds a light on

the young Black people of America and the constant hurdles they face as they navigate young adulthood in the contemporary age.

Anywhere You Run by Wanda M. Morris

25 October, William Morrow Paperbacks

In the summer of 1964, three innocent men are brutally murdered for trying to help Black Mississippians secure the right to vote. In the same town Violet Richards finds herself in a horrific situation. Suffering a brutal attack, she kills the man responsible which leaves her no choice but to flee her town of Jackson, Mississippi, as there is no way to escape Jim Crow justice. She hides out in a small rural town in Chillicothe, Georgia. However even with the escape, danger may be closer than she thinks.



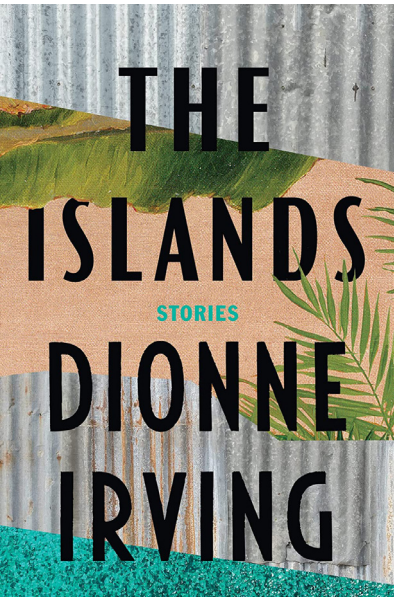
Back in Jackson, Violet’s older sister Marigold is facing problems of her own. She dreams of attending law school and has been trying to use her knowledge to further the cause of the vote. However, much like her sister, Marigold is in trouble. She’s pregnant and unmarried. After news of the murder brings the police to her, she sees no other option than to flee. But has she made a terrible choice that threatens the life of her and her unborn child?

What both sisters have failed to realise is that there is a man hot on their trail. One that has dark secrets and a disturbing motive. From the award-winning author of *All Her Little Secrets*, Wanda M. Morris brings another gripping novel.

The Islands by Dionne Irving

1 November, Penguin Random House

Dionne Irving explores the immigrant experience in *The Islands*, following the lives of Jamaican women who are either relatives of people who have immigrated, or immigrants themselves. Ranging from stories of women from the 1950s to modern day, Irving astutely examines the intricacies of immigration in her debut collection. Set across London, France, Panama, Florida and Jamaica, the difficulties of assimilation, the legacy of colonialism



and sexual discrimination are studied as the women navigate their unsettled lives.

One story tells the tale of a woman and her husband who impulsively move to Florida with high hopes of living the American Dream, only to discover cracks in their relationship. Another shows a mother, who is a touring comedienne, feeling pressure to volunteer in a prep school’s International Day. In another, a travel writer connects with the mother who abandoned her.

Themes within *The Islands* focus on the desire for connection during the turbulence of displacement and the relationship that one forms with their own identity. Restless and uncertain, these stories follow women all striving to spread their roots where they find themselves planted.

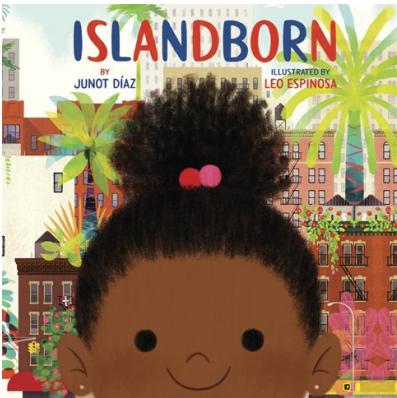
Celebrating Black Narration

BY PAULINE BIRD AND CAMERON PHILLIPS

In celebrating Black communities, their talents and stories, we in the audiobook team have a powerful angle that our favourite medium gives us: voice. Voicing one’s story is just as important as the story itself, and our picks this issue highlight Black writers whose stories are also narrated by members of the same community. In addition, our picks are audiobooks whose print editions have a focus on illustration.

Cameron’s Pick:
Islandborn by Junot Díaz, narrated by Junot Díaz

Lola is a small child who is sitting in a classroom with her fellow classmates. Her teacher sets them a task: to draw a picture of the place where they emigrated from. The trouble is, Lola doesn’t know the place she came from. She left the Titular Island when she was very young, so cannot remember.



With the help of her family and friends, Lola sets out on a path to discover her roots.

Emotionally charged and written to, at times, devastating effect, Lola’s story is one familiar to so many people who have been displaced from their home. Despite the more mature tones of displacement, diaspora, dictatorship, immigration and losing everything to natural disasters littered throughout Lola’s tale is a constant glow of eminent triumph at her family’s journey, but also the pride they feel for their homeland. Family is the key element to Lola’s story,

forming the scaffolding which allows her to construct the drawing of the Island.

When it comes to the narration, Junot Díaz is mesmerising and the sound design is powerful to match. Accompanied by various sound effects to describe the scene he is painting, Díaz sounds like the relative who reads all of the kids bedtime stories, the one who can play multiple characters with different voices. His decision to add Spanish words to the English narration is very interesting, as it perhaps mirrors the way parents who immigrate with their young children teach them their mother tongue. He infuses the tale with myth, magic and authenticity, which leads me to believe the work is semi-autobiographical, with Díaz himself leaving the Dominican Republic for New Jersey when he was six years old. It is absolutely brilliant, and I will definitely be re-listening on multiple occasions in the future.

Pauline’s Pick: *Sulwe* by Lupita Nyong’o, narrated by Lupita Nyong’o

Sulwe’s skin is the colour of midnight. She is darker than all of her family members and everyone at school. She notices that those with lighter skin colours are treated more positively than those with darker hues. This eats away at Sulwe’s sense of self-worth, and she dreams of and prays for lighter skin. Her mother tries to comfort her by reminding her that true beauty comes from within, but when a shooting star arrives in her bedroom, Sulwe is taken on a truly transformative magical night-time journey. Through a charming vignette featuring mythical sisters Day and Night, she discovers that she too is beautiful – inside and out!

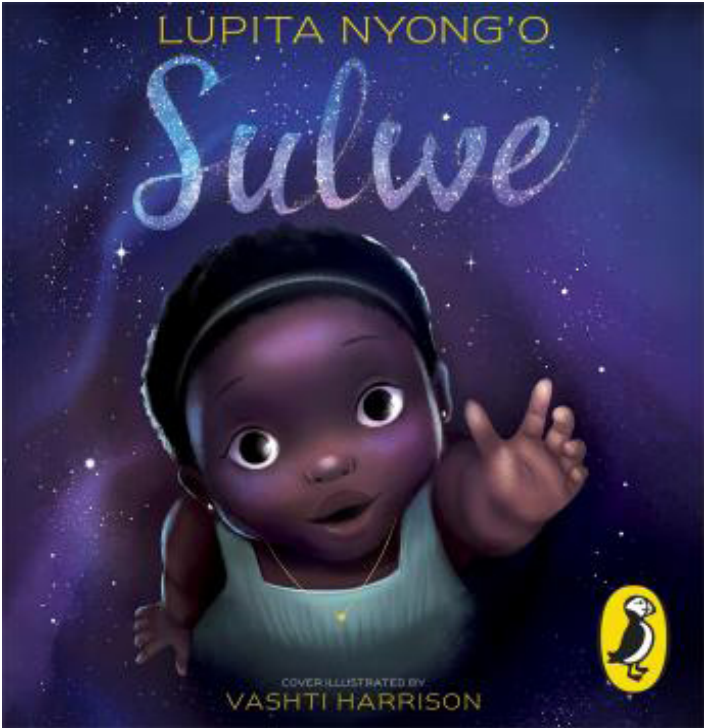
This mythical journey and its message are important. Had the listener been left with Sulwe’s mother’s comments alone, although well-intentioned, they could reinforce the belief that darker skin is not beautiful – and that instead Sulwe must accept that her beauty is not external. The story teaches us that all skin colours are beautiful, but the most important beauty is found within.

Written and narrated by Academy Award-winning actress Lupita Nyong’o, this powerful book explores themes of colourism and

self-esteem, encouraging children to see their own unique beauty. She draws upon her own experience of colourism, growing up with darker skin. The audiobook features a section at the end where Nyong’o shares her own stories. This made the narration even more powerful in my opinion, as we are reminded of the impact that colourism can have on an individual.

There were so many things I loved about this audiobook in addition to the message of the story. It was wonderful that all the characters in this book were Black and instead of contrasting with white characters, we were introduced to a spectrum of characters with various shades of Black skin. I also liked the slow, gentle pace

of the book and the soothing accompanying music. It’s the perfect book to soak up and enjoy – particularly before bed. This is a great example of a picture book that works extremely well in audiobook format. If you haven’t yet tried listening to a picture book in this mode, I urge you to try this one!



Latest Acquisitions & Adaptations

BY GEORGIE CUTLER AND EVA LEE



Acquisition News

Trapeze bags short story collection and novel by Kelechi Okafor

The UK and Commonwealth rights excluding Canada for Kelechi Okafor’s *Edge of Here* and an untitled novel have been bought by Trapeze books. The short story collection will “explore contemporary womanhood” ([MMB Creative](#)), using Okafor’s brilliant storytelling skills learnt as an actor, director and writer. Okafor

describes the collection as “the book [they have] been waiting for and that is why [they have] written it” ([The Bookseller](#)). The deal was completed by Sareeta Domingo, Editorial Director at Trapeze, and Sallyanne Sweeney from MMB Creative. *Edge of Here* is set to be released next September, with Okafor’s untitled work due in autumn 2024.

Usbourne wins five-way auction for Kimberly Whittam’s debut releases

Usbourne has acquired the rights to the debut novel from Kimberly Whittam in a two book deal. The first book set to be released is *Quiet Storm*, a novel inspired by Whittam’s role as a teaching assistant. It promotes the idea that “you don’t have to be the loudest person in the room to shine” ([The Bookseller](#)), a message aimed to represent and boost quiet children in the classroom. *Quiet Storm* is to be published in June 2023, followed by the second novel in 2024. The rights were acquired by the Fiction Director at Usbourne, Rebecca Hill, from The GoodLiterary Agent’s Gyamfia Osei.

Booker Prize author moves to Jonathan Cape

Brandon Taylor has parted ways with Daunt Books where he published his debut novel *Real Life in 2020*, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. He is set to publish his new novel *The Late Americans* with Jonathan Cape where Editorial Director Željka Marošević acquired UK and Commonwealth rights. Taylor describes his new novel as a “deeply involving new novel of young men and women at a crossroads” ([The Bookseller](#)). He is set to promote the novel at Vintage’s fiction showcase in 2023, marking his first UK talk at the event. *The Late Americans* will be published in June 2023.

From book to screen: In the works

Netflix to develop *Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun*

Netflix is set to team up with Westbrook Studios and

Yoruba Saxon to develop a film adaptation of *Onyeka* and the *Academy of the Sun*.

Will Smith, Jon Mone and David Oyelowo are set to join the project as producers. It will be based on the middle-grade novel of the same name by Tolá Okogwu, released in June 2022. It focuses on Onyeka, a British-Nigerian girl who discovers her hair has psychokinetic powers. She is enrolled in a superhero school called the Academy of the Sun where she can train her powers. When her newfound community is threatened, she must team up with her fellow pupils to put a stop to a monumental battle. The release date is yet to be set but we’ll report back with updates on this exciting adaptation.

Chipo Chung and Anthony Mark Barrow cast for *Black Cake* adaptation

Chip Chung and Anthony Mark Barrow have been cast as Eleanor Bennett and Clarence ‘Little Man’ Henry in Hulu’s upcoming adaptation of *Black Cake*. Based on the novel by Charmaine Wilkerson, *Black Cake* tells the story of a murder mystery underpinned by family drama. Eleanor Bennett leaves her two estranged children a recording that reveals family secrets that have long been buried. These revelations cause the siblings to challenge their beliefs on their family’s identity, but will they heal the rift between them? We are waiting on a release date for this adaptation.

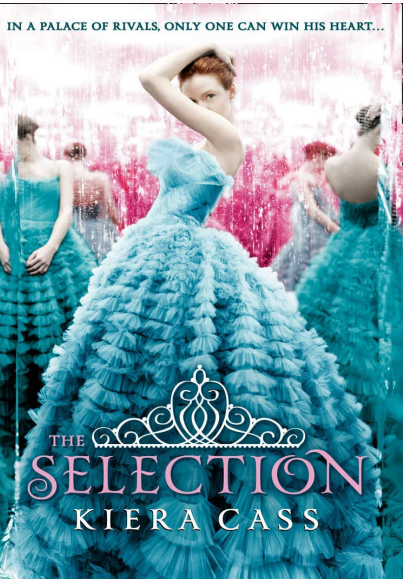
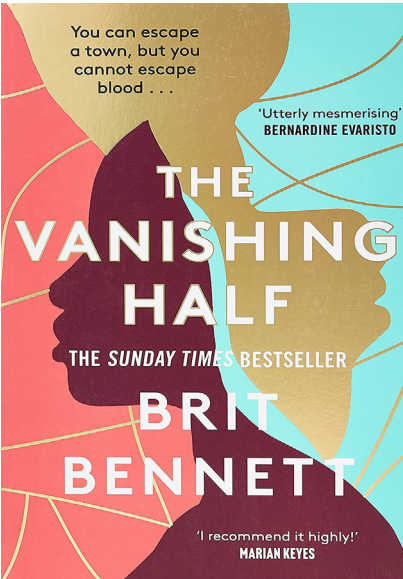
The Selection picked up by Netflix

Netflix is set to release *The Selection* by Kiera Cass after many rumours of a film adaptation floating around for years. Internationally acclaimed Saudi Arabian director Haifaa Al-Mansour is set to be working alongside Pouya Shahbazian and Denise Di Novi to produce. The novel follows thirty-five girls participating in *The Selection*, an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience the world of glitz and glam while competing for the love of Prince Maxon. Leading lady America Singer rebels against this idea of a competition but soon meets the prince and realises there may be more to what she imagined. Currently, there is no news on casting, with rumours of *Stranger Things* star Sadie Sink for the leading role.

The Vanishing Half coming to HBO

HBO is to develop a limited series after acquiring rights to New York’s top-seller book back in 2020. The historical fiction book by Brit Bennett centres on Black twin sisters Stella and Desiree Vignes, who grow up in a small Black community. One leaves, and one returns and raises her daughter there while the other chooses a new life with a white husband and doesn’t reveal any story of her past. Separated by their different lives, it explores themes and issues on race, expectations and personal desires from

their individual perspectives. So far, the filming team has announced Bennett and Issa Rae will produce along with Aziza Barnes for the screenplay. There is currently no information on casting or release date, so keep your eyes peeled for this adaptation.



Highlights in the Charts

Nightcrawling by Leila Mottley

REVIEW BY NATALIE BECKETT
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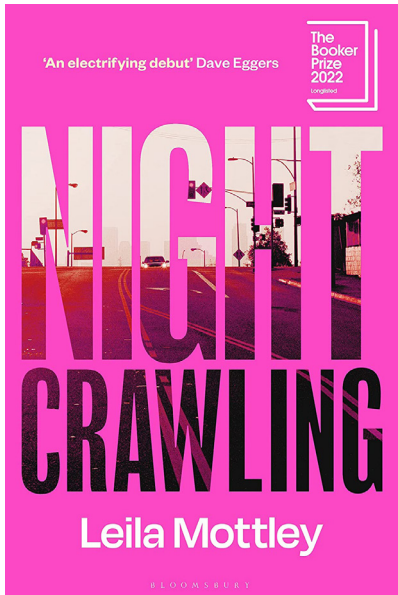
Nightcrawling begins and ends with a dirty swimming pool in a run-down apartment complex in Oakland, California. Mottley effectively uses the pool to literally plunge us into the mesmerising and tragic world of Kiara Johnson, making it immediately evident why she is the youngest ever Booker-longlisted writer.

At seventeen, Kiara is doing her best to survive in a world systematically built against her. Her brother, Marcus, is distracted by naive dreams of becoming a musician like their Uncle Ty; her father has died and her mother is in a halfway house. A high school dropout with no job prospects, Kiara turns to the streets to support Marcus and their neighbour’s son, Trevor, whose mother is a drug addict. When she is coerced into the back of a police car, the agonising reality of the dark adult world turns out to be more brutal and corrupt than she could have ever imagined.

Nightcrawling was inspired by an infamous 2015 case, involving members of the Oakland Police Department who participated in the sexual exploitation of young

women of colour. In an interview with The Booker Prizes, Mottley admits she had felt the headlines surrounding the scandal were “narrow and often misdirected attention away from the system pattern of harm to girls and women of colour.” Through Kiara, Mottley gives the young victims of the scandal a voice that would otherwise remain unheard. It is a powerful reminder of the violence Black women face every day, whose stories are rarely told.

Despite being a minor who has been exploited at the hands of men with power, Mottley manages to convey Kiara’s ingrained feeling of shame for succumbing to prostitution. As she walks up to give testimony against the police, Kiara admits she feels like the defendant of a terrible crime. Her feelings are exacerbated by those closest to her. Her brother abandons her and her Uncle is all too quick to tell her that her father would be disappointed. Even her best friend Ale is unable to look at Kiara for what she has done. Mottley questions their judgement and compassionately shows how



in some cases, alternative paths are often so unclear they may as well be non-existent.

Despite her unimaginably cruel and unjust circumstances, part of Kiara’s heroism is displayed in the small joys she continues to find in the world around her. She makes pancakes and plays basketball with Trevor; she falls in love with her best friend Ale and finds a way to forget her worries by diving beneath the pool water. It is in the balance of the light with the dark and the descriptions of these small joyful moments that Mottley’s prowess as a writer shines through.



Kindred by Octavia E. Butler

REVIEW BY HALIMAH HAQUE
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“I never realised how easily people could be trained to accept slavery.” - Octavia E. Butler, *Kindred*.

Kindred follows the protagonist Dana, a Black woman, after her life is turned upside down when she’s transported back in time to a Maryland plantation in 1815. An aspiring writer in 1970s America, Dana struggles with her identity and beliefs as she’s repeatedly summoned by Rufus, a white boy from her family’s past, forcing her to confront the horrors that her ancestors were subjected to just decades before.

I finished *Kindred* within two sittings and was amazed by Butler’s ability to effortlessly transport her readers through different time periods. It’s harrowing to see that this novel is as relevant today as it was during the 1970s, illustrating the racial tension and discrimination that continues to prevail in our communities.

Through the graphic depiction of slavery, Butler clearly highlights the horror that slavery was. Readers are shown slave life from the perspective of a “free” time-travelling Black woman, compelling them to constantly draw comparisons with modern day life and Dana’s encounters. This makes the transition to the early 1800s all the more stark and distressing.

Butler’s use of simplistic language allows readers to focus more on the important topics being discussed. Butler highlights the power dynamic that existed between a slave and their white master, as well as the guilt and trauma that often accompanies these experiences.

Above all, I loved the depth of the characters and complexity of their

relationships. Dana’s relationship with her white husband, Kevin, is truly put to the test, which is utilised to highlight the contrasting experiences Black and white people have of the world. While Kevin fights for his wife and other slaves, he often dominates Dana and fails to understand the trauma she experiences whilst at the plantation.

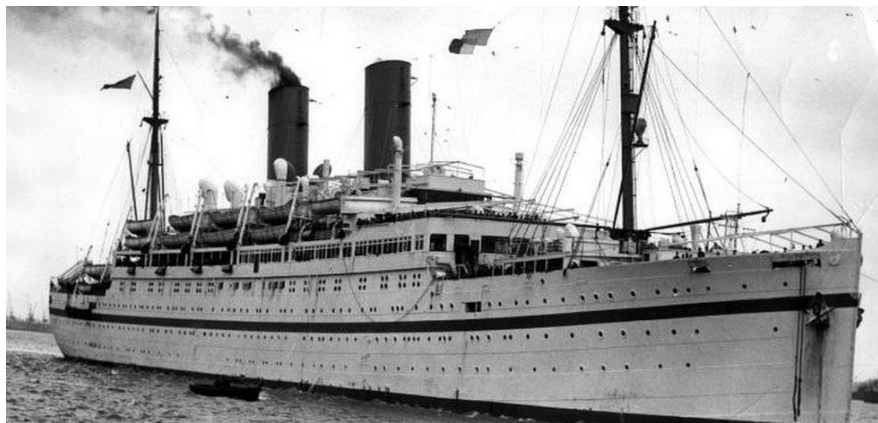
On the other hand, Dana and Rufus’ mentor/mentee relationship was interesting to read, despite its unfortunate, yet inevitable end. Although her hope to transform Rufus for the better was wishful, it highlighted Dana’s innocence and the immense impact environmental and societal influences have on individuals.

Kindred is an insightful and thought-provoking read, where time travel is skilfully used as a mechanism to illustrate the long-term effects of slavery and the discrimination many Black people are still subjected to in the twenty-first century.

Celebrating Literature that has Wind Rushing Through its Pages

BY SHANIAH SHIELDS, LEANNE FRANCIS, MICHELLE YE AND JIA WEN HO

On 22 June 1948, the *Empire Windrush* docked into Tilbury, Essex, carrying hundreds of passengers who could not fathom the impact they would have on cosmopolitan Britain. Formerly the MV Monte Rosa, the Empire Windrush was renamed after the River Windrush in the Cotswolds. It signified the start of a post-war immigration boom from the Caribbean to Britain which brought workers to help fill post-war labour shortages.



Every year on 22 June, Windrush Day is commemorated to celebrate and acknowledge the contributions that the Windrush generation and their descendants have made to British society. The Windrush Generation (1948–1971) helped to shape modern Black British culture including art, music, and literature. Now, nearly seventy-five years on, it is important to educate ourselves on the Windrush Generation, their impact on British history and on their betrayal by the British Home Office in 2018 which was uncovered by journalist Amelia Gentleman. For more information on the Windrush scandal, [Gentleman’s The Windrush Betrayal: Exposing the Hostile Environment](#) is a credible resource. For more information on the Windrush, [The British Library](#) has a great selection of Windrush stories available.

Key Figures

The Windrush Generation not only contributed to the economy of Britain but also to the culture, bringing with them new styles of dress, food and music that are at the core of our contemporary culture. They were pioneers and notably a passenger

on the *Empire Windrush* Sam, King MBE, became Mayor of Southwark in the 1980s. He was one of the creators of the Windrush Foundation and of Notting Hill Carnival, the annual Caribbean festival event that showcases the beauty and vibrancy of Caribbean culture. Furthermore, Allyson

Williams MBE has also been involved in Notting Hill Carnival since 1975, a tradition that is woven into the fabric of the nation. In the sporting world, cricketer Sir Clive Lloyd and Olympian Linford Christie OBE have Windrush roots. Author, presenter and

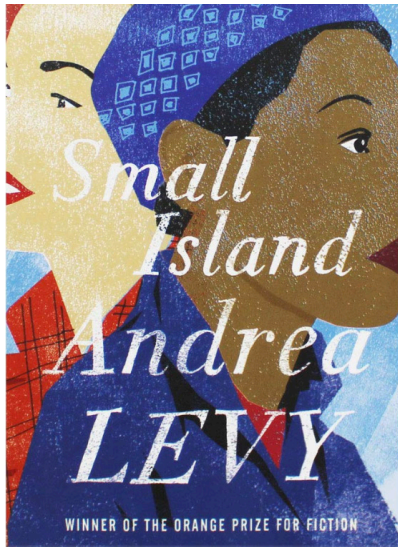
politician Baroness Floella Benjamin has noted her journey during the Windrush in her children’s book *Coming to England* (1995) which is an inspirational story of hope and determination.

The seismic impact of the Windrush Generation also sculpted the contemporary art and literature that was being published. At their core, a sense of belonging and community was explored in conjunction with narratives on heritage and identity. We have collated a list of fiction, poetry and children’s books that showcase the talent of the Windrush Generation.

Book Recommendations Fiction

The complexity and emotional gravity of the Windrush is brought ever closer through novels of fiction such as Andrea Levy’s award-winning *Small Island* (2004). Anchored by Queenie, Bernard, Gilbert and Hortense, the novel contrasts the Jamaican diaspora with the English community. Hortense and Gilbert immigrate from Jamaica to London after World War II, only to find a chasm between imagination and reality. Hortense, who prides herself on her English, is confronted with a language barrier when conversing with Queenie and realises the England of her imagination is not the one before her. Gilbert and Bernard, both soldiers, find themselves

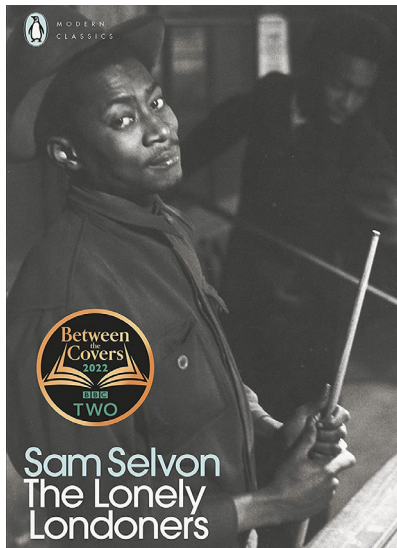
on opposite sides after the war. Gilbert is greeted with racial hostility and prejudice embodied by a patriotic and patriarchal Bernard. Blatant racism and internalised social prejudices are woven throughout the novel, encapsulating the many facets of society immigrants were forced to endure and yet still thrived in.



The Lonely Londoners (1956) by Sam Selvon reflects the lives of immigrants in London during the 1950s. Each character has their own dreams and expectations for London, but even as they assimilate into English society they are simultaneously ostracised and forced into the margins. Between Moses, Tolroy and the plethora of other characters we encounter, each becomes part of a group identity inevitably forged through conscious and unconscious segregation. Every character is a unique window into the experience of the “other,”

as they swing between identities that were forced upon them and identities they claim for themselves. While the running thread of loneliness is disheartening, the novel also reaches out to capture those moments of warmth and vibrancy that can be grasped in a big city’s kaleidoscope of little worlds.

In Louise Hare’s novel, *This Lovely City* (2020), bound for a beckoning England, Lawrie Matthews boards the *Empire Windrush*. At first, Lawrie finds employment as a postman, while enjoying nights playing the clarinet at clubs amongst friends. Content and in love with his neighbour Evie, Lawrie’s life seems to be on track. Unfortunately, his accidental discovery of a dead baby incites a cascade of escalating racial violence. Despite the encouraging greetings on paper, Lawrie and other immigrants are battered by hostilities. The ironic title articulates just how far removed post-war



London was from the hopeful conjurings of the immigrants it purported to welcome. Set against bleak circumstances, Lawrie's perseverance and faith in love is a beacon of hope in a city he strives to define for himself.

Poetry

Born in 1924, James Berry OBE was a Jamaican poet who came to England in 1948 on the SS Orbita, the second ship after the *Windrush*. In 1981, Berry was the winner of the Poetry Society's National Poetry Competition, becoming the first poet from the West Indies to achieve this award. From there on, his career skyrocketed, and in 2007, he produced the poetry collection *Windrush Songs*, published by Newcastle-based independent publisher Bloodaxe Books. Originally published to mark the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade, *Windrush Songs* gave voice "to the people who came on the first ships from the Caribbean, whose journeys held strange echoes of earlier sea voyages which had brought ancestors from Africa to the slave plantation."

Berry's poetry employs a combination of Standard English and Jamaican Patois when narrating multiple voices in this collection. *Windrush Songs* is both reminiscent and angry: a

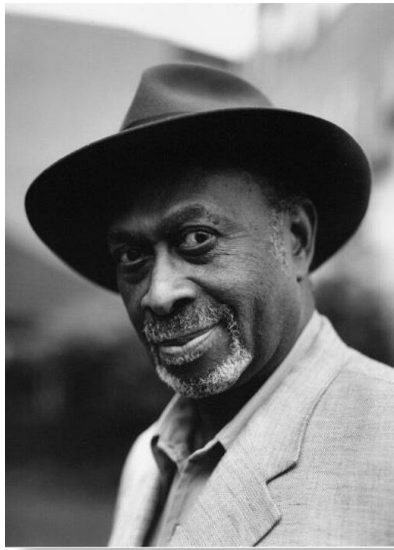


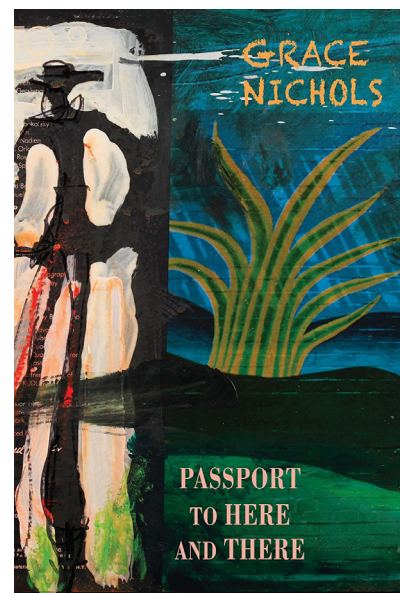
Photo credit: The Children's Book Show

time capsule providing a unique social and political commentary on the world after the arrival of the *Windrush*. This is a collection about journeys, heritage, ripe fruit and the feeling of being an outsider. Though James Berry passed away in 2017, the impact he had on Black British literature will forever remain. As a way to honour and celebrate him, in 2021 the Newcastle Centre for the Literary Arts and Bloodaxe Books launched the James Berry Poetry Prize to support emerging poets of colour.

Guyanese poet Grace Nichols moved to England in 1977. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and a recipient of the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry, Nichols has published

numerous collections of poetry, including *I is a Long-Memored Woman* (1983), *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984) and *Passport to Here and There* (2020). Much like Berry, Nichols' poetry is a response to political and social tensions at the time. Her collections deal with the evolving world, each time employing a different tone.

I is a Long-Memored Woman is perhaps her most serious work, offering an intimate, first-person account of life for enslaved Black women. *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*, on the other hand, is a more light-hearted collection, discussing Western beauty standards in a playful, mocking tone. *Sunris* (1996) is a colourful collection, mimicking the vibrancy and musicality of



carnival. *Passport to Here and There* journeys between Britain and Guyana, narrating multiple voices in a way which is reminiscent of James Berry's *Windrush Songs*.

Children's Books

Children's books play a vital role in introducing the younger generation to the Windrush history and to exploring their own cultural and historical identities. They are also a fun and delightful way to connect young children with history positively. It's especially important that children have access to books that are about them.

In her autobiographical children's book, *Coming to England* (1995), Baroness Floella Benjamin narrates her story of coming to England. At ten years old she travelled 4,000 miles with three siblings by ship to find a new life in England. However, the journey was only the start of her troubles when she found the new country unfriendly and hostile towards her. A deeply personal and moving account through the lens of a young girl, *Coming to England* is suitable for children aged five and above and is wonderfully illustrated by Diane Ewen.

Granny Came Here on the Empire Windrush (2022) is a children's book that crosses generational boundaries. Authored by Patrice Lawrence and illustrated

by Camilla Sucre, this heartwarming tale celebrates the Windrush generation through a child named Ava and her granny. For school, Ava has to dress up as an inspirational figure; she asks her Granny who suggests names like Mary Seacole and Rosa Parks. However, as they are searching for an outfit in Granny's trunk, she learns about Granny's own history – how she sailed to England during the Windrush. Ava realises her true inspirational figure was right at home all along.

A poetry book for children aged four and above, John Agard's *Windrush Child* (2022), illustrated by Sophie Bass, is a lyrical and vibrant story of a young Caribbean boy who is waving goodbye to all he has ever known. The journey is long and the future is uncertain; however,

there is hope and promise. The book commemorates the long journey that countless Caribbean families have gone through.

A book for older children aged nine and above, Benjamin Zephaniah's *Windrush Child* (2020) is about ten-year-old Leanard who struggles to live in England, a new country that his family just moved into. The food is horrible and winters are cold. However, it is worse when the people are unwelcoming and hostile towards him and his family. Tackling these difficult issues, Benjamin Zephaniah adds his experiences growing up in England in the 1960s along with detailed research of the Windrush history.



Translated Fiction by Translators of Colour

BY NIINA BAILEY, OISIN HARRIS, TOBY SMOLLET AND AMY STRONG

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In recent years, there have been conversations about white translators translating work by authors of colour and whether it is appropriate. There have been instances where translators have withdrawn from translations, or their translations have not been used because of this. Translators of colour are heavily underrepresented in the publishing industry. Last year, translators in the UK released a statement calling for racial equality in literary translation.

***Beyond Babylon* by Igiaba Scego, translated by Aaron Robertson. Published by Two Lines Press in 2019**

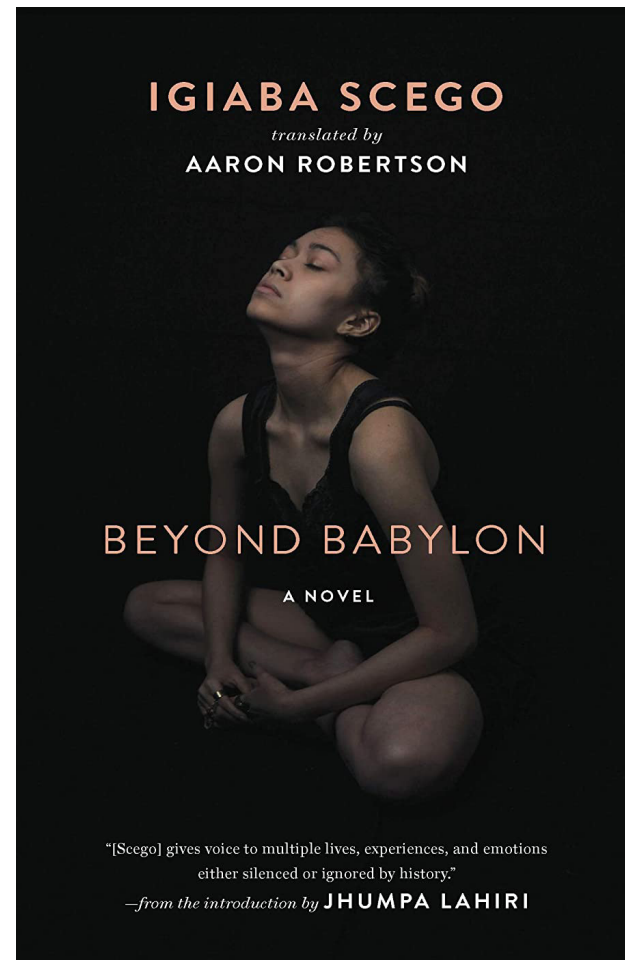
Having previously written for prominent publications such as *The New York Times*, *The National* and *Foreign Policy*, Aaron Robertson is currently a writer, translator and editor at Spiegel & Grau and has a non-fiction book coming out in 2023: *The Black Utopians*.

Robertson began learning Italian at Princeton University and spent time

studying abroad in Bologna, which was where he first came across the novel that would later earn him huge critical acclaim in the translation world: *Beyond Babylon* by Igiaba Scego. Sprawling across nations, languages and generations – from Argentina to Somalia, Italian to Arabic, mother to daughter – this book is an exploration of what defines and shapes us: race, gender, country, politics, family, trauma, secrets.

He embarked on a translation of the novel for his senior thesis. Despite the fact that by the winter holidays he had only translated the first eighty pages, he not only managed to finish his translation, but also won numerous prestigious awards for his

work, including the 2020 PEN Translation Prize. His translation has been described by International Booker Prize-winning translator Jennifer Croft as “entrancing and pitch-perfect,” whilst Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Jhumpa



Lahiri has stated that Robertson’s translation demonstrates “remarkable sensitivity, precision and elegance.”

When asked how his various literary roles overlap, Robertson replied that his involvement in translation has encouraged him as a writer and editor to avoid monotony and sameness. He explains, “When you read stories outside your national context, it encourages you to break outside of certain conventions.”

***Letters from a Seducer* by Hilda Hirst, translated by John Keene. Published by New Directions in 2015**

Many readers of this article may be familiar with John Keene through his excellent collection of stories, *Counternarratives*, published by New Directions in 2015. As an intricate, detailed work of remarkable scope, it should not be a surprise that John Keene takes on similarly complex challenges as a translator.

Hilda Hirst was an avant-garde Brazilian author, whose works employed fractured and disruptive narratives – see *Com Os Meus Olhos de Cão* (*With My Dog Eyes*) for an example of just how distorted syntax and language can be in a Hilda Hirst book. *Letters from a*

Seducer is no different, but John Keene approaches the text with a level of care and precision that allows the complexity and beauty of the original work to thrive.

Letters from a Seducer follows the story of Karl, a man who answers the big questions of life through the most important act that any human takes part in: sex. The book, however, is not read through Karl, but through the perspective of Stamatiou, who finds his letters to Cordelia, Karl’s sister, who is his opposite. Hilda Hirst regularly explores the sexuality of women in the 20th century, and this work is the ultimate example of this.

Despite the linguistic and formal experimentation within the work, the novel remains entirely fascinating, with jaw-dropping twists and engaging characters, all elevated in English by John Keene’s exceptional translation.

Elizabeth “Betty” Wilson (translator from French and Spanish into English)

Renowned Jamaican translator, Elizabeth Wilson has been translating works from the Caribbean canon for over thirty years. From 1987’s celebrated novel *Juletane* by Guadeloupean writer Myriam Warner-Vieyra, to lauded Haitian author

Yanick Lahens and her latest translation of Cuban poet Dulce Maria Loynaz.

In an interview with [Southern World Art News](#), Wilson stated she’s, “bilingual in Jamaican Standard English and Jamaican Creole but, unfortunately, I do not speak French Creole fluently.” What a fascinating advantage for a Jamaican translator that perhaps renders her ear more sensitive to the tiers inherent in most creole-based Caribbean dialects, ranging from the acrolect (a local variety of English/French/Spanish spoken by educated speakers with high socio-economic status) to the basilectal (this creole is likely used by rather uneducated low-status speakers).

Throughout Wilson’s career she’s addressed the so-called language “divides” at play in the Caribbean literary scene. There are several ways Wilson sees that have the efficacy to open the “silos” of imagining an English, French, Spanish or Caribbean literature. Whether through the promotion of more texts in translation on school curricula, or through more “‘foreign’ film festivals [that] have done a lot to promote the literatures of other countries. Literary festivals like Calabash in Jamaica have also introduced and promoted writers who do not write in English.”

The StoryGraph: A Spotlight

BY SHUANGYUE ZHAO AND TEHZIB JANJUA

Ever get tired of accidentally buying a book you already own? Or maybe forgetting that book your friend gushed over and promising to get to it? Or maybe the fact that you can never find the book for that particular mood you're in? The StoryGraph is here to fulfil all of your bookish needs on one handy platform.

The StoryGraph makes an ambitious promise: to steer you towards books that suit your mood, which is reflected in the slogan: "Because life's too short for a book you're not in the mood for." After signing up, you will be asked to fill in a survey on your reading preferences. The questions include your favourite genres (such as dystopian, fantasy, nature or true crime), and the characteristics you appreciate the most in books right now (strong world-building/other-worldly, plot-heavy, unreliable/morally ambiguous characters, etc). Then come three interesting questions to check what genres you dislike, what turns you off a book, and also what kind of books you are

never/rarely in the mood for (for example, adventurous, informative or tense).

Your personalised book list will be generated shortly thereafter. Moreover, you can further improve your recommendations through writing freely about what you want in the blank area provided, and using some filters like pace, type of books (fiction or non-fiction), number of pages, and even "don't show me books in my To-Read Pile/I own." You can also edit all of your answers and choices at any time, and any change will be reflected immediately.

The most impressive point about The StoryGraph is its instantaneity – they really care about your "MOOD" and focus on what you wish to read "AT THIS MOMENT."

Features:

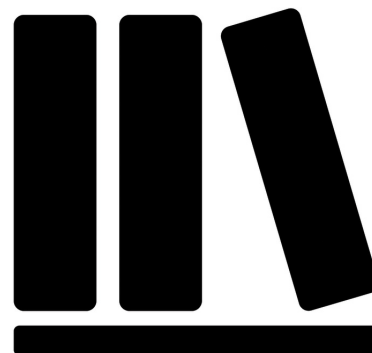
Custom Tags and Lists – allow you to find and filter books according to specific wants and the custom option allows you to curate your own reading list of recommendations for friends.

Reading Challenges – create reading goals and challenges for yourself whilst getting involved in ongoing, fun reading challenges.

Content Warnings – pick your next read confident that the book's contents won't trigger you.

Fractions of a Star – finally you can give that 4.5 or awkward 2.25 star you've been dreaming of.

DNF and Owned – pre-made categories for books you've read and books you did not finish (DNF) so never again will you buy another copy of that book that's hidden in the back of your shelf (and maybe already own three of and still have yet to read).



Reading Journal – keep track of what exactly you liked (and maybe not so liked) about your reads, before and after you've finished.

Reading Queues – a handy feature for not just music. Create your own queue of up to five books so that you can jump straight to the next read.

Book Clubs – a feature yet to be released. Get ready to be able to vote on books, organise club meetings and discuss all things bookish.

FAQs:

Does The StoryGraph have a mobile app?

Yes, The StoryGraph app is both on the [App Store](#) and the [Play Store](#). If it is not available in your country, you can [download the app from its website](#).

Will I be able to import my data from Goodreads?

Yes you can! All of your currently-reading, read, to-read and did-not-finish shelves can be imported. Any custom shelves will be mapped to a custom tag on StoryGraph. Find your full [Import Guidelines](#).

Is The StoryGraph free to use?

It is. The StoryGraph does have a paid [Plus](#) plan for users looking for a more

enhanced, personalised experience, but most of the app will always be free to use.

For further queries please see the [contact page](#). Before submitting a feature request, you can take a look at the [public roadmap](#) to see what the team members are working on and what's on their radar.

The Team:

The StoryGraph is run and built by Nadia Odunayo and Rob Frelow. It started life as a personal side project of Nadia's to create and track progress through reading lists.

Nadia Odunayo is the Founder and CEO who started The StoryGraph as a small side project after learning to code and working as a software engineer at Pivotal. Her recommended book is *The Eighth Life* (for *Brilka*) by Nino Haratischwili.

As the Co-founder and Chief AI Officer, Rob Frelow is in charge of all the machine learning that powers The StoryGraph's recommendations, similar books, and more. Daniel Suarez's *Daemon* is his favourite book.

Abbie Walker is responsible for various things at The StoryGraph, including customer support, managing volunteer librarians, and helping to train machine learning algorithms. Her favourite book so far this year is *The Giant Dark* by Sarvat Hasin.

Visit the [team page](#) to get to know the three book lovers behind The StoryGraph in detail.

Finding a satisfying book just got a whole lot easier, and all thanks to The StoryGraph. Go to its website or download the app, give it a try and maybe you will fall in love with reading.

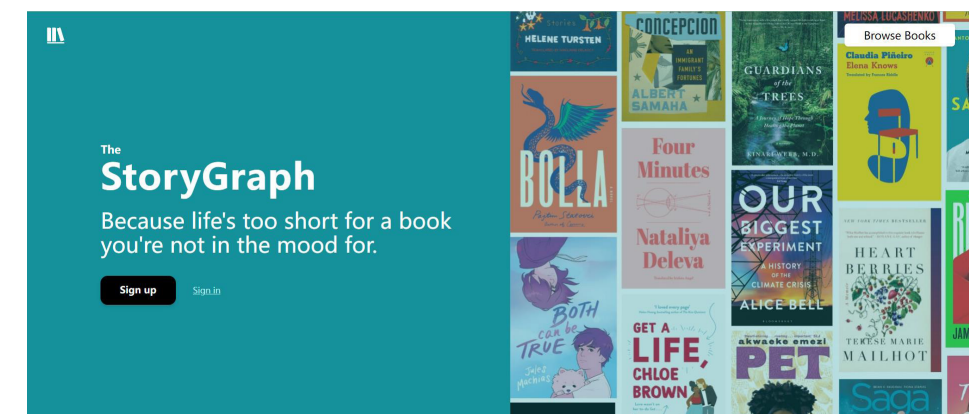


Photo Credit: The StoryGraph

Black Voices in Children's Publishing

BY EMMA ROGERS, ROSIE PINDER AND AIMEE HALDRON

As a part of this issue's focus on Black voices in publishing, we wanted to highlight a few of our favourite Black authors who are working across the children's book industry. From picture books to novels for young adults, there are loads of exciting authors championing Black voices within the children's book world. Many tackle topics such as respecting personal boundaries, institutional racism and immigration in their books, making these reads key for children, as well as entertaining.

Picture Books

Don't Touch My Hair!
by Sharee Miller

Wherever Aira goes, somebody wants to touch her hair and it isn't long before she has had enough. Sharee Miller teaches children the importance of personal boundaries and asking for permission in this hilarious picture book.

I am Perfectly Designed
by Karamo Brown

Karamo Brown, the star of the Netflix show *Queer Eye*, makes his writing debut with this picture book that explores the bond between a father and his son. While spending the day walking around the city, the two

discuss all the ways that they are perfect for each other and all the plans they have to make. Written along with his son, Jason, this is the perfect book for both adults and children.



Middle-Grade Books

You Are a Champion by Carl Anka and Marcus Rashford

Marcus Rashford MBE is known for his skills on the football field. In this guide, he draws on his own experiences to teach young children that their only competition is themselves. Rashford's debut novel won The British Book Awards 2022 in both the Book of the Year and Children's Non-Fiction Book of the Year categories.

Coming to England by Floella Benjamin

Floella Benjamin's memoir is a classic, but twenty-six years later, its message still rings true. In 1960, Floella and her siblings left Trinidad to join their parents in London. When she is rejected by all of her peers, she quickly realises that to succeed in life, she will have to work harder than anybody else.



The Dream Team: Jaz Santos vs. the World by Priscilla Mante

Published in 2021 and shortlisted for the *Sunday Times* Sports Book Awards 2022, this is Priscilla Mante's debut and the first in *The Dream Team* series. It follows Jaz and her football team the Bramrock Stars as they try to be taken seriously and show that girls can play football. This is a really heartwarming read and particularly great after the success of the England Women's National

Football Team at the Euros this summer! The second title in the series – *Charliah Green vs The Spotlight* – was published earlier this year and there is a third book still to come.

Young Adult

Noughts and Crosses series
by Malorie Blackman

Children's Laureate from 2013–2015, Malorie Blackman published *Noughts and Crosses*, a dystopian novel where the roles of Black and white people in society are reversed, back in 2001. Following its success, she concluded the series with two more novels for the new generation – *Crossfire* in 2019 and *Endgame* in 2021. The series has also been adapted into a BBC drama starring Masali Baduza and Jack Rowan.

Ace of Spades by Faridah Ābíké-Íyímídé

Faridah Ābíké-Íyímídé explores institutional racism in schools in her debut novel. An anonymous texter, Aces, is bringing two students' secrets to light in this compelling thriller. Devon is a quiet musician, but he is thrown into the spotlight when some private pictures are exposed. Head girl Chiamaka's role comes under threat when everybody learns

the price she paid for her power. This novel dominated Bookstagram and BookTok upon its publication and it's easy to see why.

The King is Dead by Benjamin Dean

Described as "Gossip Girl but make it royal," this is a change of pace from Dean's first book *Me, My Dad and the End of The Rainbow*. This suspenseful queer young adult thriller will have you hooked and flying through it to find out who would target King James. He has been in the spotlight all his life as the first Black heir to the throne, but when his dad dies unexpectedly, James is crowned king at just seventeen. When James' boyfriend goes missing, threatening notes appear in the palace and gossip is leaked to the press, James realises that even the people in his innermost circle cannot be trusted.

Black voices in children's publishing and across the board are still not always getting the recognition they deserve. We hope that these suggestions have drawn attention to a few brilliant books that you may not have come across. But, as always, this is just a small selection. We'd love to hear your recommendations for

children's books by Black authors that we should be reading.



Modern Classic Predictions

BY MEGAN POWELL, HANNAH SPRUCE AND SERENA KERRIGAN-NOBLE

Over here on the Classics team, we have been discussing inspiring Black authors whose work has, too often, been elided from a canon of predominantly white, male authors. Among the pillars of classic literature, but not limited to, are Ralph Ellison, Alice Walker and Maya Angelou. These authors have made an indelible impact on the canon, exposing the deep-seated prejudices entrenched within society. At the same time, these authors sought to make visible those marginalised experiences.

Nervous Conditions by Tsitsi Dangarembga

Firstly, we would like to highlight one of our favourite classic authors to set the precedent of our selection process for our modern classic predictions. Tsitsi Dangarembga's 1988 debut novel, *Nervous Conditions*, follows the journey of Tambu, who is unexpectedly granted the opportunity of an education by her uncle and subsequent adaptation to a Western mentality. Dangarembga was the first Black woman from Zimbabwe to have a book published in English and thirty years later was included in the BBC's top 100 books which changed the world. The

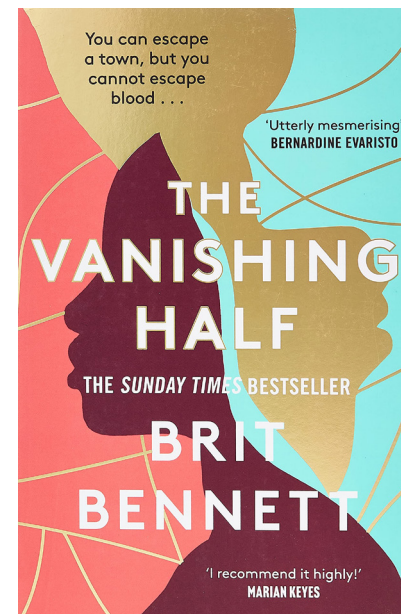


book explores the isolation and internal struggle of this cultural shift, as Tambu feels detached from her native tongue and her familial practices. Tambu's mother laments about her lost child due to the radical change in her identity while Tambu feels embarrassed and unfamiliar in her homestead. The book explores the impact of class and gender and the lost potential and hopelessness that the women share despite their differing backgrounds. The people in the novel are striving to achieve the white ideal and must sacrifice their cultural practices and language to conform. The novel explores the inherent limitations of

the assimilation within these patriarchal and western societies, as a sense of equality and fairness is never attained. It is a novel which highlights the necessity of emancipation, isolation and selfishness to survive within such pervasive structures.

The Vanishing Half by Brit Bennett

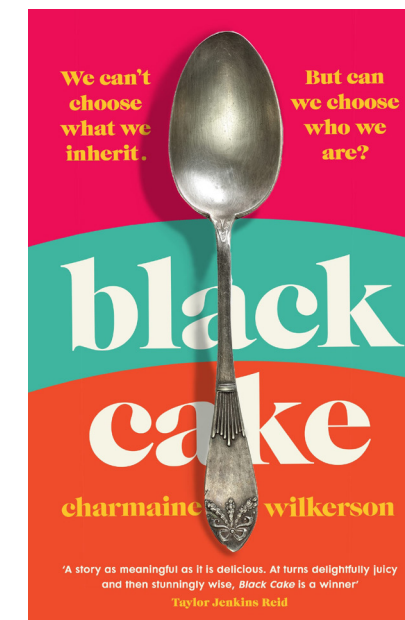
Our second prediction is American author Brit Bennett. Bennett's novel *The Vanishing Half* (2020) may be set in the late 1960s and 70s, but it contains an important message, which remains pertinent today. This striking novel explores collective trauma, cultural erasure and the racial



inequality which continues to pervade America. The plot follows two African American sisters. One sister can pass as white and, in doing so, avoid the prejudice her sister faces. Bennett shows how such impunity constitutes a form of culture erasure and painful severance from one's past and heritage. Bennett demonstrates that such performative whiteness is as much a prison as an escape from the brutality of racial prejudice; this kind of "passing," Bennett reminds us, is "both an act of self-creation and also an act of self-destruction."

Black Cake by Charmaine Wilkerson

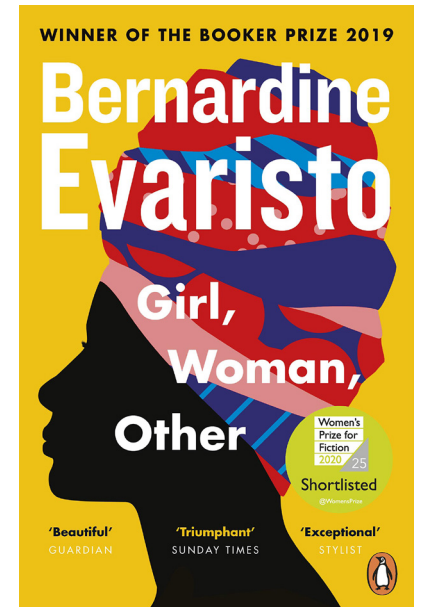
This concern with "passing" on histories, trauma and heritage is a central concern of Charmaine Wilkerson's stunningly evocative novel, *Black Cake* (2022). The titular black cake which



siblings Byron and Benny inherit after the death of their mother comes to represent an entanglement of memories, secrets and relationships which the story unfolds. This intergenerational story, traversing time and place, is as layered and complex as the cake which is at the centre of this book. As the lives of Benny and Byron, and the afterlives of their mother's legacy, intersect, the reader is confronted with the irrevocability of past decisions, which threaten to unsettle the present. However, this is also a story about endurance and survival, as characters come to reassess and reconstruct their identities.

Girl, Woman, Other by Bernadine Evaristo

Bernadine Evaristo is already shaping the literature scene, so it is no surprise she features on our list. Evaristo will undoubtedly become a significant figure for upcoming modern classics with her 2019 novel *Girl, Woman, Other* winning The Booker Prize alongside Atwood, making her the first Black woman to achieve this prestigious award, and rightly so. *Girl, Woman, Other* is remarkable in recounting the lives of twelve characters as they tell their story. The novel focuses on themes of sexuality, racism, feminism and politics, to name just a few. Each issue is carefully expressed to captivate the reader and present intersectionality to



explore the experiences of the women. The characters vary in personality, social situation and experience but are woven together to formulate an imperative read.

The Thing Around Your Neck by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has taken the literary world by storm and is already critically acclaimed with her inspiring works. *The Thing Around Your Neck* was published in 2009 and is a collection of short stories that depict central themes of oppression, cultural differences, and the effect of colonialism. Each story is stunningly told to poetically explore imperative themes which will certainly solidify Adichie as a modern classic.

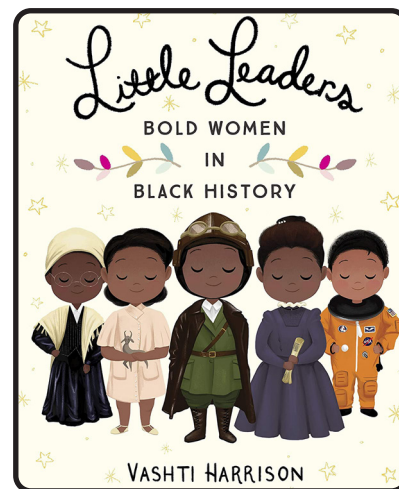
Spotlighting the Work of Leading Illustrators

BY AMY EVANS, JULIETTE TULLOCH AND LUCY ROBERTS

For this issue, we turned a spotlight on Black designers and illustrators leading the way in the industry. From picture books to collections of poetry and educational reads, these artists are bringing flare and beauty to the industry, most notably to books for younger readers. We took a look at just some of their most popular works and the inspiration behind their designs.

Vashti Harrison

[Vashti Harrison](#) is a bestselling writer and illustrator. She is the author and illustrator of the *Little Leaders* books for children, which highlight diverse leaders and historical figures, and of the upcoming picture book *Big*. She has also illustrated multiple books written by other authors, including actress Lupita Nyong'o's *Sulwe* and the tie-in book for filmmaker Matthew A. Cherry's *Hair Love*. She also shares lots of her art, done in various mediums, on her Instagram [@vashtiharrison](#).



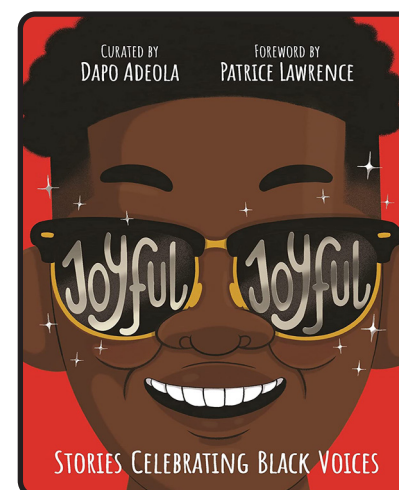
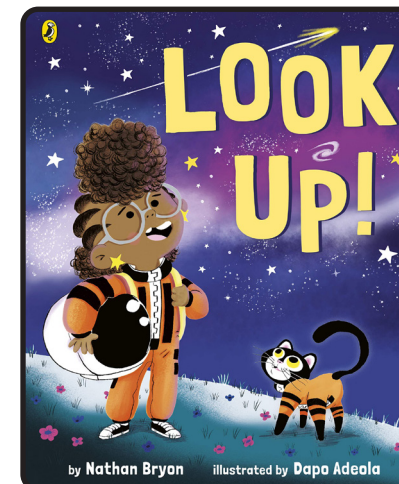
The cover for Harrison's *Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History* features abolitionist Sojourner Truth, sculptor Augusta Savage, aviator Bessie Coleman, civil rights activist and journalist Ida B. Wells and astronaut Mae Jemison. Harrison's designs are, as she describes on her website, intended to represent "little girls dressing up as famous women." This helps the book feel more relatable to young readers, creating a bridge between them and these great people from history. The characters also all have their eyes closed and are smiling. This links to the idea that they are playing dress-

up and imagining themselves as these historical figures. The happy expressions also make the book feel like it is going to have a positive tone and message for young readers.

Dapo Adeola

Dapo Adeola is an illustrator, author and character designer, who has won multiple awards, most notably Illustrator of the Year at the 2022 British Book Awards. Adeola's work strives to challenge gender norms and the politics surrounding equality through his buoyant and vibrant works of art. His illustration debut in 2019, Nathan Bryon's *Look Up!*, gained rave reviews and won the Waterstones Children's Book Prize in 2020. Following the story of Rocket, who is science-mad and hilarious, the picture book strives to make readers turn off their screens and learn more about space. Adeola's illustrations bring to life sweet family dynamics and the mysteries of the night sky, whilst educating them about the first African-American woman to visit space.

His most recent work includes curating *Joyful Joyful*, a collection of stories and poems that celebrate joy and Black voices, with a foreword by the acclaimed Patrice Lawrence. It brings together forty talented Black writers and artists from across the world, including Adeola, Malorie Blackman, Odera Igbokwe and Faridah Ābíké-Íyímídé. The stories range from a Halloween dance competition, the joy of jollof rice, a mythical



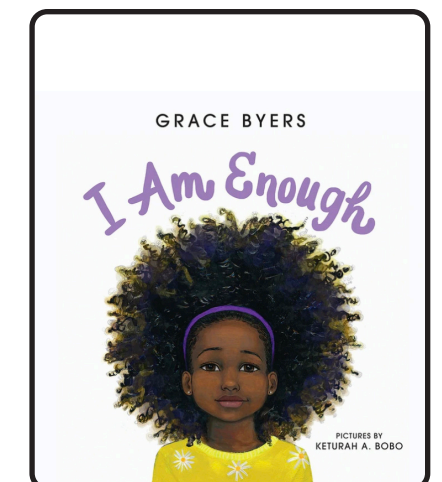
whale and celebrating your ancestry. This work will leave young readers feeling hopeful about their future and inspired to read more. You can see more of Adeola's work and the inspirations behind them on his [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Keturah A. Bobo

Keturah A. Bobo is a *New York Times* bestselling illustrator and artist whose work is particularly vibrant and striking. Home-schooled by her mum, Bobo's love of the arts was nurtured from a young age and she graduated from Columbus College of Art and Design in 2006. Keturah said she takes inspiration from her community and especially the beauty of natural Black hair. The stunning cover of Grace Byers' *I Am Enough* depicts exactly her appreciation and the book itself made it to number one on the *New York Times* bestsellers list two years after publishing. In her spare time between publishing, Keturah Bobo works on other projects such as painting murals on the back of denim jackets, which you can buy from her online store to support her work and career.

Bobo first hand paints her illustrations, then edits the backgrounds using Adobe platforms. The colour palette Bobo uses is reflected through her blog, in the

pictures that she takes of real life situations; from the light catching pink in her home, the greens she passes on her bike and the blue hues of the seas she has visited. This creates the softer images on the front covers that she designs in comparison to other children's literature which can be more colour-blocked. Bobo's work presents a comfortable, everyday image of so many lives, yet people who often go underrepresented in popular culture and media. She gives a platform to those who may not see themselves so clearly in a book character otherwise. The picture books she illustrates celebrate Blackness and self-confidence from a young age. The importance of her work is made abundantly clear on her Instagram, as she has images of her reading the books she has contributed to to her own son, Mekhi. To find Bobo's work for yourself, check out her [blog](#), [website](#) and [Instagram](#).



Job Opportunities

By TASNEEM HAFIZ

Junior Designer/ Designer (1 year FTC), Summersdale

Closing Date: 20 October 2022

Salary: £22,000–£26,000, dependent on experience

Location: Chichester

A fantastic opportunity has arisen to join Summersdale and their collaborative team as a Junior Designer/Designer.

Your primary responsibility will be facilitating the design and production of a set number of Summersdale titles. Other responsibilities of this role include: assisting with and creating designs for book covers, internal pages and sales and publicity materials, typesetting sample pages, implementing editorial corrections, processing digital artwork and photographs for print, prioritising project workloads alongside other departments and freelance designers and preparing and supplying briefs.

The successful candidate will require the essential skills of being proficient in Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, InDesign and Acrobat and being familiar with Microsoft Office.

Additionally, you will need to demonstrate good organisation skills with the ability to prioritise and work under pressure within tight deadlines. You must have a flexible proactive approach with excellent time management skills and be a strong communicator. You will also have a passion for design, cover and layout design and typography – adapting your design skills alongside the role.

Ideally, you will have design experience, particularly in publishing, but Summersdale may consider a talented graduate, willing and able to learn quickly. The role is based in their offices in Chichester for a period of twelve months. For more information and to apply, please click [here](#).

Primary Sales Consultant, Hodder Education

Closing Date: 17 October 2022

Salary: £23,500–£25,000 pro rata, dependent on experience

Location: South East England and South London

Are you interested in Sales? You could join Hodder Education as a Primary Sales Consultant where you will be surrounded by experienced educational sales consultants.

This role will involve managing primary school and MAT accounts in a given area with the aim of growing turnover with existing customers and seeking out new opportunities, focusing on customer acquisition for



new adoptions of “Reading Planet” – their key literacy programme.

The successful candidate will be passionate about education and sales, will be target-driven and adaptable. Hodder Education Group is looking for someone with experience in working in a customer-centric business/ environment where gaining and retaining customers and increasing revenue have been part of your remit. The role is working term-time only and based in South London/South East. For more information and to apply, please click [here](#).

Sales Operations Executive, France, Belgium & Luxembourg at Paperblanks

Closing Date: 18 October 2022

Salary: €28,000–€32,000, dependent on experience

Location: Dublin, Republic of Ireland

An opportunity has arisen to join Paperblanks as a Sales Operations Executive for their customers based in France, Belgium and Luxembourg.

This role will involve various responsibilities such as: providing a high level of customer service to their European customers and sales team, managing

client orders, checking and processing data, updating customer records in database and files, solving customer queries, resolving customer issues to satisfactory conclusions, dealing with logistics, checking stock levels and product availability, compiling ad-hoc reports and liaising with and supporting the sales team.

Fluently speaking French is essential but knowing any other language is an advantage. The successful candidate will also be highly motivated and enthusiastic, have excellent communication skills, have a proactive attitude to work, be a team player and have the ability to multi-task and problem solve.

The role will be based at their Dublin office on a hybrid working pattern of 3 days office-based / 2 days home-based. For more information and to apply, click [here](#).

Sales Operations Executive, Germany, Austria & Netherlands at Paperblanks

Closing Date: 18 October 2022

Salary: €28,000–€32,000, dependent on experience

Location: Dublin, Republic of Ireland

An opportunity has arisen to join Paperblanks as a Sales Operations Executive

for their customers based in Germany, Austria and Netherlands.

This role will involve various responsibilities such as: providing a high level of customer service to their European customers and sales team, managing client orders, checking and processing data, updating customer records in database and files, solving customer queries, resolving customer issues to satisfactory conclusions, dealing with logistics, checking stock levels and product availability, compiling ad-hoc reports and liaising with and supporting the sales team.

Fluently speaking German is essential but knowing any other language is an advantage. The successful candidate will also be highly motivated and enthusiastic, have excellent communication skills, have a proactive attitude to work, be a team player and have the ability to multi-task and problem solve. The role will be based at their Dublin office. For more information and to apply, click [here](#).



Spotlight on gal-dem Magazine

By Amy Tighe and Ella Davies



Photo credit: gal-dem.com

gal-dem is a new-media publication, founded in 2015 by Liv Little during her final year of university "as a direct response to a feeling of severe isolation and hopelessness that often comes with being the only person of colour in a room." It's an independent online and print magazine produced by women and non-binary people of colour, committed to telling the stories of people of colour of marginalised genders.

The magazine's first print issue, *the gal-hood issue*, sold out its first print run. The second issue, *the home*

issue, subsequently sold out as well. 2019 also saw the publication of an anthology, *I Will Not Be Erased: Our Stories About Growing Up as People of Colour*, from some of the women and non-binary people of colour who write for the magazine. It marked an exciting development for the press and signalled more success to come.

The gal-dem editorial collective was invited to curate an event presenting work by young female contemporary artists of colour at the Victoria and

Albert Museum in 2016, as part of the museum's *Friday Lates* series. Alongside this, they arranged a variety of activities and workshops. *The Guardian* [described the showcase](#) as "nothing short of breathtaking." The gal-dem team has also previously guest-edited *The Guardian's Weekend magazine*.

Split into six sections – Culture, First Person, Life, Music, Politics and Investigations – the site also runs regular columns answering all questions on QTIBPOC issues, Afro hair

care, travelling and dating, as well as having podcast guests like [Michaela Coel](#) and [Emma Dabiri](#).

Shanice Dover took some time to chat to us about her role as Head of Social and Communications at gal-dem, where she has been working since it began in 2015.

"I saw the ad when it was going to launch, and what its ambitions were – I really wanted to be involved! I had studied journalism and gotten quite frustrated with the industry, the ways it worked, the ways it approached news, especially how certain peoples' stories weren't being published or said in the ways they should be. So I was really excited to see that something would be launched that was more in line with the things that I wanted to see in the industry.

I wrote my dissertation on the ways that alternative media had transformed the way that we consume news, especially when it comes to marginalised communities. For example, looking at the murder of Trayvon Martin and how it was social spaces that escalated that conversation and brought it to a wider space. It all seemed to align very well, the fact that we were starting to see social change brought about and discussed super widely on social media, then seeing this publication that would be operating on social media as mainly an online publication at the time."

What kind of tasks do you do now in your job?

"It's a lot of working closely with the editorial team and also the commercial team. Most of our editorial content is online, so with the editors, it's thinking about how we can use our social platforms to translate some of the article topics that we're talking about, or how we can use specific features on those channels; it's storytelling in a slightly different way, to bring people in, to raise awareness of some the things that we're speaking about and to bring them back to the site to learn more or engage in that way. With the commercial side of the business, it's more thinking about how brand work can also live on our social platforms."

What kind of advice would you give to your readers who want to work in publishing?

"What I often see on social media and I think what's discussed quite a lot, is that there is a lot of opportunity for knowledge sharing, even if you're someone who has very little experience or feel like you're not quite sure where to look, or where to ask, or who to ask. I feel like there's a lot of collaboration in the industry; that was definitely the case for us in 2015. It was people just sharing that this is something we care about. And that's what we want to do: be able to connect with illustrators and different writers or

people who just want to support. As a team, we've tried to also create spaces for aspiring journalists, such as online writing workshops that we have run in the past or collaborating with other collectives who share our values."

What have you read recently that's really stuck with you (can be anything - a book, an ad, a tweet)?

"There is a poet called Vanessa Kissule, she attended the first garden party, and would write little poems about people in the crowd, then put them on a board and you could go up and see them afterwards. She sat in the corner with her little typewriter, then put them up on a board. [There is a tweet she wrote recently](#); it gives very beautiful and helpful advice on writing, thinking and editing."



Campaign Spotlight:

You Are a Champion

BY CAITLIN DAVIES, DANIELLE HERNANDEZ AND GEORGIA REES

You Are a Champion has been one of the standout children's books of 2021. Written by Premier League footballer Marcus Rashford and author Carl Anka, this non-fiction title aims to promote positivity and resilience in young people. At the age of twenty-four, Rashford has undertaken several philanthropic campaigns in the public eye, particularly during the most difficult stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Carl Anka is a sports journalist, broadcaster and writer from London. Collaborating with Rashford, *You Are a Champion* (2021) and *You Can Do It* (2022) have become bestselling titles.

Born in Manchester, Rashford comes from a low-income background where he experienced first-hand the difficulties of food poverty. During the first UK lockdown, food poverty was strongly highlighted, with many schoolchildren unable to access breakfast clubs and free school meals. In light of this, Rashford partnered with UK charity FareShare and lobbied the

Government to provide a substantial solution. He was awarded an MBE for his work and continues to work on this campaign, as well as aiming to tackle racism, social inequality and homelessness.

According to recent research, five children in a classroom of thirty are likely to have a mental health problem ([The Children's Society](#)). During this challenging period, *You Are a Champion* aims to speak to young people experiencing unprecedented levels of adversity. The book focuses on how to "be comfortable with who you are, use your voice and stand up for others."

Aligning with a Celebrity Brand

Macmillan Children's Books have utilised Marcus Rashford and his celebrity brand to their advantage when creating the marketing campaign for *You Are a Champion*, from publicity engagements with the footballer to charity collaborations in his name. In the process of doing so this campaign perfectly demonstrates the importance

of aligning your marketing efforts with the brand of the author. Through all his activism, Marcus Rashford has become identifiable as the footballer with a social conscience, looking to improve the opportunities available for children from working-class backgrounds like him. Complementing these values with different outreach programmes and charitable activities during the marketing campaign was a clever way to ensure that his personal voice and message were reflected not just in the empowering content of the book itself, but within the promotional campaign as well.

Macmillan Children's Books partnered with WHSmith and the National Literacy Trust to gift a copy of every book bought in store to schools. Using the right marketing tools, this partnership was successful in encouraging members of the public to buy and gift as many books as possible to help children with little access to books hear Rashford's positive words.

The partnership was also effective in providing event opportunities during the lead up to publication. Purchasing a copy of *You Are a Champion* with WHSmith, for example, also entitled you to a free ticket to an exclusive chat with Marcus Rashford and co-author Carl Anka in a virtual live stream. Meanwhile, ticketed events at independent bookshops also promised a chance to virtually interact with the football star while a portion of the event proceeds went to support sport programmes for kids. These events were a fantastic way to build buzz around the new release.

Powerful Messaging

The campaign for *You Are a Champion* has been highly praised, with the team at Macmillan Children's Books being highly commended in the Children's Campaign category at the Book Marketing Society Awards in September 2021. The judges praised the team for their "pitch-perfect branding" and "authentic message" which stayed true to Rashford's values and work with grassroots organisations.

It may seem like *You Are a Champion* has been everywhere since its release in May 2021, and this is largely due to the volume of PR and publicity opportunities that have been attended by both Rashford and co-author Carl Anka. The book has been nominated



for a variety of awards, winning both the Book of the Year at the Nibbies and Bestselling Sports Book of the Year at the Sports Book Awards. And from award-winning to bestselling, *You Are a Champion* was the feature of many bookshop campaigns from Waterstones to independent stores like Forum Books, who featured a cardboard cut-out of Rashford in their Be a Champion window where passers-by and customers could take the opportunity to "Stand With Marcus" and post under the #YouAreAChampion hashtag on social media. Some of the images posted by parents under the hashtag were then featured on the largest digital

billboard in Europe on the side of Manchester's Victoria Warehouse.

Macmillan Children's Books have taken every opportunity to scream the praises of *You Are a Champion* and its follow-up *You Can Do It*, which was released this July. And what better time to promote a football star's new book than during a major tournament. Following England's loss to Italy at the UEFA Euro 2020 final on 11 July 2021, Macmillan took the opportunity to encourage young fans by posting the quote "never lose sight of who you are or what's important to you" to their Instagram page with the book's trademark orange branding.

Our Favourite Reads Celebrating the LGBTQ+ Community

BY EMILY MYHILL, EMMA HOLBROOK AND BECCA BINNIE

We're taking a dive into some of our favourite reads written by Black authors who celebrate the LGBTQ+ community!

***Real Life* by Brandon Taylor**

Real Life is Brandon Taylor's debut novel: published in 2020, it follows Wallace, a gay Black biochemistry student making the tricky move over to a Midwestern university town to finish his postgraduate degree. Shortlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize, *Real Life* was instantly met with positive acclaim and has a large list of shortlist nominations under its belt.

Dealing with difficult issues including grief, childhood trauma and racism, *Real Life* weaves a subtle and honest narrative about the realities of life as a Black queer male, and the difficult ways in which those characteristics intersect.

Brandon Taylor's writing is exquisite, powerful and intricately crafted. It communicates the suffocating alienation of Blackness in an overwhelmingly white, overtly racist society incredibly well. Likened to Hanya Yanagihara's *A Little Life* and Donna Tartt's *The Secret*

History, Taylor brings a new campus novel to the table with breath-taking prose and raw themes that will linger with you for days.

Perfect for anyone wanting a masterfully written contemporary fiction centring on a Black queer character navigating intense struggles. If you've read it and want more, make sure to check out Taylor's short story collection *Filthy Animals*, and keep an eye out for his next book, *The Late Americans*, which will be published in 2023.

***Ace of Spades* by Faridah Ābíké-Íyímídé**

Ace of Spades is an award-winning YA thriller published in 2021 by talented Nigerian author, Faridah Ābíké-Íyímídé. Winner of the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work - Youth / Teens in 2021, it's no wonder this book remains popular for celebrating both the LGBTQ+ and Black community.

Taking place in Niveus Private Academy, where money controls everything, the story follows the

only two Black students: talented musician Devon and head-girl Chiamaka. An anonymous texter threatens to expose their dark secrets to the entire school; someone knows everything about them and will stop at nothing to expose the truth that threatens to destroy everything these two students fought to protect.

Sex, lies, a badass female protagonist and a fight against racism, Faridah Ābíké-Íyímídé's *Ace of Spades* truly captures the oppression under a society which favours white supremacy and manipulation of the LGBTQ+ community and should definitely be next on your TBR list!

***The Stars and the Blackness Between Them* by Junauda Petrus**

The Stars and the Blackness Between Them is an American YA novel published by Dutton Books in 2019 and written by Junauda Petrus. The novel follows Mabel and Audre, both

sixteen, both Black and both from completely different backgrounds.

Audre is sent to live in Minneapolis after being caught with a secret girlfriend by her religious mother. She is scared of losing her Trinidadian roots, but luckily Mabel is on hand to help Audre navigate a new life. However, Mabel has been haunted by confusing feelings and a vague illness all summer and as it catches up to the pair, their relationship is tested in all kinds of ways.

Petrus writes dynamic, engaging characters who prove love is stronger than hatred. Both a physical copy and the audiobook deserve a place on your bookshelf!

***Rainbow Milk* by Paul Mendez**

The semi-autobiographical *Rainbow Milk* by Paul Mendez was published in 2020. Jesse McCarthy is living in the legacy of the Windrush generation and, at nineteen, wrestling with his racial and sexual identity after a Jehovah's Witness upbringing. Trying to escape repressive religion, a broken family and a disempowered Black country, Jesse turns to sex work as he grasps for notions of love and spirituality.

Tackling important subjects including immigration, racism, sex, sexuality and religion, Paul Mendez's book is urgent and creatively fresh.

***This Poison Heart* by Kalynn Bayron**

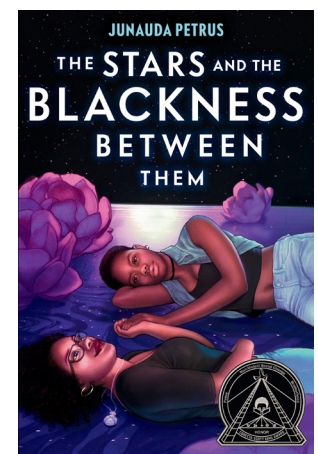
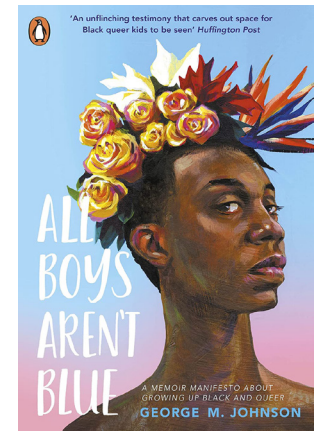
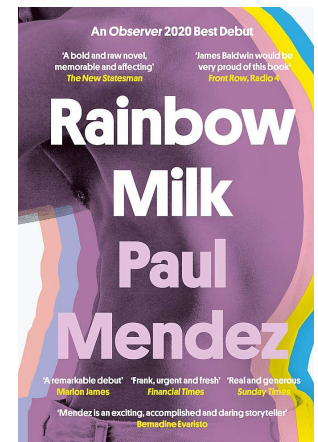
In 2021, Bloomsbury YA published an epic fantasy written by author of *Cinderella is Dead* Kalynn Bayron called *This Poison Heart*. This novel follows protagonist Briseis who has a gift: she can grow plants from tiny seeds to rich blooms.

Bri uncovers secrets when she moves with her mother to her late Aunt's estate in rural New York. As she meets some interesting characters, not all mean well and she must learn to control her gift in order to protect those she loves.

This Poison Heart is a must read and good news... the second instalment of this exciting series is already available. Look for *This Wicked Fate* to delve deeper to Briseis' journey.

***All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson**

Published in 2020 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, *All Boys Aren't Blue* is a YA non-fiction novel. The book is composed of a selection of essays written by journalist and LGBTQ+ activist George M. Johnson. They follow his childhood through to college years in New Jersey and Virginia. The essays recount memories of being bullied, travelling to flea markets and exploring sexual relationships. This heartbreaking and important work displays the struggles of Black queer boys and is an enlightening masterpiece.



The Jhalak Prize for British BAME Authors

BY EMMA BAIGEY AND PARIDHI BADGOTRI

Co-founded in 2017 by authors Nikesh Shukla and Sunny Singh, the Jhalak Prize and the newer Jhalak Children's & YA Prize aim to support and celebrate British BAME writers. The only other literary award in the UK that accepts entries strictly from writers of colour is the SI Leeds Literary Prize, which was first awarded in 2012.

In an article for [Writers Mosaic](#), Singh spoke of the need for “initiatives that are not intended for the white gaze, that can resist the lure of whiteness and continue to centre a decolonising impulse to resist, challenge, defy and revolt.” The Jhalak Prize, whose previous winners include Reni Eddo-Lodge and Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi, does just this.

Barriers to admission are few, as entry is open to all genres and to self-published authors. The shortlist consists of six books, which are celebrated by twelve independent bookshops thanks to a partnership with National Book Tokens. The publicity events and social outreach that result of this collaboration works towards Singh's goal to “help writers of colour not only to reach

wider readerships but to encourage both writers and readers, not only of colour, to question how our psyches and our imaginations have been colonised.”

The 2022 Jhalak Prizes went to Sabba Khan for her debut graphic novel, *The Roles We Play*, and Maisie Chan for *Danny Chung Does Not Do Maths*. Both independently published authors received £1000 alongside a piece of art that serves as a trophy, created by BAME artists through the Jhalak Art Residency. This year, Romani artist Elijah Vardo constructed the artwork using gouache, markers, pencil and ink on paper. He named the piece “*My Grandmother's Hands*” as it embodies the oral storytelling tradition within his culture amidst high rates of illiteracy, and it symbolises the significance of holding our personal histories in our hands whilst bringing them to a wider audience.

We've spotlighted a few highlights from the shortlists, from fun-filled graphic novels to historical narratives of belonging and race.

Consumed by Arifa Akbar

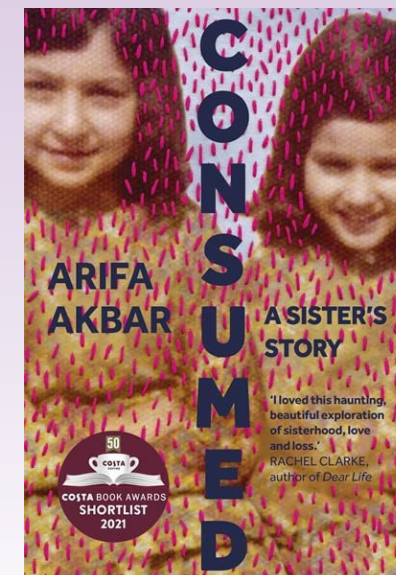
Consumed is a story that deals with a blend of sisterhood, grief and strange mythologies around tuberculosis. It is a memoir that deals with Arifa Akbar's sister falling seriously ill. Akbar discovers that her sister's illness was the start of the revelation of family secrets and her sister's own world.

Somebody Loves You by Mona Arshi

The novel explores the refuge of Ruby in silence. Ruby rarely opens her mouth, silence is an escape from the trauma of her mother's mental illness and pressurised suburban atmosphere. It is a stunning story that ponders over the choice to express or refuse the stories that build us.

The Roles We Play by Sabba Khan

Khan's debut graphic novel examines themes of cultural and personal identity amidst the British Pakistani diaspora. Being a second-generation Azad Kashmir migrant herself, Khan builds a visual tale based around



the major flooding that happened in Azad Kashmir where the majority of this diaspora originated and were forced to flee from.

Things I Have Withheld by Kei Miller

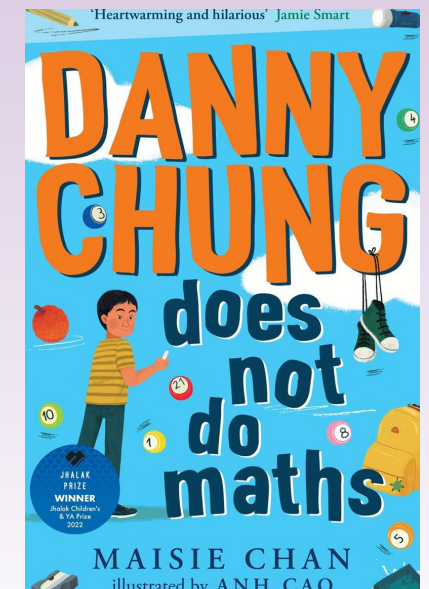
This beautiful collection of essays took home the OCM Bocas Prize for non-fiction and was shortlisted for the Baillie Gifford Prize. Miller's letters to known racial equality activists and artists as well as problematic figures act as a framework for tales of everyday racism. He is particularly concerned with silence and the impact and risks of breaking it. More than anything, the collection probes readers to question the things we think are unspeakable and why we think this way, from prejudice in our imaginations to our reflex defence mechanisms and actions.



We're Going to Find the Monster by Malorie Blackman, illustrated by Dapo Adeola

Dream team Malorie Blackman and Dapo Adeola have teamed up to create this colourful and joyous children's adventure book. The tale by previous Children's Laureate and winner of Illustrator of the Year at The British Book Awards 2022 have crafted a story about two adventurers who imagine their brother becomes a monster.

The Musical Truth: A Musical History of Modern Black Britain in 28 Songs by Jeffrey Boakye, illustrated by Ngadi Smart



This important novel makes the complex themes of race, imperialism and postcolonialism accessible to young adults. Boakye and Smart use the music of Black British artists to depict significant turning points in the nation's history and race relations, provoking us to question existing, dominant narratives.

Danny Chung Does Not Do Maths by Maisie Chan

This feel-good story follows eleven-year-old Danny Chung, who can't meet the expectations of his family to be good at maths. All he wants to do is retreat into his bedroom where he can let his creativity burst and draw to his heart's content. When his Chinese, ex-maths-champion grandmother Nai Nai comes to stay, they are both forced to learn a few unexpected lessons from each other.

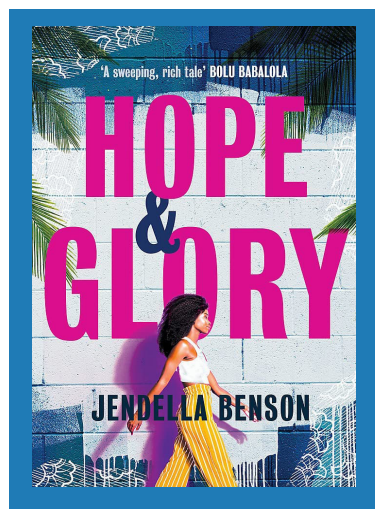
Upcoming Publishing Events

BY ERIN EVETT AND KELLIE SMITH

An Evening with The Candid Book Club and Jendella Benson at Waterstones Piccadilly

11 October, 7:00 p.m.,
Waterstones Piccadilly

Join The Candid Book Club and author Jendella Benson at Waterstones Piccadilly, where Benson will be discussing her debut book *Hope & Glory*. It is set in Peckham, and follows the titular character Glory as she returns to London to find her family broken after the death of her father. It is masterfully written and includes themes of love, loss, family and secrets. Benson is an author, blogger, photographer and host of the podcast *Black Ballad Presents: The Survival Guide*. For more information and ticket prices, click [here](#).



Using Social Media to Build Your Author Brand, Troubadour Publishing

12 October, 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.,
Online

An effective author ‘brand’ is an excellent foundation for developing your writer platform and audience-building efforts. Social media and blogging are both great opportunities for authors and readers alike. Both can be used to grow a dedicated readership, connect directly with your readers, seek out event opportunities and connect with other like-minded authors. So, just how do you begin?

Delivered online by Troubadour Publishing’s assistant marketing manager Phillippa Iliffe, this session will discuss the major social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Goodreads – and delve into the world of book blogging. As a new and upcoming writer, see how social media can help you implement your marketing plans from the very start and develop an authentic and trusted author brand.

The event is free to attend and you can register for a place [here](#).

Gower St Presents: Soma Sara in Conversation with Nimco Ali (OBE)

12 October, 6:30 – 7:45
p.m., Waterstones Gower
Street

Join activists Soma Sara and Nimco Ali (OBE) at Waterstones Gower Street, as they discuss Sara’s collection of essays *Everyone’s Invited* and Ali’s book *What We’re Told Not to Talk About (But We’re Going to Anyway): Women’s Voices from East London to Ethiopia*. Both women have set up charities to help vulnerable women, including Ali’s work against the practice of FGM (female genital mutilation). This evening seeks to unpick the imbalance of racial power we see in today’s society and the impact that social media has had on exposing these issues. For more information and ticket prices, click [here](#).

Bloomsbury at 35: Abdulrazak Gurnah and Alexandra Pringle in Conversation

13 October, 7:30 – 8:30 p.m.

The London Library, SW1Y 4LG

Join this fantastic evening to celebrate as Bloomsbury Publishing approaches their 35th anniversary. Join Executive Editor Abdulrazak Gurnah and Nobel Prize-winning author Alexandra Pringle as they discuss the steps they took to exceed in their illustrious careers, as well as the varying changes they have seen across the publishing industry over the last thirty years. They will be in conversation with Yassmin Abdel-Magied, author of *It’s Not About The Burqa* and *The New Daughters of Africa*. Tickets [here](#).

Berwick Literary Festival

13 – 16 October, Berwick-Upon-Tweed

Berwick Literary Festival (BLF) once again welcomes an array of speakers such as Martin Bellamy, Lisa Hobman and Kathleen Jamie (plus many more), as well as writing workshops, sponsored live performances in the town’s Maltings Theatre and promoted poetry.

Shortlisted authors from Berwick Rotary Club’s annual short story competition for local children are also invited to an “Oscars-style” awards ceremony in the Guildhall on the Saturday of the Festival. Winners and runners-up in each category are awarded prizes by the Club, with a certificate for all participants.

Tickets for all events are priced as low as possible at £5, except for the writing workshops, which are priced at £15. Some live events and all Zoom events are free, but booking is essential. Tickets can be booked [here](#).

Ronnie Archer-Morgan, Dorchester Literary Festival

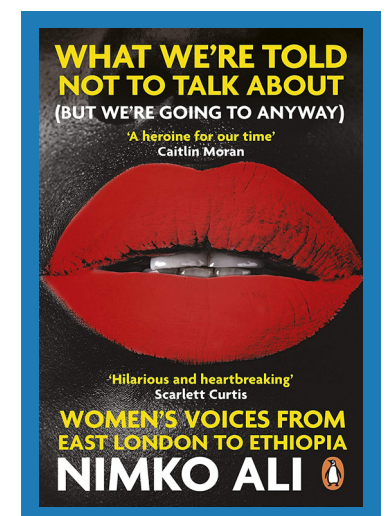
19 October, 4:00 p.m.,
Dorford Centre, DT1 1RR

Don’t miss out on this fascinating talk, where Archer-Morgan, one of the beloved hosts of *Antique Roadshow*, shares his own life story. Born in the fifties to a Sierra Leonean mother battling mental health problems, he demonstrates his pure resilience. Whilst in and out of care, battling racism and coming into contact with criminals and police, he eventually managed to find his feet in the music industry. This eventually led him to beginning his own antique gallery, and set him on the path to being a much loved household name. For more information and ticket prices, click [here](#).

The British Book Awards Presents: Sathnam Sanghera

20 October, 7:00 – 9:00
p.m., The House of St
Barnabas, W1D 4NQ

You definitely will not want to miss out on this brilliant series of events brought to you by The British Book Awards, where you can be privy to exclusive behind-the-scenes conversations with bestselling authors and the people that helped them along the way. To kick off the series, acclaimed *Empireland* author and winner of The British Book Award for Non-Fiction: Narrative, Sathnam Sanghera will be joined by Olivia Mead and Annie Moore, Senior Campaigns Officers at Penguin General. This is definitely not one to miss, a perfect event for fans of *Empireland* as well as any publishing hopefuls looking to get into marketing and publicity, as you’ll hear all about how these publishing powerhouses helped this ever important book to reach its key readership. Don’t miss out, tickets [here](#).



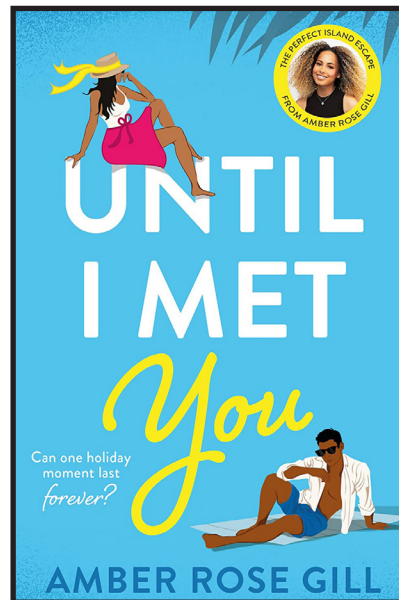
Shuffling of the Shelves – October Part One

BY SERENA KERRIGAN-NOBLE, HANNAH MOORE, LUCY SHARDLOW AND MELISSA TRAN

This October, as the weather gets colder, and we all wish to feel cosier, the charts are ever-changing.

Featuring on the WHSmith's chart this week is *Love Island* star Amber Rose Gill, with her debut romance novel, *Until I Met You*. Following travel blogger Samantha and corporate worker Roman, this novel transports us to tropical Tobago, as their lives unexpectedly intertwine and romance blossoms. Footballer and food poverty campaigner Marcus Rashford MBE has also been making a splash, with his debut middle-grade novel, *The Breakfast Club Adventures: The Beast Beyond the Fence*. A story of friendship, adventure, and discoveries, this fun read follows a group of kids from the "Breakfast Club," who band together to solve the mystery of twelve-year-old Marcus's missing football.

Popular books featured by Waterstones include *The Confessions of Frannie Langton* by Sara Collins, a debut novel which is the



winner of the Costa First Novel Award and previously awarded Waterstones Book of the Month. Collins writes a gothic novel set in the year 1826, following the story of Frannie Langton, a maid who has been accused of murdering the family she serves. Told through Frannie's confessions as she shares her life story from Jamaica to London, the novel is both haunting and alluring. Additionally, *Transcendent Kingdom* by Yaa Gyasi,

originally published in July 2020, has been highlighted on the Waterstones website as a "must read." The novel describes the experience of a Ghanaian family living in Alabama. Protagonist Gifty continues her PhD studies, despite the various family tragedies that are occurring in her life. A story about addiction, grief, depression and the experience of an immigrant family, *Transcendent Kingdom* has previously made seventeen 'best book' lists (Literary Hub).

Over on Instagram readers are loving two amazing female authors, both of whom appear to be storming through the charts with their newest releases. The first is Ayanna Lloyd Banwo with her debut novel *When We Were Birds*. This mythic love story explores two unforgettable outsiders who are brought together through their connection to the dead. Banwo's novel "speaks of the truth that we all struggle with our identity and place in this world" (@bookwormgonewild on Instagram). Another



topping the charts is Jayne Allen with the second instalment in her *Black Girls Must Die Exhausted* series: *Black Girls Must Be Magic*. As Tabitha discovers she is unexpectedly pregnant, she must navigate her way through motherhood on her own terms. This is a narrative that explores the many societal issues that Black women face, but also focuses on acts of bravery, strength and the importance of self-love.

From the historical to the fictional, BookTok creators are sharing a plethora of books as ever. Known as a pioneer for Black women's fiction, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* has been circulating TikTok and explores a woman's life, pre-Civil War, as a slave in America; focusing on themes of Black identity, trauma and motherhood (@berniejulia). Although it is important



to look back at how Black people have been treated throughout history, issues arise when Black stories have historically been centred around pain. In an attempt to counteract this narrative, @hothanjama_ recommends *Seven Days in June* by Tia Williams, a novel that has been praised for its presentation of Black joy. The novel is a love story between two authors, Eva and Shane, who rekindle their love over seven days. A book that appears popular across the book charts, it is definitely worth a read for all romance lovers.

Our noteworthy book this month is by Elizabeth Uviebinené and Yomi Adegoke with their collaborative series *Slay in Your Lane*, looking particularly at the first book: *The Black Girl Bible*. After conducting several interviews with successful



Black women in business, media, science and more, Uviebinené and Adegoke put together the ultimate guide on how Black women are, to quote the book itself, "shaping almost every sector of society" (Waterstones). As well as the many successes, the authors' draw on personal stories and how the industry still has a long way to go in order to have equality within the workplace and society. *Slay in Your Lane* has launched a podcast where the two friends discuss similar topics to the book of issues surrounding race, gender and ageism. Adegoke is due to publish their debut fiction novel *The List* in Summer 2023, which will be interesting for fans of Adegoke to see their transition from nonfiction to fiction writing.

Not to be Overlooked

By GURNISH KAUR

Not To Be Overlooked introduces a variety of wonderful but lesser-known books to assist readers in finding their next great reads. This week's column covers a review of *Open Water* by Caleb Azumah Nelson.

Caleb Azumah Nelson, *Open Water*

I would like to shine a light on an upcoming author, though one who has been so successful to date that “upcoming” feels like a distant past – Caleb Azumah Nelson. The novel *Open Water* by the debut novelist was published in February 2021, for which Caleb won the 2021 Costa First Novel Award. *Open Water* is a beautifully crafted novel exploring themes of grief, love, masculinity and focuses on the multifaceted Black experience.

Open Water is very much a London novel. From the late-night tube rides, the busy streets of Oxford Circus and the sound of pub chatter falling into the streets of Shoreditch. As a

South-East Londoner and a reader, Nelson's descriptions felt vivid, and lively like the streets of London. But Nelson does not forget to display the narrow London streets that confine and govern the Black body. Through unrelenting racial profiling, stop and searches, police brutality and racial oppression, London is in control.

The central plot focuses on an unnamed protagonist, who is a photographer, and a young female dancer who he meets in a pub in London amongst friends. However, it soon comes to the photographers understanding that the woman he admires is romantically connected to his close friend, Samuel. After the encounter, the attraction remains and their paths meet, they connect and form their relationship. But they are yet to face the challenges the world will throw at them as a couple.

As the novel progresses, Nelson opens the battle of tenderness and strength that the protagonist struggles to express within his masculinity. Nelson asks the

question, what does it mean to be vulnerable when you are everyone else's strength?

This is not a classic romance novel. This is a story of two souls connecting beyond the surface everyone else sees. *Open Water* gives voice to those that have been overlooked or disregarded. The voice of this story belongs to a Black man who is fragmented because of the world he lives in; a world of racial profiling and police brutality.

Nelson expresses this through the feeling of art in *Open Water*. He wraps the novel in music, photography and dance to express feelings of loss and celebration. With *Open Water*, Nelson celebrates Black artists by lacing the chapters with writers like Zadie Smith and James Baldwin to films and music by Kendrick Lamar and Phife. The acknowledgement of other Black artists in *Open Water* is not only referenced by the characters naturally, but this was one of my favourite qualities of the novel. *Open Water* is a debut novel but it does not fall

short of beautiful writing, raw reality and a novel that should become a modern classic.

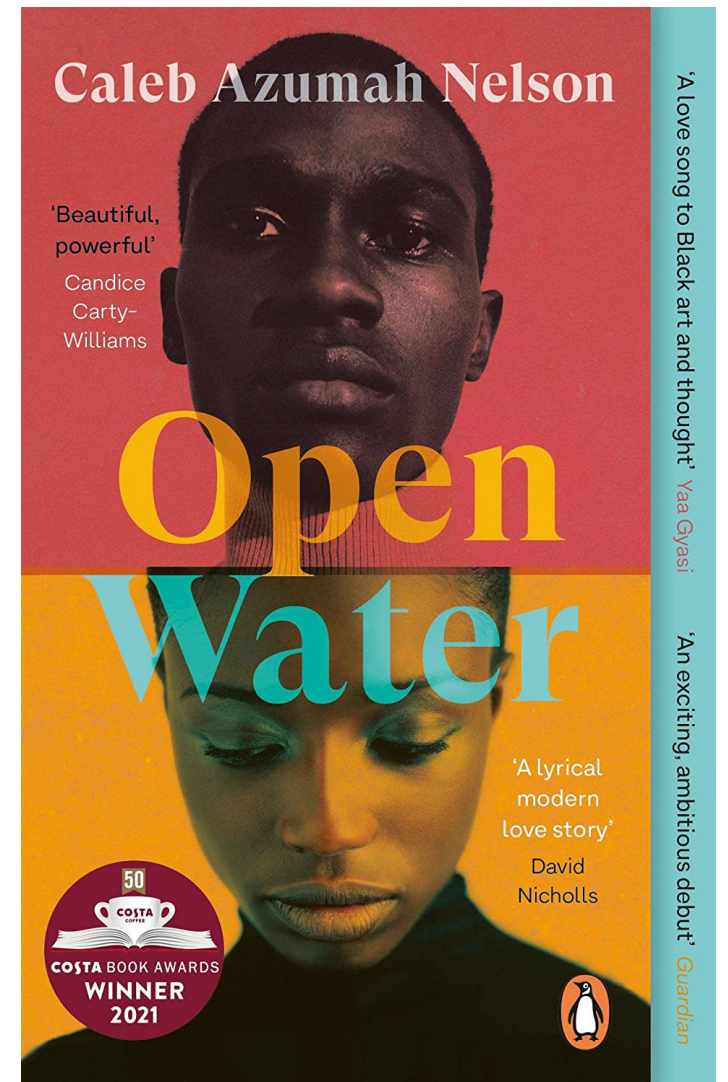
I have not read a novel in the second person in a very long time, but the way Nelson has cultivated each sentence and word with so much soul and depth makes you feel as though you are amongst the characters. Perhaps this is why he chose to use the second person, to make the reader feel connected and not just a distant observer. You move with them when they dance, you sit with them when they drink a cup of tea, and you listen when the other speaks.

I found myself constantly holding a pencil in my hand while reading this novel. In 176 pages I found myself wanting to underline every other line. Each piece of dialogue, and each description felt perfectly pieced together. A quote from *Open Water* that I think fits perfectly with the book industry is the following:

“I love her writing,” her mother says.

‘She’s my favourite writer. NW is the book I return to most.’

Perhaps that is how we should frame this question forever; rather than asking what is your favourite work, let's ask, what continues to pull you back?”



This particular quote showed me a new outlook on reading and made me reflect on the art I consume. What stays with me and what do I return to and why? I think we should all be asking that question to understand ourselves and others better.

Overall, this modern short read has been crafted with great poetic sentences

written from the soul. While reading this novel, I felt an immense connection to the characters' stories and lives. Nelson has a beautiful mind for storytelling, and I am excited about what this upcoming author has planned.

The Best 2022 Debuts by Black Authors

BY ZOE DOYLE, ROWAN JACKSON, AMY WRIGHT AND LAUREN JONES

For this issue, we have put together a list of the best debuts released by Black authors in 2022. Read on to discover our top picks.

***The Witchery* by S. Isabelle**

For those of you wanting to embrace the spooky season, *The Witchery* is a great young adult debut filled with magic, witchcraft and curses. New to Haelsford, Florida, Logan struggles to control her powers as she attends the magical school, Mesmortes Coven Academy.

Here she meets three other witches known as the infamous “Red Three.” During the Haunting Season, the wolves rise from the depths of the swamp, eager to kill, and the humans and witches must work together to survive. The book follows the four witches and two local boys as they attempt to break the curse on the town.

Juggling six main characters takes some getting used to, but the characters all have complex histories and relationships to magic that gives them unique and

distinct voices. With strong female characters and a diverse and queer normative cast, *The Witchery* is a modern and edgy take on the magical school genre.

***The Final Strife* by Saara El-Arifi**

El-Arifi holds nothing back in the first of an epic, fantasy trilogy. Rooted in the mythology and storytelling traditions of Africa and Arabia, *The Final Strife* sees three women join together to bring down an empire. Sylah is one of the few survivors of a failed revolution that has sent her into a spiral of drug addiction; Anoor is the abused daughter of a powerful ruler who conspires with Sylah to win the trials that will determine the next set of rulers; and Hassa is a trans woman who joins forces with Sylah and Anoor to reignite a revolution.

The world building in this novel is intricate and complex. The attitudes towards sexuality and gender are similar to that of many cultures prior to colonisation. Interestingly, the social conflict is caste-based and

is tied not to skin colour, but to the colour of blood. Red is the colour of the ruling class, blue of the poor, working class, and clear, the blood of slaves. Fast-paced and gripping, this book explores hard-hitting themes of oppression, control and class violence and features morally grey and complex characters. El-Arifi is a debut author who exhibits passion and confidence in her writing and shows great promise.

***You Truly Assumed* by Laila Sabreen**

You Truly Assumed by Laila Sabreen is a thought-provoking and heartwarming debut. It tells the story of three Black Muslim young women who all have very different lives and experiences, but come together after a terrorist attack leads to increased islamophobia when assumptions are made that the attacker is Muslim.

Sabriya uses her blog *You Truly Assumed* to fight back and is soon joined by Zakat and Farah who help run the popular blog. Whilst they receive a lot of support,

they also receive hate and online harassment, and the friends face a difficult decision on what the future holds for the blog. *You Truly Assumed* switches point of view between the three characters, in which we learn about their individual experiences. It is an inspirational story about friendship, community and the power of standing up and speaking out.

***Nightcrawling* by Leila Mottley**

Longlisted for the Booker Prize 2022, *Nightcrawling* is a chilling and beautifully written depiction of poverty, corruption, injustice and police brutality. It is clear that Mottley began as a poet, her prose is evocative, compassionate, angry and unique, and gives the protagonist an intimate and distinctive voice.

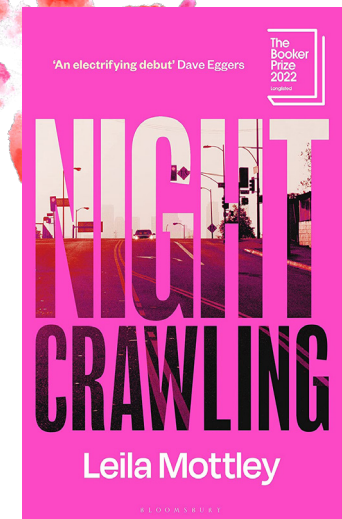
The novel follows seventeen-year-old Kiara as she struggles with loss and abuse. Following the death of her father and subsequent shattering of her family life, Kiara turns to “nightcrawling” (or streetwalking as it is often referred to) to avoid eviction and care for her disillusioned brother, Marcus, and young neighbour, Trevor, whose mother is struggling with addiction.

One night, she finds herself embroiled in a sinister police deal which causes her to become the centre of a media storm.

This is by no means a light book, the subject matter is heavy, painful and impactful, and yet deeply important. Mottley began writing this when she was only seventeen – she is now nineteen – and was inspired by the true story of a police scandal in Oakland, 2015. She does not shy away from the darkness and grit of the subject matter and provides us with a story of a resilient and caring

young woman navigating her way through a world which refuses to protect her.

Despite the heaviness of the plot, Mottley’s writing flows well and I read it fairly quickly. However, please do check the trigger warnings before reading *Nightcrawling*.



Upskilling Tips for Dissecting the School Curriculum

BY MEGHAN CAPPER, TANVI JAISWAL, MISHA MANANI AND GEORGIA STACK

In this week's issue, we are celebrating Black voices by sharing with you some top tips on dissecting the school curriculum. It is widely understood that more needs to be done to diversify the school curriculum, so we're sharing some ways that we can all celebrate Black individuals' achievements in publishing. We'll be discussing who could get involved in making the change, suggesting books for the curriculum and including some useful resources that can support authors who are often left out.

Who can get involved and how?

- **Parents and Guardians:** You can ensure the books and media your children consume celebrate diversity and inclusivity in their content and authorship. By reading and discussing books on race, gender, sexuality and mental health with your children, you can show your children a multi-faceted picture of our society. Additionally, parents could support Black-owned bookshops

in the UK, such as [New Beacon Books](#), [Roundtable Books](#), [Afrori](#) and [BookLove](#) (a travelling book carnival).

- **Teachers:** You can include influential Black authors/thinkers/speakers/politicians in your teaching and class discussions to ensure representation for all students. Roundtable Books have a specific "[Black studies module](#)" on their website, which is a great resource.
- **Students:** At university, students can choose modules that have Black authors on their reading lists. You can also take part in student committees that discuss issues of diversity and inclusivity within their student intake and also aim to "decolonise" the curriculum on courses. Alternatively, students can support marginalised voices by signing university petitions and attending protests or marches for Black rights at their university.

- **Publishing Hopefuls and Employees:** Those entering into the industry should support organisations such as the [Black Writers' Guild](#), [Black Agents and Editors' Group \(BAE\)](#) and [Big Black Books](#), who speak out against the inequality and lack of representation within publishing. Following influential Black publishers on social media channels, such as [Jane Link's bigblackbooks](#) and [Sharmaine Lovegrove](#) is a good way to stay informed with discussions of diversity in the industry. Additionally, [Jacaranda Books](#) are committed to "creating space on the bookshelf" for Black authors and is a great place to start diversifying your reading.
- **Exam Boards:** They should present an inclusive list of authors and texts to choose from. This includes books on the English Literature and Language syllabus from diverse UK publishers, such as Penguin's [#Merky](#)

[Books](#), [Knights Of, Lantana](#), [Dialogue Books](#) and [Verso Books](#).

Suggested Books for the Curriculum

- [And the Stars Were Burning Brightly](#) by **Danielle Jawando:** This book helps diversify literature by showcasing themes of suicide, mental health, loss and cyberbullying with characters from underrepresented backgrounds. Written by a Black British author, the story follows a teenage boy, Nathan, who lost his brother to suicide and tries to unearth the reasons why.
- [Your Show](#) by **Ashley Hickson-Lovence:** This details the extraordinary life of Uriah Rennie, the Premier League's first and only Black referee. It explores how he overcame racial discrimination in Britain to create a successful career. *Your Show* can inspire young people and highlight the importance of determination and resilience.
- [Girl, Woman, Other](#) by **Bernardine Evaristo:** This book unravels the experiences of twelve Black British women. Evaristo covers women of various occupations, ages and classes, which provides a broad scope of

identities across different times in Britain, which is underexplored in schools.

- **Additional Suggested Authors:** Bolu Babalola, Caleb Azumah Nelson, Patrice Lawrence, Maya Angelou, Jericho Brown and Alice Walker.

Publishing Resources Supporting Diverse Books

- [Lit in Colour:](#) Started in 2020 by Penguin Books UK and The Runnymede Trust, this initiative aims to support schools around the country to teach more inclusive content in English Literature. This includes commissioning more diverse books, as well as providing free teaching resources, book donations and more.
- [Emerald in Publishing:](#) This project focuses on diversifying the education sector. It provides more open source articles and gives academic authors from underrepresented backgrounds a platform to showcase their research.
- [Diversifying the Curriculum Conference \(2022\):](#) This virtual conference held annually explores the diversification of the UK's curriculum

through discussions with professionals and academics. It delves into increasing representation and making education more inclusive of diverse communities.

- [Hackney's Diverse Curriculum:](#) This company specialising in school services launched this programme to highlight Black history and its contribution to the cultural diversification of the UK.
- [Everybody In Charter:](#) This charter focuses on children's education and book publishing. It aims to increase inclusivity by partnering with publishers, booksellers, authors, teachers and organisations like The Bookseller, The Publishers Association and more.

Thanks for reading Issue Fifty-Seven! Join us again for Issue Fifty-Eight, where we will feature Part 2 of Upskilling Tips for Career Progression with two exciting interviewees.



Black Authors Spotlighted on TikTok

BY ALEXANDRA CONSTABLE AND HAYLEY CADEL

As you may remember from a previous issue, BookTok has quickly become a core marketing tool within the publishing industry. Various publishers have begun to send their books to BookTokers to review on social media, and book stores such as Waterstones have recently created sections dedicated to those books trending on the platform. BookTok has proved undeniably successful in promoting the popularity of certain books, even being responsible for pushing some titles to the top of the *New York Times* bestsellers list. In this article, we are highlighting some of the talented Black authors that have been particularly championed on BookTok – most notably, the works of Talia Hibbert, Tia Williams, Bolu Babalola, Joya Goffney and Jasmine Guillory.

Talia Hibbert is a British romance novelist who specialises in paranormal romance. She is most commonly known for her 2019 romance novel *Get a*

Life, *Chloe Brown*, which follows the story of Chloe Brown, who after almost dying in a near-death experience with a drunk driver, devises a list of directives that intend to help her “get a life.” For much of Hibbert’s life, she struggled with undiagnosed medical problems, which were later discovered to be caused by fibromyalgia. The issues she faced throughout her journey towards and after diagnosis inspired the themes of discrimination and prejudice within healthcare settings in her novel. The book was hugely popular and became the first in a trilogy that follows the recurring Brown sisters – see also, *Take a Hint*, *Dani Brown* and *Act Your Age*, *Eve Brown*.

Other romance writers also doing well on BookTok are the wonderful Bolu Babalola and Tia Williams, who have turned their hand from other creative industries to become novelists. *Love in Colour* was published in 2021 and is Babololu’s first book. It’s a collection

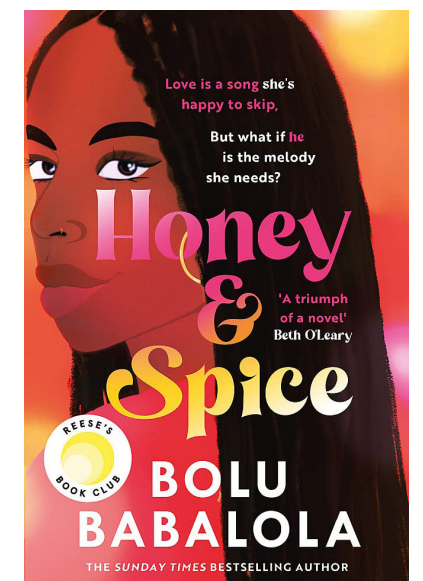
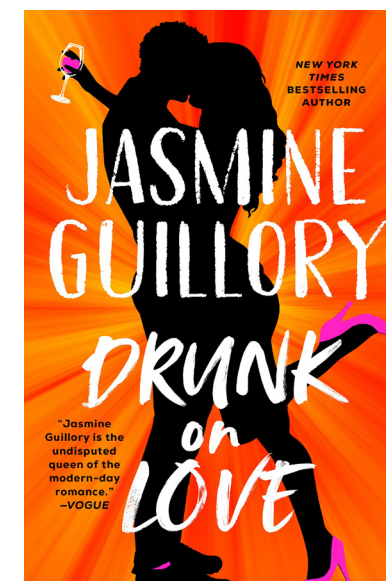
of short-stories where she finds and beautifully rewrites love stories from history and mythology. Following the success of this first book, Babalola went on to release *Honey & Spice* in 2022, with the marketing campaign utilising her popularity on social media to generate anticipation for the book’s release. *Honey & Spice* is a relevant and relatable romance, with the main character embroiled in a “situationship.” Also popular on BookTok, the author Tia Williams with her novels *The Perfect Find*, *The Accidental Diva* and *Seven Days in June*. With genre similarities to *Book Lovers* by Emily Henry, *Seven Days in June* was notably popular on BookTok last year. This novel recounts the meeting of the main characters Eva and Shane, both successful writers. While they immediately connect, despite acting as though they are strangers, it emerges that they had a whirlwind romance fifteen years earlier. Now reconnecting, questions from the past are finally answered.

Due to the popularity of BookTok as a platform, readers are also connected with books outside the UK, with the platform offering the potential for readers to find a wider variety of books from around the world. American romance novelists Joya Goffney and Jasmine Guillory have seen the benefits of this international reach. Goffney’s YA debut, *Excuse Me While I Ugly Cry*, resembles a romcom full of secrets and chemistry. The main character, Quinn, obsessively keeps lists of things that embarrass her in her diary, following the logic that if she documents them in this way, she won’t need to face them. However, when she loses her diary, she is forced to confront her fears. As her journal is revealed on an Instagram account week-by-week, she is blackmailed into facing her fears or risk her whole journal being made public. Following the success of her

debut, Goffney’s subsequent novel, *Confessions of an Alleged Good Girl*, moves away from YA. It sees the main character battling with her religious parents towards a more sex positive outlook. Similarly, the prolific writer Jasmine Guillory, has also found popularity on BookTok. For those of us currently trying to get into the publishing industry, *By the Book*, sets itself up to be a relatable read. The main character Isabelle has been working in the industry for a few years and now at twenty-five, the position she is in is not where she thought she would be, still living at home and one of the few Black employees at the publishing house. Seeing the potential for a promotion, Isabelle travels to Beau Towers mansion to convince an author to complete his long-awaited manuscript, however upon arriving the pair notice they share some similarities and a romance ignites.

Finally, we wanted to leave you with some recommendations for upcoming releases to look out for, both in store and on BookTok. If you liked the sound of Jasmine Guillory’s work, her most recent novel *Drunk on Love* was published this month and has already garnered widespread attention from readers on BookTok. Moreover, due to be released in November, Kennedy Ryan’s new romance novel *Before I Let Go*, endorsed by Colleen Hoover, is one to watch. The novel grapples with ideas of lifelong commitment, to understand love and healing.

Regardless of how active on BookTok you are, we hope everyone will find some interesting new recommendations to add to their to-be-read list!



Manorism by Yomi Sode: A Review

BY OISIN HARRIS

Published by Penguin,
6 October 2022.

Yomi Sode is an award-winning Nigerian British writer. He is a recipient of the 2019 Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowship and was shortlisted for The Brunel International African Poetry Prize 2021. Sode uses chiaroscuro and parts of Italian painter Caravaggio's life in this debut. He places under a microscope the contemporary experiences of living as Black boys and men in Britain today, but also dissects the contrasts in impunity afforded to Black and white artists and Black and white people more generally.

The collection opens with an atrociously emotive imagined rendering of the mental, physical, and spiritual states inhabited by those men and women captured during the slave trade. He paints a highly charged and moving frieze of their agonising wait in the island of Goree island, off Senegal's coast, before they passed through the infamous door of no return. Sode begins the poem by pondering if these millions (an estimated twenty million in Goree alone) of souls might have been escaped their fate if: "The angel could have warned the slaves, the

same / way it warned Joseph before King Herod's attempt to kill baby Jesus."

This poem manifests echoes of the famed Martinican poet, Édouard Glissant's *Open Boat*, an introductory theory of his philosophical investigations in *Poetics of Relation*. Both poems are compass readings of how the middle passage becomes this lodestone anchoring future traumas. What's remarkable is how Sode injects this opening poem with biblical imagery to paint a tableau of a mass genocide and to contrast this, supposedly received Old Testament scene with, let's call it "dark," the unknown and alien notions of, for example, "Aneephya." Sode later in the book, defines Aneephya as: "Aneephytis: the release of the annephyia toxin into the bloodstream. [...] It is known to occur in heightened levels in Black people as a result of inherited trauma and 'weathering' carried down the generations."

He deploys this assumedly created condition (or a clever riff on the known condition of anaphia, the inability to feel touch) as a sort of invisible yet taut mental umbilical cord connecting the original trauma of those early captives whose echoes cadence throughout this collection. From the murdered of Grenfell in

L'Appel du vide: "How many buried names approved the cladding?"

To *Remnants*, where Sode dissects the heroism of Patrick Hutchinson who carried a white counter protestor to safety during 2020's BLM protests: "I'll hail him up, this Black man & his friends, spiriting a white man away like firewood from a furnace of protesters that had waited to set him ablaze... Is this how it works? How trauma folds itself in ocean waves, letting its remnants wash up on the shore for us to collect, time and time and time and..."

All the way to Sode's personal grief over his cousin's mother's death from cancer in *December 3rd 11:10 and December 3rd 12:30*: "Pushing my breath in O's from my mouth, trying to calm myself the f*ck down. I was not calm. I was O's, a welter of O's, as though I was giving birth to my grief."

This collection also investigates cultural appropriation, and the cultural (mis-)representation of "Black Britain." It homes in on the liberties taken by certain figures like Piers Morgan who've "borrowed" what they see as urban terms when commenting on incidents like that of Alex Mann, a white fifteen-year-old, who at Glastonbury was invited on stage by grime artist Dave to rap the verse of

another absent grime artist, AJ Tracey. Sode brilliantly switches between how Alex is viewed after the fact and how the media view AJ Tracey. It's also a book that performs an autopsy of our justice system and its involvement in the consistently unequal treatment of Black vs white defendants. As evinced in *Fugitives*: "because white skin is white skin everywhere; because privilege, irrespective of time, allows a grace period."

One intensely moving poem is *The Martyrdom of Michael, From The Block*, in which Sode parallels Caravaggio's painting, *The Martyrdom of St Matthew*, with the fictional murder of young teenager Michael, from the TV series *Top Boy*. Watching Caravaggio's painting alongside Michael's death, (he gets thrown off a high-rise balcony by Albanian gangsters just after trying to warn off the person who caught him selling drugs) is uncomfortable but conveys powerfully the cowardice, violence and indelible pain caused by such events in affected communities: "Michael calls down to the man he made his God / And is thrown from the tenth-floor balcony / To an untimely death. [...] / His God bears witness to the sacrifice — / And runs to safety... / Tonight, when Michael's mother gets the door, / It will not be because her son has forgotten his keys."



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