

"Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign; but stories can also be used to empower and to humanise."

- Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie

KS5 Reading List

In light of the recent events in the USA, we have put together a reading list of some wonderful books and links to help you learn more about racial injustice.

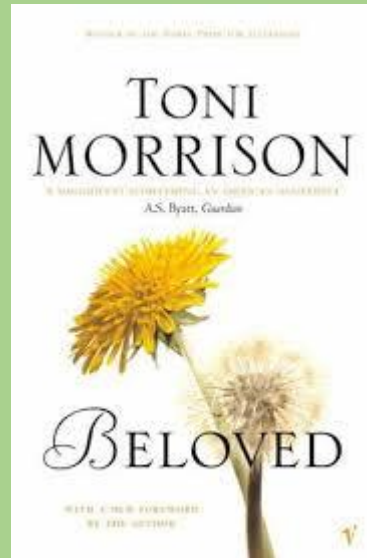
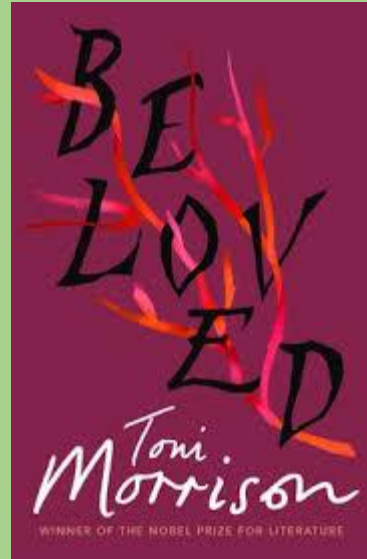
Books can act as powerful windows to understand other lives and perspectives, as well as acting as mirrors to look at ourselves more closely. We hope you enjoy reading one of these books.

Fiction

- There are so many amazing books that touch on topics of racism and prejudice, but here are some classics and modern books that we would like to recommend.
- These novels are complex and beautifully written explorations of love and relationships, friendship, culture, identity, self-discovery, trauma, colonialism, pride, suffering.

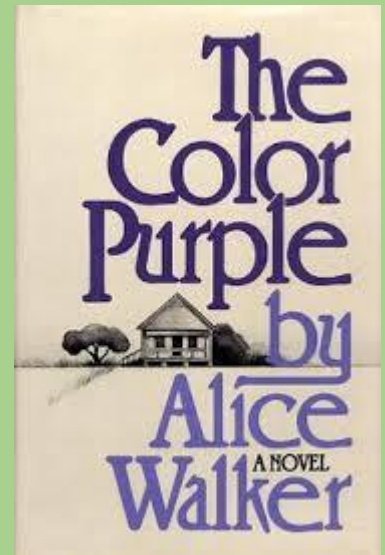
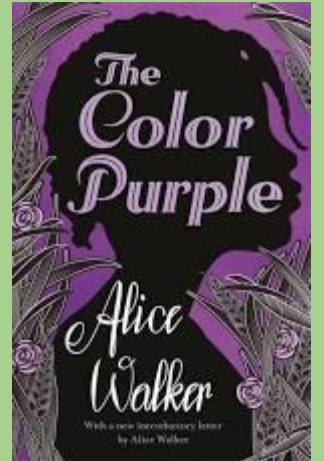
'Beloved' – Toni Morrison

- The 1987 novel 'Beloved' won the Pulitzer Prize in 1988 and the Nobel Peace Prize for literature in 1993 "who in novels characterized by visionary force and poetic import, gives life to an essential aspect of American reality." In 1998 it was adapted to film starring Oprah Winfrey.
- Morrison took inspiration for this from "A Visit to the Slave Mother who Killed Her Child" in an 1856 newspaper article which details the account of Margaret Garner who escaped slavery in Kentucky in 1856 by crossing in to Ohio, a free state. Rather than allowing her children to be taken back in to slavery, she kills one of her daughters, escaping capture.
- The novel begins in 1878 where Sethe and her daughter Denver live in a house haunted by a malevolent spirit. Sethe's sons fled the house when they were 13, seemingly because of this spirit and Denver is friendless and cut off from the black community. Paul D arrives who knew Sethe when they were slaves on the same plantation. He tries to drive out the superstition from their house, but they return one day to find a young woman sat outside who calls herself Beloved. Beloved was the only word written on the tombstone of Sethe's daughter and she believes it is her daughter come back. Out of guilt and love she gives all of herself to Beloved's increasing demands, until finally the spirit of Beloved is exorcised from the house.
- The novel explores the psychological trauma of slavery; the way repression and disassociation can cause a fragmentation of the self and a loss of true identity. Morrison dedicated this novel to "Sixty million and more" slaves who died as a result of the slave trade. It is a complex novel and while also tracing the story of Sethe and her family, it also writes of the collective memory and trauma of all slaves and their descendants. For me, it is a must read book that has had an enormously powerful impact on me.



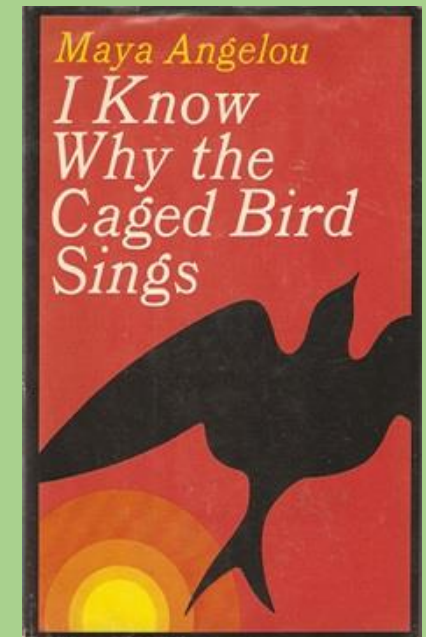
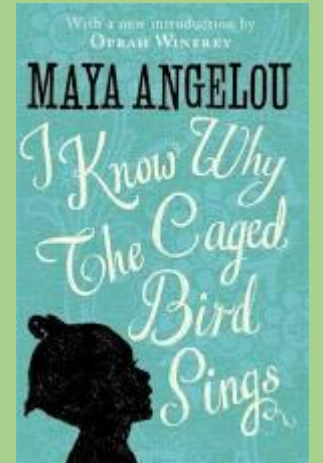
'The Color Purple' – Alice Walker

- This Pulitzer Prize winning novel, written in 1982, has been adapted into both a musical and a film starring Oprah Winfrey and Whoopi Goldberg.
- The story is told from the point of view of Celie in the early 1900s in the South of the USA beginning when she is 14 and spanning her life as she grows up.
- It is told in the form of letters to God as Celie is beaten and raped by her father.
- A man, Mister, wants to marry her younger sister Nettie, but he is given Celie instead where she is expected to look after his children and he treats her in a similarly abusive way to her father.
- Over the course of the novel she meets strong women Sofia and Shug who shape how she sees the world and herself giving her courage to grow in strength.
- While there are many painful incidents of racism, police brutality, rape, abuse and suffering, this is a novel of profound hope and beauty – and of the discovery and blossoming of self.



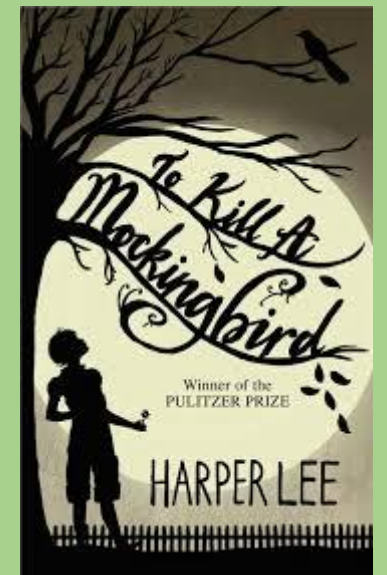
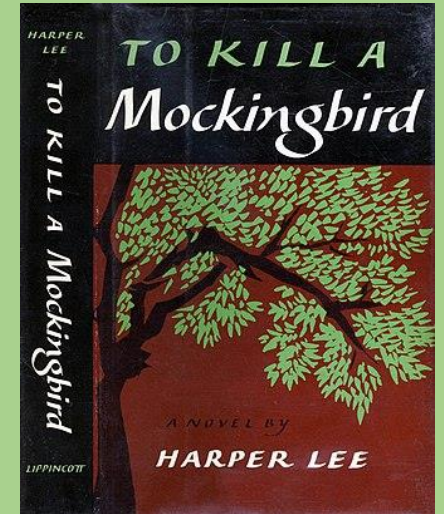
'I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings' - Maya Angelou

- Angelou's autobiography charts her life from ages 3 to 17 that show how strength and a love of literature can help overcome racism and trauma.
- Throughout the book, Maya transforms from "a victim of racism and with an inferiority complex into a self-possessed, dignified young woman capable of responding to prejudice."
- Angelou was also a poet and powerful voice in the civil rights movement alongside Martin Luther King and Malcolm X.



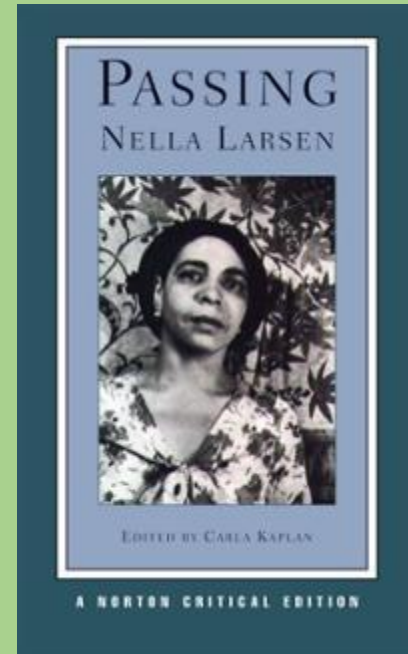
To Kill a Mockingbird – Harper Lee

- '*To Kill a Mockingbird*' was published in 1960 and has become a modern classic, winning the Pulitzer Prize and being studied in schools across the USA and UK.
- The plot and characters are loosely based on Lee's observations of her family, her neighbours and an event that occurred near her hometown of Monroeville, Alabama, in 1936, when she was ten.
- The novel is told from the perspective of six-year old Scout who lives with her brother Jem and widowed father Atticus Finch, a lawyer. It takes place over three years during the Great Depression in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama and centres on Atticus Finch's attempts to prove the innocence of Tom Robinson, a black man who has been wrongly accused of raping a white woman in 1930s Alabama.
- A film was made from the book in 1962. Here is a clip where Scout, Jem and their friend Dill inadvertently stop a mob lynching Tom Robinson. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaVuVu5KXuE>



'Passing' - Nella Larsen

- *Passing* is a 1929 novel is set primarily in the Harlem neighbourhood of New York City in the 1920s.
- The story centres on the reunion of two childhood friends—Clare Kendry and Irene Redfield—and their increasing fascination with each other's lives. The title refers to the practice of “racial passing” and is a key element of the novel; Clare Kendry's attempt to pass as white for her husband, Jack Bellew, is its most significant depiction in the novel, and a catalyst for the tragic events.
- Larsen's exploration of race was informed by her own mixed racial heritage and the increasingly common practice of racial passing in the 1920s. Praised upon publication, the novel has since been celebrated in modern scholarship for its complex depiction of race, gender and sexuality, and is the subject of considerable scholarly criticism.
- A film adaptation of the novel is currently under production by Rebecca Hall. See the link for a discussion of this:
<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/aug/20/passing-film-rebecca-hall-black-white-us-rac>



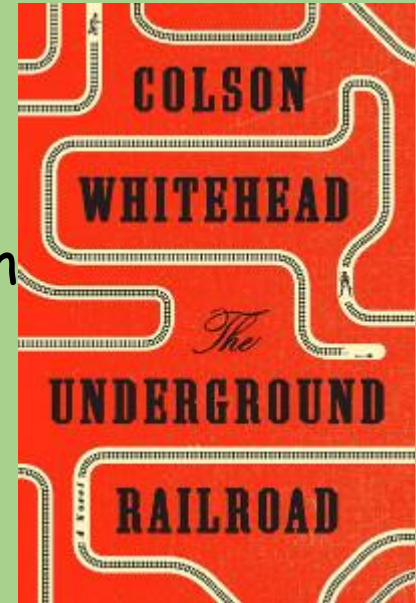
'The Vanishing Half' – Brit Bennett

- Set in 1968, this novel also explores a more modern exploration of the idea of 'passing' like the previous novel.
- "Partly set in a mythical town in the Jim Crow South, the story offers a critique of whiteness from the perspective of someone who passes for white by choice — a choice motivated by an understandable desire for privilege, financial stability, and most of all safety.
- Stella Vignes lives in Mallard, Louisiana, a town solely inhabited by black people who strive to marry lighter, so that each generation will be lighter than the one before. One night as a child, she and her twin sister witness the lynching of their father by a group of white men. As teenagers, this trauma leads them in dramatically different directions; one sister marries the darkest man she can find, the other runs away to live and pass among a group of good white people.
- This link offers an interesting interview with Brit Bennett about why she wrote the novel: <https://www.vulture.com/2020/06/brit-bennett-the-vanishing-half-interview.html>



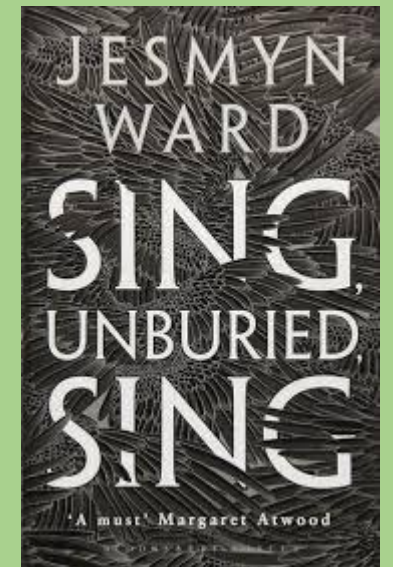
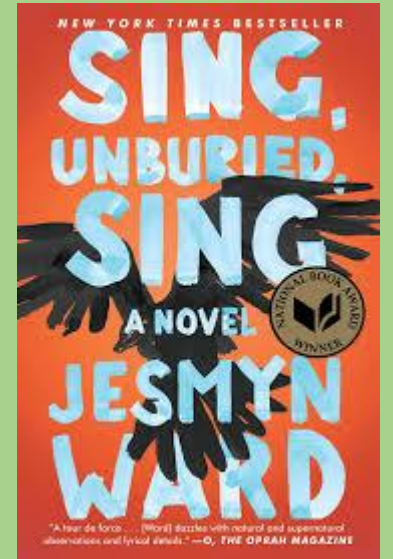
'The Underground Railroad' – Colson Whitehead

- '*The Underground Railroad*' was published in 2016 and has won various prizes including the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2017.
- It is an alternate history tells the story of Cora and Caesar, two slaves in the south-eastern United States during the 19th century, who make a bid for freedom from their Georgia plantations by following the Underground Railroad, which the novel depicts as primarily a rail transport system in addition to a series of safe houses and secret routes.
- In the "Acknowledgments", Whitehead mentions two famous escaped slaves: Fredrick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs.
- Here is a link to Whitehead talking about his novel: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?417268-11/colson-whitehead-discusses-the-underground-railroad>



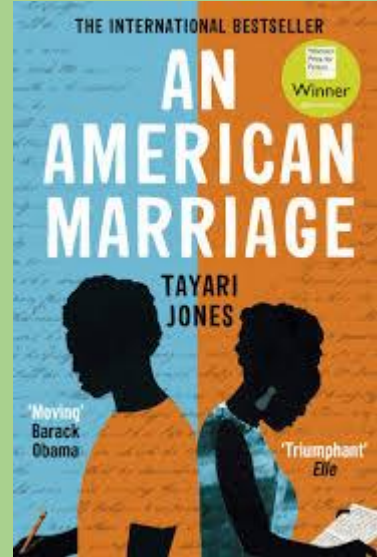
Sing, Unburied, Sing - Jesmyn Ward

- *Sing, Unburied, Sing* is a 2017 novel about a family's dynamics in the fictional town of Bois Sauvage, Mississippi. The novel received overwhelmingly positive reviews, and was named by The New York Times as one of the 10 Best Books of 2017.
- This is no country for young boys: 13-year-old mixed race Jojo cares for his little sister Kayla; his dad Michael is in the notorious Parchman prison (a place of fear, "the bogeyman", when Ward was growing up); his mother Leonie is a drug addict. They live with their grandparents: Pop, upright and dignified, is consumed by his past, haunted by racial history; Mam, with her herbal remedies and voodoo, is dried up and hollowed out by cancer.
- <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/may/11/jesmyn-ward-home-mississippi-living-with-addiction-poverty-racism>



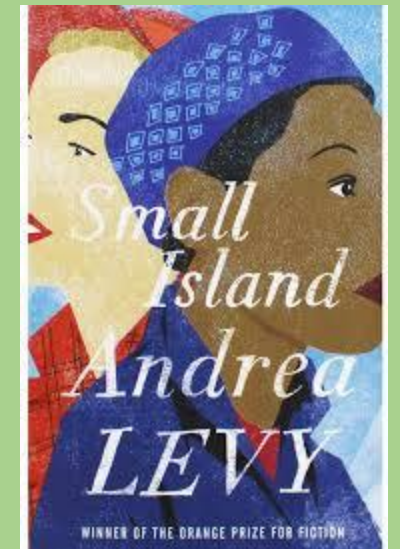
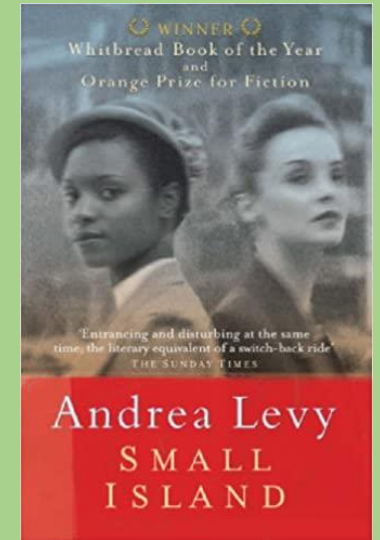
An American Marriage - Tayari Jones

- *An American Marriage* was written in 2018 by American novelist, Tayari Jones. In February 2018, it was chosen for Oprah's Book Club 2.0 and in 2019 won the Women's Prize for Fiction.
- The novel focuses on the marriage of a middle-class African-American couple, Roy and Celestial, who live in Atlanta and whose lives are torn apart when Roy is wrongfully convicted of a rape he did not commit.
- <http://booksbywomen.org/an-american-marriage-a-q-a-with-tayari-jones/>
- <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/in-an-american-marriage-a-wife-feels-imprisoned-by-her-husbands-wrongful-incarceration>



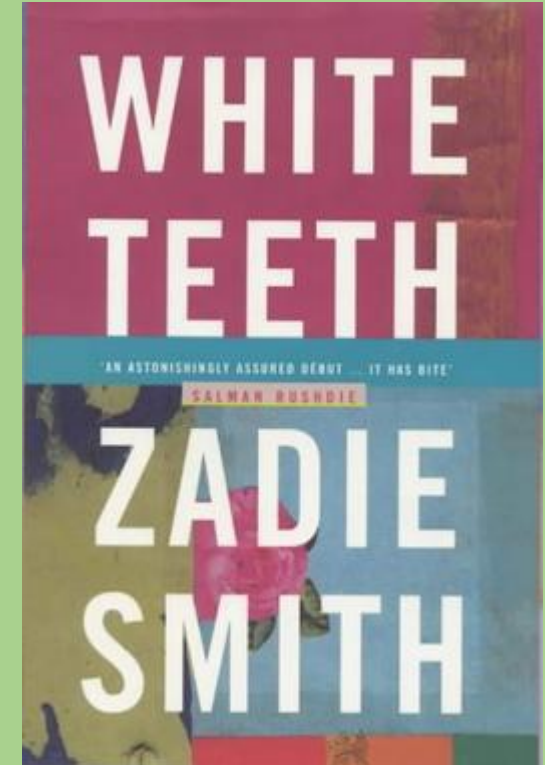
Small Island - Andrea Levy

- '**Small Island**' was written in 2004 by British author Andrea Levy, winning several awards including the Orange Prize, Whitbread Book of the Year and Commonwealth writer's prize. It was also adapted to television in 2009 and the National Theatre brought it to the stage in April 2019.
- It tells the story of post-war Caribbean migration through four narrators - Hortense and Gilbert, who migrate from Jamaica to London in 1948, and an English couple, Queenie and Bernard, in whose house in London they find lodgings.
- The four characters' lives come together exploring racial prejudice in England during and after the war, in colonial Jamaica and Jim Crow-era America. Although Gilbert and Hortense overcome some of the racist barriers of living in England, it is clear that prejudice in England will influence their lives forever and that racism remains a "huge and unsolvable demon at the end of the novel."



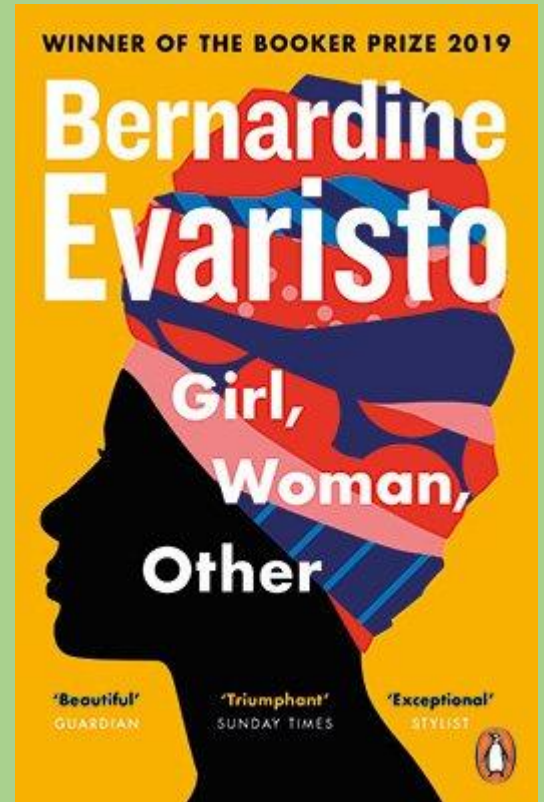
White Teeth- Zadie Smith

- Written in 2000, '*White Teeth*' has won several honours and awards including the Whitbread Book Award.
- It focuses on the later lives of two wartime friends—the Bangladeshi Samad Iqbal and the Englishman Archie Jones—and their families in London across three generations. It covers such themes as love, friendship, war and three cultures in multi-cultural Britain.
- The novel is centred around Britain's relationships with people from formerly colonised countries in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean.



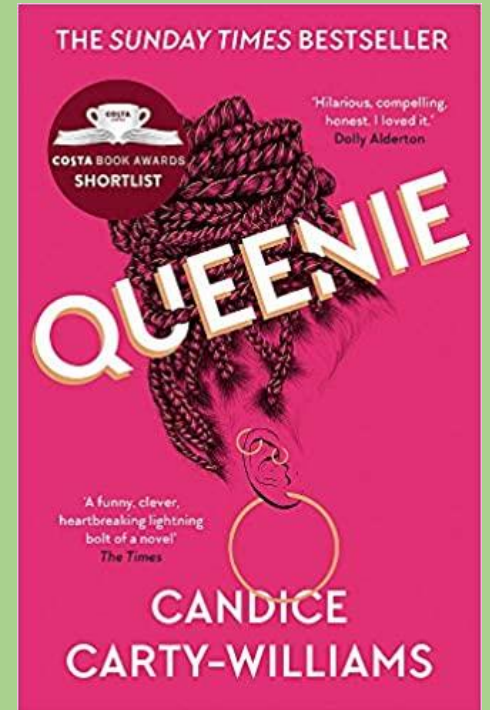
'Girl, Woman, Other' - Bernadine Evaristo

- Published in 2019, 'Girl, Woman, Other' jointly won the Booker Prize the same year along with Margaret Atwood's 'The Testaments'.
- It follows the lives and struggles of twelve very different characters. Mostly women, black and British, they tell the stories of their families, friends and lovers, across the country and through the years.
- Some of the **themes** explored in the characters lives are feminism, politics, patriarchy, success, relationships and sexuality. Asked about her motivations in writing the work, Evaristo said, "I wanted to put presence into absence. I was very frustrated that black British women weren't visible in literature."



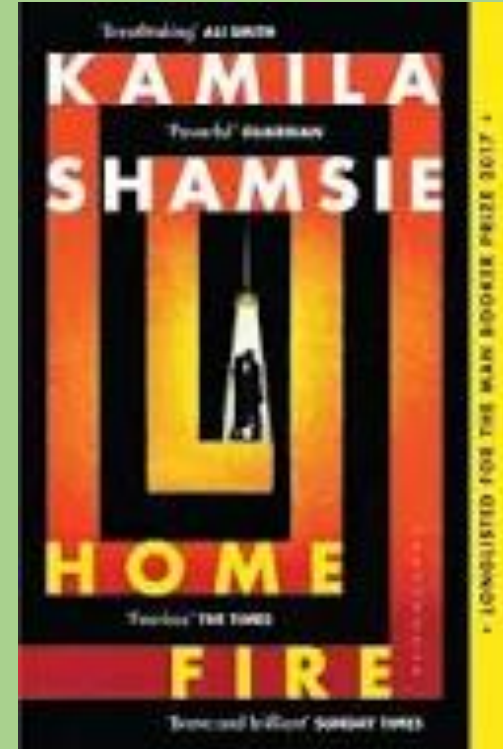
'Queenie' - Candice Carty-Williams

- Long-listed for the Women's Prize for Fiction in 2020, 'Queenie' follows the life of Queenie Jenkins, a twenty-five year old Jamaican British woman living in London, straddling two cultures and slotting neatly into neither. She works at a national newspaper, where she's constantly forced to compare herself to her white middle class peers.
- "Queenie is a masterclass in how to write accessible political fiction about race and gender. Funny, relatable, sad, and hopeful; Candice Carty-Williams is a writer to watch."



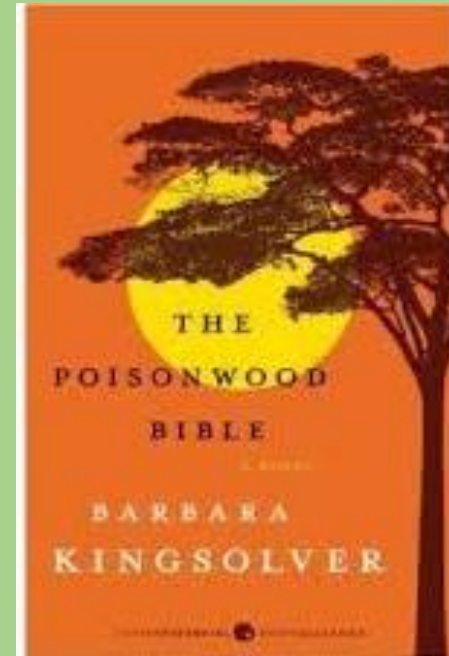
'Home Fires' - Kamila Shamsie

- *Home Fire* won the Women's Prize for Fiction in 2018 and was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize 2017 and shortlisted for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2018.
- It reimagines Ancient Greek Sophocle's play 'Antigone' unfolding among British Muslims.
- The novel follows the Pasha family: twin siblings Aneeka and Parvaiz and their older sister Isma, who has raised them in the seven years since the siblings were orphaned by the death of their mother; their jihadi father, whom the twins never knew, is also dead. Parvaiz attempts to follow in his father's footsteps by joining ISIS in Syria, but when he decides he has made a serious mistake, his twin sister attempts to help him return to Britain, in part through her romantic relationship with Eamonn Lone. Eamonn is the son of British Home Secretary Karamat Lone, who has built his political career on his rejection of his own Muslim background. The effort to bring Parvaiz home fails: Parvaiz is shot to death trying to escape, then Eamonn and Aneeka, trying to return Parvaiz's body to the UK over the objections of Karamat Lone, die in a terrorist attack.
- The concerns of the novel include the identity and security of Muslims in Britain. It speaks of the troubles of Muslims as they struggle to maintain a unique cultural identity while defending their "Britishness" and loyalty to the state against political and social activists who wish to alienate them.
- Read an interview with Kamila Shamsie here:
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/aug/27/kamila-shamsie-home-fire-man-booker-longlisted-author-interview>



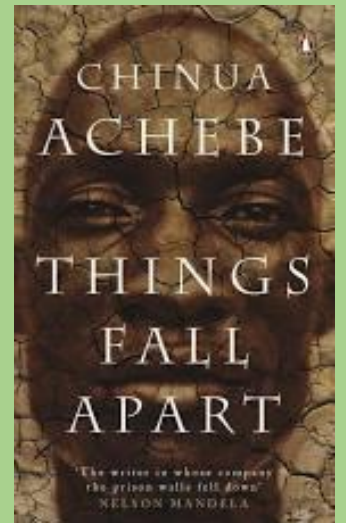
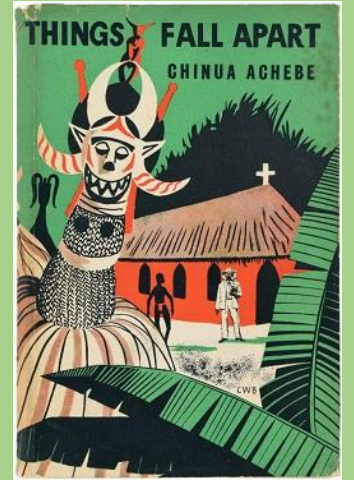
The Poisonwood Bible – Barbara Kingsolver

- *The Poisonwood Bible* is a best-selling novel written in 1998.
- In 1959 an overzealous Baptist minister named Nathan Price drags his wife and four daughters deep into the heart of the Congo on a mission to save the unenlightened souls of Africa. The five women narrate the novel. They move from from the U.S. state of Georgia to the village of Kilanga in the Belgian Congo, close to the Kwilu River.
- They carry with them everything they believe they will need from home, but soon find that all of it--from garden seeds to Scripture--is calamitously transformed on African soil.
- The novel reflects on Western colonialism and a depiction of cultural arrogance, ignorance and greed.
- The novel's title refers to Bible errata. The father of the family creates his own "misprint" of the bible. He concludes his sermons with the Kikongo expression "Tata Jesus is bängala" with the intent of saying "Jesus is most precious". In his hurried mispronunciation, he actually says "Jesus is poisonwood".
- <https://educheer.com/term-paper/the-evolution-of-colonialism-in-the-poisonwood-bible/>



'Things Fall Apart' - Chinua Achebe

- Published in 1958, *Things Fall Apart* was the debut novel of Nigerian author Chinua Achebe
- Its story chronicles pre-colonial life in the south-eastern part of Nigeria and the arrival of Europeans during the late 19th century. It is seen as the archetypal modern African novel in English, and one of the first to receive global critical acclaim.
- The novel follows the life of Okonkwo, an Igbo ("Ibo" in the novel) man and local wrestling champion in the fictional Nigerian clan of Umuofia.
- The work is split into three parts, with the first describing his family, personal history, and the customs and society of the Igbo, and the second and third sections introducing the influence of British colonialism and Christian missionaries on Okonkwo, his family, and the wider Igbo community.
- Achebe continues the story of one African community in 'Arrow of God' and 'No Longer at Ease'.



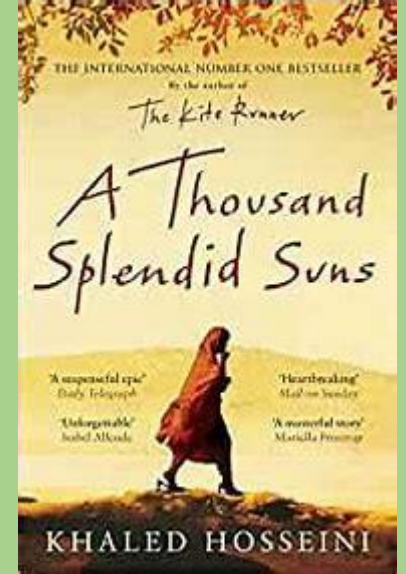
'Americanah' Chimamanda Adichie

- Published in 2013, 'Americanah' tells the story of Ifemelu and Obinze, who are young and in love when they depart military-ruled Nigeria. IN America Ifemelu has to grapple with what it means to be black, despite her academic success. Obinze plunges into a dangerous, undocumented life in London. Fifteen years later, when they reunite in a newly democratic Nigeria and reignite their passion - for each other and for their homeland - they face the hardest decision of their lives."
- Adichie said of her own move to America, "First of all, I wasn't black until I came to America. I became black in America. Growing up in Nigeria, I didn't think about race because I didn't need to think about race. Nigeria is a country with many problems and many identity divisions, but those identity divisions are mainly religion and ethnicity."
- <https://daily.jstor.org/chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-i-became-black-in-america/>

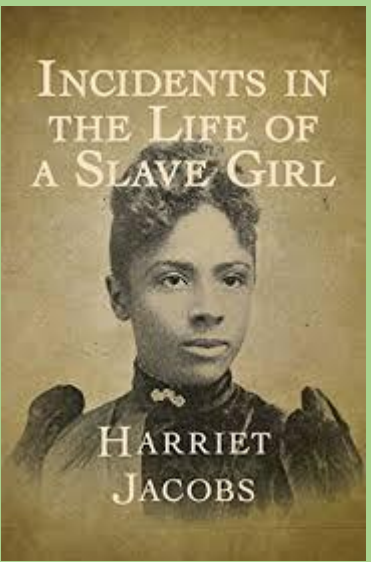
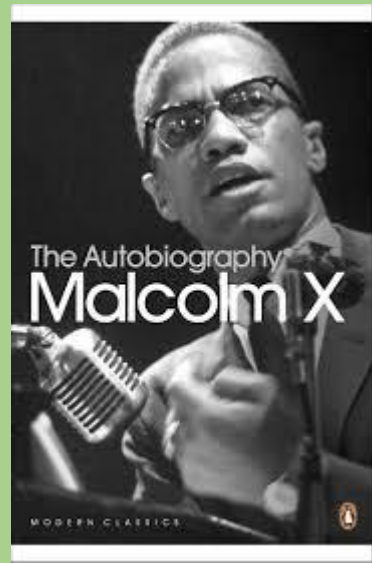
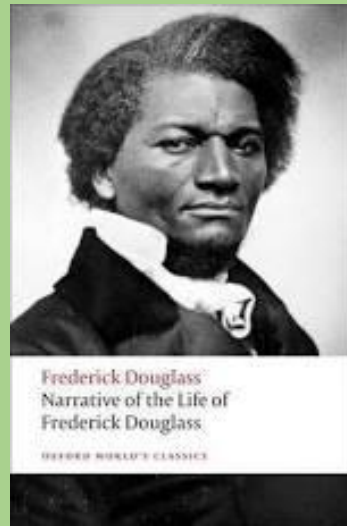
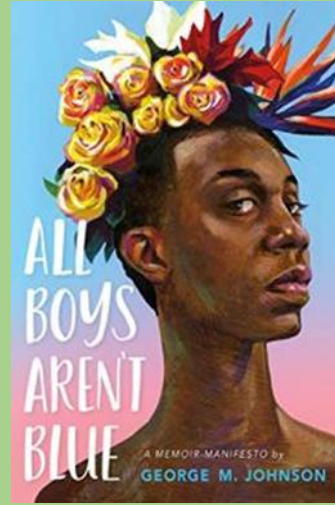
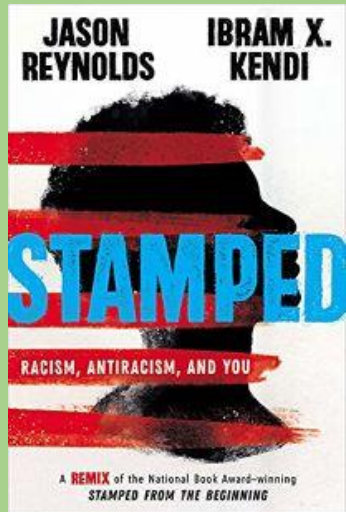
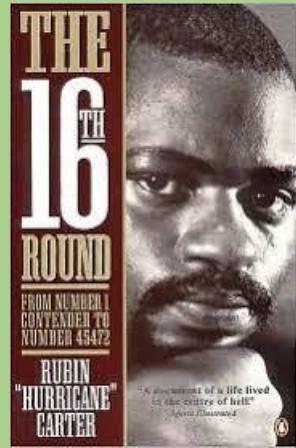
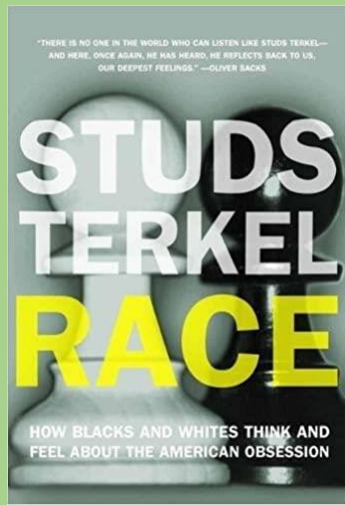
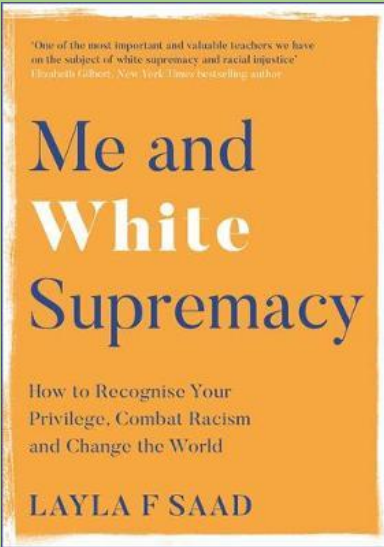
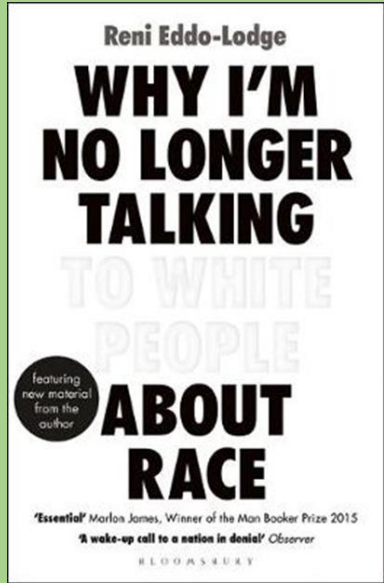
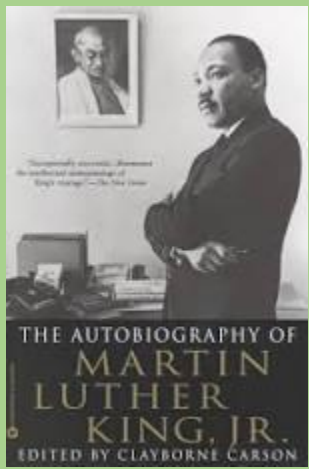
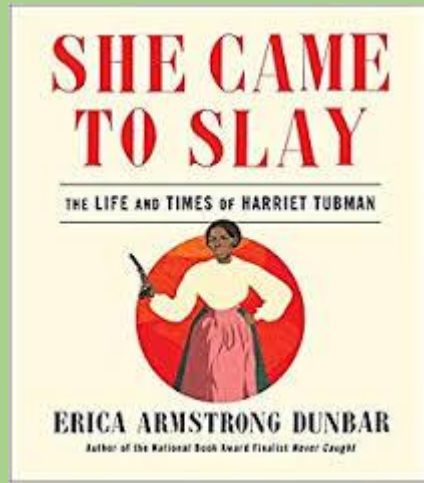
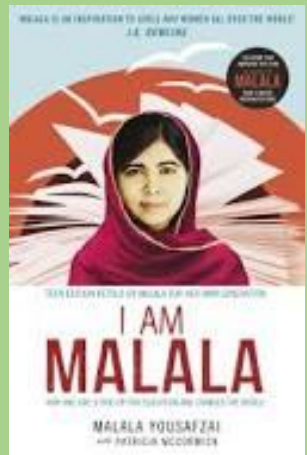
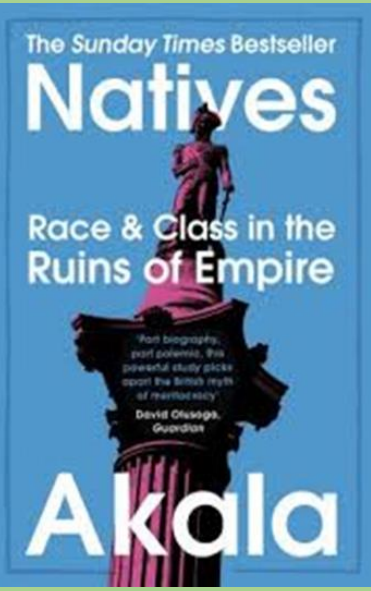


'A Thousand Splendid Suns' – Khaled Hosseini

- *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a 2007 novel by Afghan-American author Khaled Hosseini. It is his second, following his bestselling 2003 debut, *The Kite Runner*.
- Mariam is an illegitimate child, and suffers from both the stigma surrounding her birth along with the abuse she faces throughout her marriage. Laila, born a generation later, is comparatively privileged during her youth until their lives intersect and she is also forced to accept a marriage proposal from Rasheed, Mariam's husband.
- Hosseini has remarked that he regards the novel as a "mother-daughter story" in contrast to *The Kite Runner*, which he considers a "father-son story". It continues some of the themes used in his previous work, such as the familial aspects, but focuses primarily on female characters and their roles in Afghan society.



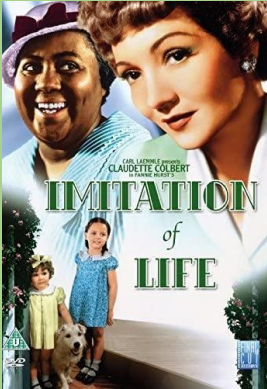
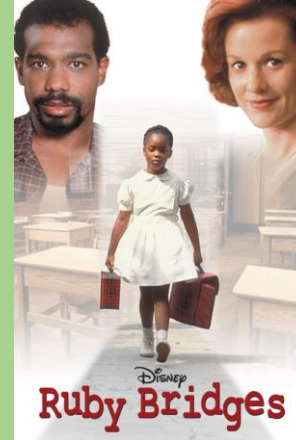
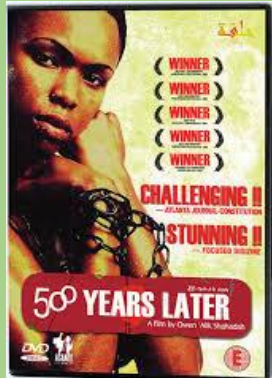
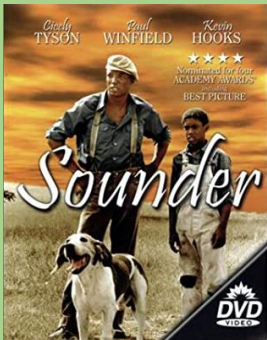
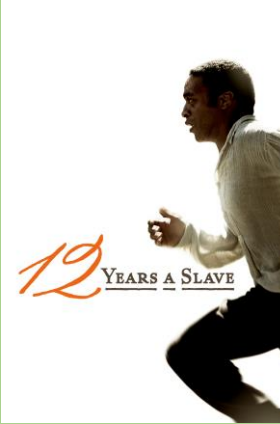
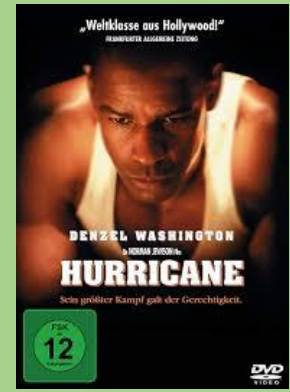
Non-Fiction



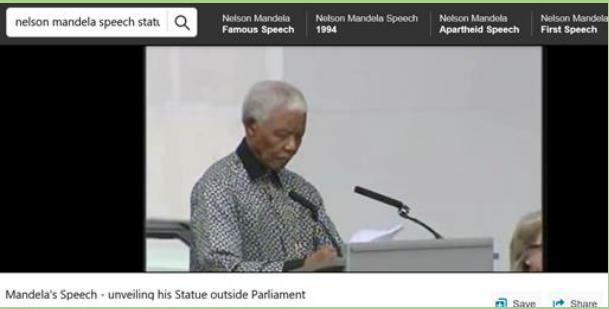
Articles

- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/mar/19/lambs-to-the-slaughter-50-lives-ruined-by-the-windrush-scandal>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/07/london-born-twins-face-deportation-to-different-countries>
- <https://jezebel.com/i-dont-know-what-to-do-with-good-white-people-1671201391>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/30/black-power-salute-1968-olympics>
- <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/new-goals-what-happens-when-poor-young-black-men-from-london-s-mean-streets-are-sent-to-rugby-one-of-britain-s-top-public-schools-skp33q9v2>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/29/slavery-abolition-compensation-when-will-britain-face-up-to-its-crimes-against-humanity>
- https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/feb/28/if-we-did-nothing-we-would-be-killed-on-the-streets-benjamin-zephaniah-on-fighting-the-far-right?CMP=share_btn_fb
- <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/london-2012-olympics-blog/2011/dec/21/jesse-owens-four-gold-medals>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/mar/13/studs-terkel-race-us-20-years>
- https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/loving-v-virginia-movie_n_581aee7ee4b0c43e6c1e2dfe?ri18n=true

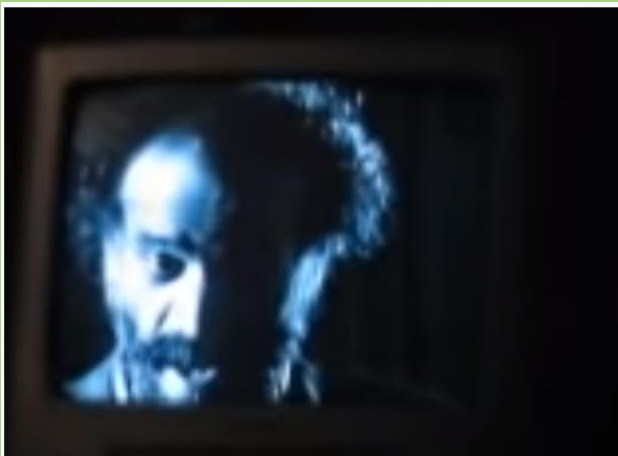
Films



Talks and interviews



Music and poetry



- [Power](#)
- [History lesson](#)
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/146367/poetry-and-the-civil-rights-movement>

TV and documentaries

