

Prison Reading Groups (PRG) was created in 1999 to set up, support and fund informal reading groups in prisons. We now support more than 60 groups in over 45 prisons nationwide. PRG is part of Give a Book.



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Finding a Good Read:

A regular column to help you find a good read even if you can't get to the library yet

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

October is Black History Month and prisons all over the country are celebrating it: with music and poetry events, displays, competitions and Big Reads.

Here's a small selection of Black writers and books to choose from. We've organised them by country so readers can focus on a particular interest or get a window on Black experience in different places and times.

Britain

A few of the novels – both classics and new work - that explore Black British experience:

Candice Carty-Williams, *Queenie*

Bernadine Evaristo, *Girl, Woman, Other*: - an exploration of Black British identity through the stories of twelve very different women

Andrea Levy, *Small Island* - the experience of Caribbean immigrants in post-World War II Britain, told through brilliant characters, both 'slyly funny and passionately angry'.

Nadifa Mohamed, *The Fortune Men* (2021) – based on true events and set in 1952, it's the story of Mahmood Mattan, a Somali immigrant to Cardiff's Tiger Bay who is accused of the brutal murder of a local shopkeeper

Courtia Newland, *The Scholar*

Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* and *Swing Time*

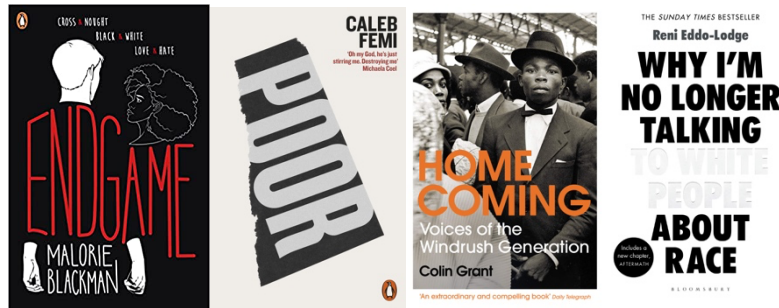


2020 was the 50th anniversary of the arrival of hundreds of young West Indians in Southampton on the SS Empire Windrush. In *Homecoming: Voices of the Windrush Generation* Colin Grant collects the memories of many of those people to create a brilliant oral history.

If you're looking for books to get a teenager reading and thinking, check out Malorie Blackman's brilliant *Noughts and Crosses* series. It's set in Albion, an alternative Britain where Blacks hold the power and call themselves 'Crosses' while the white 'Noughts' are poor and discriminated against. The most recent book, *Endgame*, includes a pandemic and a 'Nought Lives Matter' movement. Malorie's fans include Stormzy, who made a guest appearance in the episode of Dr Who she wrote. His song 'Superheroes' includes the line: 'I'm Malorie Blackman the way I sell books'.

For memoirs of growing up Black in Britain, see Lemn Sissay, *My Name is Why*, Derek Owusu, *That Reminds Me* and Caleb Femi, *Poor*. There's lots of great Black British poetry too. Look out for work by Linton Kwesi Johnson, Grace Nichols, Benjamin Zephaniah, Inua Ellams, Roger Robinson, Jay Bernard, Patience Agbabi, Raymond Antrobus and Jackie Kay.

For powerful discussions of race in Britain today, try Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* or the scathing and satirical *Think Like a White Man* by Dr Boule Whytelaw II, Professor of White People Studies (pseudonym of Nels Abbey). Or check out Emma Dabiri's *Don't Touch My Hair* for a fascinating perspective on Black history and experience. In November 2020 the BBC broadcast Steve McQueen's *Small Axe*, a series of five films about London's West Indian community. There's also a DVD that your library may have.



[United States](#)

Classic Black American novels include Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, Nella Larsen's *Passing*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, James Baldwin's *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*.

More recent African American books and writers to look out for: Yaa Gyasi, *Homegoing*, Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad* and *The Nickel Boys*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah*, Brit Bennett, *The Vanishing Half*, Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give*, Jason Reynolds, *Long Way Down*.

[Africa](#)

There are more and more books being published or translated into English from all over Africa. Here's a small selection of classics and new work. If your library doesn't already stock them, ask if they can order them.

Kenya: Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Devil on the Cross*, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, *Dust*

Liberia: Ahmadou Kourouma, *Allah is Not Obligated*

Nigeria: Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, Ben Okri, *The Famished Road*, Chigozie Obioma, *The Fishermen*, Oyinkan Braithwaite, *My Sister, the Serial Killer*

Republic of Congo: Alain Mabanckou, *Broken Glass*

Sierra Leone: Aminatta Forna, *The Memory of Love*

South Africa: Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Trevor Noah, *Born a Crime*

Uganda: Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi, *Manchester Happened*

Zimbabwe: Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, Petina Gappah, *Rotten Row, Out of Darkness Shining Light*

If your library is open, check out the black history shelves yourself. Or if your library has a request and delivery service, ask for a writer or a sub-genre like the ones above. Or just put in a request for 'a book celebrating black history.'

If you've read a good book recently send a review in no more than 100 words and mark it 'Finding a Good Read'.

