

# Celebrating Black History Month

## How well do you know Black history and culture?

1. In what year did Britain first pass an act officially outlawing the institution of slavery: 1772, 1833 or 1838?
2. In which war was the British-Jamaican nurse Mary Seacole most active?
3. Where was Kofi Annan born and which international organisation did he lead?
4. In what year and where did Tommy Smith and John Carlos, who finished 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 200 meters sprint at the Olympics raise their fists in a Black Power salute on the podium at the awards ceremony?
5. In August 1981 Charles Chapman became the first black swimmer to swim across which body of water?
6. Who was the first Black player to be made captain the England football team and in what year?
7. What was the name of MC Hammer's debut album which was released in 1990 and sold 10 million copies?
8. Match the films to their directors:
 

<b>Spike Lee</b>	Boyz N The Hood
<b>Melina Matsoukas</b>	Twelve Years a Slave
<b>Ava DuVernay</b>	Do the Right Thing
<b>Steve McQueen</b>	Queen & Slim
<b>John Singleton</b>	Thirteenth

## Poem of the week

*Langston Hughes (1902-1967) was an African American poet, novelist and playwright who wrote about black life and culture in 20c America. Here is the opening from one of his most famous poems.*

### Let America be America Again

Let America be America again.  
Let it be the dream it used to be.  
Let it be the pioneer on the plain  
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed -  
Let it be that great strong land of love  
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme  
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty

Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,  
But opportunity is real, and life is free,  
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,  
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

## Black British writers

Black writers have claimed many of the top literary prizes in recent years. In 2019 alone, Roger Robinson won the T S Eliot Prize for his poetry collection *A Portable Paradise*, which includes a heart-breaking sequence about Grenfell, and Bernadine Evaristo was co-winner of the Booker Prize for her novel *Girl, Woman, Other*. Here are a few more titles to look out for:

### Emma Dabiri, *Don't Touch My Hair* (2019)

Dabiri explores black hair as emblematic of the black experience from slavery through to social media, and she unearths jaw-dropping facts about the uses to which black hair has been put over the centuries.

### Derek Owusu, *That Reminds Me* (2019)

Owusu was the first novelist to join **#Merky Books**, Stormzy's publishing imprint. His debut novel follows a boy known only as K who is sent to be adopted by white foster parents and returns to Tottenham to estranged parents at seven. Unflinching and raw, it ultimately questions how much our childhood has the power to shape our adult selves.

### Nels Abbey, *Think Like a White Man: Conquering the World...While Black* (2020)

Former banker Nels Abbey takes on the persona of Dr Boulé Whytelaw III, a distinguished Professor of Modern White People Studies, in this satirical guide on the realities of working in white-dominated workplaces. As humorous as it dark, this is a memorable and timely 'self-help gospel'.

**GIRL (1978)**  
by Jamaica Kincaid

*Kincaid is an Antiguan-American writer who is also Professor of African American Studies at Harvard University. Her story shines a light on mother/daughter relations in a particular place and culture. After you read it, think about what the story might have been like written from the mother's point of view. Then have a go at very short story (no more than 100 words) called 'Mother' or 'Father' or 'Girl' or 'Boy' that would give your reader a window into parent/child relations in the culture you grew up in.*

Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the color clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothesline to dry; don't walk bare-head in the hot sun; cook pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil; soak your little cloths right after you take them off; when buying cotton to make yourself a nice blouse, be sure that it doesn't have gum in it, because that way it won't hold up well after a wash; soak salt fish overnight before you cook it; is it true that you sing benna in Sunday school?; always eat your food in such a way that it won't turn someone else's stomach; on Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming; don't sing benna in Sunday school; you mustn't speak to wharf-rat boys, not even to give directions; don't eat fruits on the street flies will follow you; *but I don't sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday school*; this is how to sew on a button; this is how to make a buttonhole for the button you have just sewed on; this is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming; this is how you iron your father's khaki shirt so that it doesn't have a crease; this is how you iron your father's khaki pants so that they don't have a crease; this is how you grow okra—far from the house, because okra tree harbors red ants; when you are growing dasheen, make sure it gets plenty of water or else it makes your throat itch when you are eating it; this is how you sweep a corner; this is how you sweep a whole house; this is how you sweep a yard; this is how you smile to someone you don't like too much; this is how you smile to someone you don't like at all; this is how you smile to someone you like completely; set a table for dinner; this is how you set a table for dinner with an important guest; this is how you set a table for lunch; this is how you set a table for breakfast; this is how to behave in the presence of men who don't know you very well, and this way they won't recognize immediately the slut I have warned you against becoming; be sure to wash every day, even if it is with your own spit; don't squat down to play marbles—you are not a boy, you know; don't pick people's flowers—you might catch something; don't throw stones at blackbirds, because it might not be a blackbird at all; this is how to make a bread pudding; this is how to make doukona; this is how to make pepper pot; this is how to make a good medicine for a cold; this is how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it even becomes a child; this is how to catch a fish; this is how to throw back a fish you don't like, and that way something bad won't fall on you; this is how to bully a man; this is how a man bullies you; this is how to love a man, and if this doesn't work there are other ways, and if they don't work don't feel too bad about giving up; this is how to spit up in the air if you feel like it, and this is how to move quick so that it doesn't fall on you; this is how to make ends meet; always squeeze bread to make sure it's fresh; *but what if the baker won't let me feel the bread?*; you mean to say that after all you are really going to be the kind of woman who the baker won't let near the bread?

**ANSWERS** - How well do you know Black history and culture?

- |   |                  |                             |
|---|------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. 1833   | 8.               |                             |
| 2. Crimean War (1853-1856)                                  | Spike Lee        | <i>Do the Right Thing</i>   |
| 3. Ghana, Secretary General of the United Nations 1997-2006 | Melina Matsoukas | <i>Queen &amp; Slim</i>     |
| 4. 1968, Mexico City  | Ava DuVernay     | <i>Thirteenth</i>           |
| 5. English Channel  | Steve McQueen    | <i>Twelve Years a Slave</i> |
| 6. Paul Ince (1993-1998)                                    | John Singleton   | <i>Boyz N the Hood</i>      |
| 7. Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em                             |                  |                             |

